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# WORD ORDER AND SUBJECTIVITY IN CANTONESE

WONG CHEUK LAM CHERIE

M.Phil

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies

# Word Order and Subjectivity in Cantonese

Wong Cheuk Lam Cherie

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Philosophy

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# Abstract

Cantonese is renowned for having a rich inventory of postverbal elements which can express a large variety of meanings. They attract much attention because their grammatical status is highly controversial. Even more intriguing is that some of them can be both preverbal and postverbal; the two of them are interchangeable in some contexts but not in others. The thesis argues that the word order in Cantonese is a means to encode subjectivity. It investigates the interaction between word order and subjectivity from the perspective of functional grammar through three studies.

The thesis starts with the usage of the modal morpheme: *gang2* 梗. *Gang* bears only one semantic meaning of certainty and necessity. It can occur at either the preverbal or postverbal position. The thesis demonstrates that the postverbal *gang* encodes a more subjective modality when comparing with the preverbal *gang*. The thesis then studies the usage of the temporal morpheme: *sin1* 先. The preverbal and postverbal *sin* can even co-occur in a single sentence. *Sin* is polysemous, in particular the postverbal one. The thesis demonstrates that different semantic meanings and even various grammatical classes have been developed from the postverbal *sin* through semantic extension among various linguistic domains, such as the sentential, propositional and speech act domains. The thesis argues that metaphorical extension is also a manifestation of subjectification and concludes that the postverbal *sin* is more subjective than the preverbal *sin*. The thesis moves on to the usage of the restrictive morpheme denoted by *Z-*. *Z-* represents a large family of morphemes in which all the members share the same onset and the core meaning of restriction. The *Z-* members being studied are the preverbal *zi2* 只 (or *zi2hai6* 只係), *zing6* 淨 (or

*zing6hai6* 淨係), *zaai1* 齋 and the postverbal *zaa3* 咋, *ze1* 啫, *zek1* 喞, *zi1maa3* 之嘛. Due to their difference in phonological form, they are seldom being considered as cognate words. The thesis proposes that the two surface forms are evolved from the same semantic prime: restriction. The preverbal *Z-* is a more objective adverb whereas the postverbal *Z-* becomes a more subjective sentence-final particle.

Based on the three studies, the thesis puts forth an argument that the morpheme conveys a more subjective meaning when it is placed at the postverbal position, whereas it delivers a relatively objective meaning when it is placed at the preverbal position.

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# Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Term |
|---|---|
| ADV | adverbial marker |
| CL | classifier |
| DEL | delimitative aspect |
| DUR | durative aspect |
| EXP | experiential aspect |
| LP | linking particle |
| PERF | perfective aspect |
| POSS | possessive marker |
| PROG | progressive aspect |
| PRT | particle |
| SFP | sentence final particle |
| * | ungrammatical structure |
| ? | odd structure |
| # | grammatical but infelicitous structure |

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Goal, Scope and Organization

The present study aims to present an investigation on the interaction between word order and subjectivity by studying the synchronic meanings of some morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal in Cantonese. Some related backgrounds are given as follows.

It is well known that Cantonese has a rich inventory of postverbal morphemes. They can express a large variety of meanings such as time (e.g. *sin1* 先), quantity (e.g. *tim1* 添), scope (e.g. *saai3* 晒, *maai4* 埋), restriction (e.g. *zaa3* 咋, *ze1* 啫, *zek1* 喞, *zi1maa3* 之嘛), aspect (e.g. *zyu6* 住, *gan2* 緊, *hoi1* 開, *zo2* 咗, *gwo3* 過), degree (e.g. *gam3zai6* 咁滯, *dak1zai6* 得滯, *gik6* 極, *gwo3 tau4* 過頭) and modality (*dak1* 得, *gang2* 梗, *ngaang6* 硬). Most of them have to be translated into preverbal adverbial morphemes in Mandarin. For example,

(1) 飲杯添啦！（再喝一杯吧！）
jam bui tim laa
drink CL increase-in-quantity SFP
"Let's drink one more cup."

(2) 我贏梗。(我一定贏。)
ngo jeng gang
I win must
"I must win."

These adverbial-like morphemes have attracted much attention in the past because their grammatical status is highly controversial. In traditional grammatical analysis adopted in Mandarin, *zhuangyu* 狀語 (adverbial modifiers)

are considered to be preverbal while postverbal modifying elements are restricted to verbs and adjectives and considered to be *buyu* 補語 (verbal complements); positions of the two grammatical elements are distinct and fixed.[1] The postposition of modifying elements in Cantonese therefore presents great challenge to grammatical analysis. To further complicate the problem, these postverbal items also have their preverbal counterparts in Cantonese. The preverbal and postverbal elements sharing similar semantic content can even co-exist in a single sentence, such as (3) and (4). The co-existence of them seems redundant as they express similar meaning as if only either one of them is adopted.

(3) a. preverbal: 佢一定贏。
keoi jatding jeng
s/he definitely win
"S/he must win."

b. postverbal: 佢贏硬。
keoi jeng ngaang
s/he win must
"S/he must win."

c. co-exist: 佢一定贏硬。
keoi jatding jeng ngaang
s/he definitely win must
"S/he must win."

(4) a. preverbal: 佢差唔多喊。
keoi caamdo haam
s/he almost cry
"S/he almost cries."

b. postverbal: 佢喊咁滯。
keoi haam gamzai
s/he cry almost
“S/he almost cries.”

c. co-exist: 佢差唔多喊咁滯。
keoi caamdo haam gamzai
s/he almost cry almost
“S/he almost cries.”

Even more intriguing is that some of the morphemes can be both preverbal and postverbal, such as *sin1* 先 in (5) and *gang2* 梗 in (6). Furthermore, they may or may not co-occur in a single sentence. As illustrated in (5c) and (6c), the preverbal and postverbal *sin* may co-occur while the preverbal and postverbal *gang* cannot. The co-existence of a morpheme at both the preverbal and postverbal position seems redundant as they express similar meaning as if only either one of them is adopted. All the phenomena mentioned above are peculiar to Cantonese.

(5) a. preverbal: 先聽聽陳小姐嘅電話。
sin teng teng cansiuze ge dinwaa
first listen listen miss-chan LP phone
“(Let’s) listen to the phone call from Miss Chan first.”

b. postverbal: 聽聽陳小姐嘅電話先。
teng teng cansiuze ge dinwaa sin
listen listen miss-chan LP phone first
“(Let’s) listen to the phone call from Miss Chan first.”

c. co-exist: 先聽聽陳小姐嘅電話先。
sin teng teng cansiuze ge dinwaa sin
first listen listen miss-chan LP phone first
“(Let’s) listen to the phone call from Miss Chan first.”

(6) a. preverbal: 魚無咗水梗死啦！ (Shi, 1995)
jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei laa
fish without-PERF water definitely die SFP
“Fish definitely die without water.”

b. postverbal: 魚無咗水死梗啦！
jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang laa
fish without-PERF water die must SFP
“Fish definitely die without water.”

c. co-exist: *魚無咗水梗死梗啦！
*jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei gang laa
fish without-PERF water definitely die must SFP
“Fish definitely die without water.”

This study is motivated by the limitations of the previous work in characterizing the semantics of morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal in Cantonese. Among the previous studies, there was a prevalence of analyses concentrated on exploring the syntax and semantics of the idiosyncratic features of individual postverbal items (for example, Lee, 1994; Au-Yeung, 1998; Peng, 1997, 2002; Lee, 2004; Tang, 2003, 2006b; Zhang, 2007). The co-existence of these postverbal morphemes with their preverbal counterparts, like examples (3) and (4), were often mentioned (for instance, Huang and Zhang, 1983; Li et al., 1995:566-569; Shi, 1995) and examined (such as Tang, 2006a, 2007). However, specialized discussions on morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal are scarce. Even if some linguists realized this phenomenon, they just pointed out the fact without further investigating the matter in detail (such as Li et al., 1995:569; Shi, 1995; Tang 2006a; Cheung; 2007:204-205).

Although it is found that some morphemes can be both preverbal and postverbal, they are not free to occur at either one of these positions. In other

words, the preverbal and postverbal ones are not always interchangeable. For this reason, I strongly believe that the morpheme at the preverbal position and that at the postverbal position differ in syntax, semantics and pragmatics; they tend to have a fixed distribution in the grammar. I further propose that those variations are caused by their difference in subjectivity. Therefore, despite their high level of semantic resemblance, they are not that identical to cause redundancy. The co-existence of them in the same sentence serves specific semantic or pragmatic functions such as reinforcement.

The present study investigates the interaction between word order and subjectivity from the perspective of functional grammar by studying three morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal, including the modal morpheme *gang2* 梗, the temporal morpheme *sin1* 先 and the restrictive morpheme *Z-*. I hypothesize that *Z-* is a base morpheme with the core semantic meaning of restriction which gives rise to a large family of morphemes including the preverbal *zaai1* 齋, *zi2* 只 (or *zi2hai6* 只係), *zing6* 淨 (or *zing6hai6* 淨係) and the postverbal *zaa3* 咋, *ze1* 啫, *zek1* 嘟, *zi1maa3* 之嘛, etc. For each of the three morphemes, I first characterize its core semantic features and then move on to demonstrate how this core meaning gives rise to various related senses through semantic extension. I also show how the preverbal and postverbal morphemes are different in semantic extension and how they are different in meanings and subjectivity. Based on the three studies, the thesis puts forth an argument that word order in Cantonese is a means to encode subjectivity. The morpheme conveys a more subjective meaning when it is placed at the postverbal position, whereas it delivers a relatively objective meaning when it is placed at the preverbal position.

The thesis is organized as follows. In the remaining part of this Chapter 1, I

first describe the contributions and limitations in previous studies, and then present an overview of several theoretical frameworks that are adopted in this work. After that, I turn to the discussion of *gang* in Chapter 2, *sin* in Chapter 3 and *Z-* in Chapter 4. A conclusion is finally given in Chapter 5.

## 1.2 Previous Studies and Their Limitations

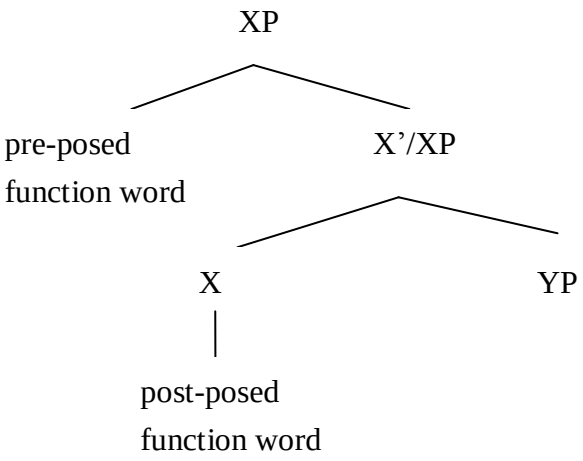
As mentioned in the previous section, some linguists have noticed and pointed out that some morphemes in Cantonese can occur at either the preverbal or postverbal position, or even co-occur in both positions at the same time to express similar meaning (such as Li et al., 1995:569; Shi, 1995; Tang 2006a; Cheung; 2007:204-205). For instance, the morpheme *gang* was reported by Shi (1995) while *sin* by Li et al. (1995:569) and Cheung (2007:204-205). However, they did not make a further investigation on the properties that distinguish the preverbal morphemes from the postverbal ones. Regarding the co-occurrence of the preverbal and postverbal *sin*, Li et al. (1995:569) just explained it as a kind of echoing formed by a pre-modifier and a post-modifier, whereas Cheung (2007:205) considered it as a kind of semantic reduplication.

The most detailed investigation on these phenomena was given by Tang (2006a, 2007). Tang hypothesized that a pre-posed function word and its post-posed counterpart in Cantonese form a discontinuous construction. The hypothesis was enlightened by Liu's (2002, 2003) proposal of circumpositions in Mandarin. A locative preposition in Mandarin must go together with a postposition to form a prepositional phrase, for instance, the localizer *zai* 在 has to co-occur with the postposition *shang* 上 to form the prepositional phrase *zai zhuozi shang* "在桌子上" (*on* the table). Liu (2002, 2003) then proposed that the localizer and the postposition form a kind of adposition called circumposition.

Enlightened by this proposal, Tang (2006a, 2007) hypothesized that the preverbal and postverbal elements sharing similar semantic content in Cantonese, such as "*jat1ding6* 一定…*ngaang6* 硬" (must) form a discontinuous construction.

According to Tang, there were two main criteria for the formation of a discontinuous construction. Semantically, the pre-posed and post-posed items must share a high level of resemblance. Syntactically, they must form a phrase with the post-posed item as the head and the pre-posed item as the adjunct. The syntactic structure involved is demonstrated by the tree diagram (Figure 1.1) below.

Figure 1. 1 The Syntactic Structure of a Discontinuous Construction




Tang (2006a) classified the discontinuous constructions in Cantonese into three types:

1) pre-posed adverb…verbal suffix, e.g. "*jat1ding6* 一定…*ngaang6* 硬" (must);

2) pre-posed adverb…post-posed adverb, e.g. "*sin1* 先…*sin1* 先 (first); and

3) pre-posed adverb…sentence final particle, e.g. "*zing6hai6* 淨係…*zaa3* 咋" (just, only).

He also attempted to identify the differences between the pre-posed and

post-posed function words for each type of the constructions. In his conclusion, the post-posed function words imposed more constraints on the predicate and conveyed some additional meanings that their pre-posed counterparts lacked.

Although Tang's (2006a, 2007) studies on the matter concerned is more detailed when comparing with others in the literature, it was mainly concerned with the syntactic structure formed by the pre-posed and post-posed function words when they co-occur in a sentence. Leaving aside the validity of the discontinuous construction hypothesis, the semantic and pragmatic differences between the postverbal morphemes and their preverbal counterparts have not yet been thoroughly explored. Their distribution in the grammar remains unclear; the motivation and prohibition of their co-occurrence are also unexplained. Furthermore, most of the previous studies only outlined the general picture of the phenomenon without making detailed investigations on individual morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal. The occurrence of a morpheme at either the preverbal or postverbal position manifests the co-existence of two different types of word order in Cantonese. What are its implications in word order typology? In order to solve these puzzling queries, the present study attempts to provide a more thorough investigation on the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of the morphemes which can be both preverbal and postverbal in Cantonese.

## 1.3 Theoretical Preliminaries

The present study will adopt a cognitive and functional approach in comparing the preverbal and postverbal morphemes. Some related theoretical frameworks will be highlighted in the following subsections.

### 1.3.1 Word Order

Languages appear to vary considerably in terms of word order. However, linguists have recognized clear patterns within these variations. Greenberg's (1963) pioneering study set up 45 universal statements involving syntax and morphology after studying a sample of 30 different languages. Most of the statements imply that "if a language has some property P, then it also has some other property Q". He proposed three main types of universal word order: Verb + Subject + Object (VSO); Subject + Verb + Object (SVO); and Subject + Object + Verb (SOV); and claimed that these different positions of the verb correlate with word order of other grammatical elements in a principled way. For example, SOV languages tend to be postpositional, placing adpositions after nouns, while VSO and SVO languages tend to be prepositional, placing adpositions before nouns.

Mandarin belongs to SVO type when considering verb in relation to subject and object. However, Dryer (1992) and Liu (2003) found that Mandarin often violates the word order universals or tendencies of SVO languages. One of the examples is the word order of adjective (Adj) and standard (St) in comparative sentences. Dryer (1992) found that OV languages prefer St Adj order while VO languages prefer Adj St order. The only one case of St Adj among the 60 genera of VO languages appeared in Chinese.

(7) English: taller than John. (adjective—standard) (Liu, 2003:53)

(8) Mandarin: 比小張高 (standard—adjective) (Liu, 2003:53)
bi xiaozhang gao
than Xiao Zhang tall
"taller than Xiao Zhang"

Further word order deviations of Mandarin from other VO languages can be found in Liu (2000, 2003) and Dryer (1992).

Liu (2000) has also studied the syntax and typological features of Cantonese. He suggested that both Mandarin and Cantonese are not typical SVO/VO languages. However, Cantonese is relatively closer to the typical SVO/VO type when comparing with Mandarin. One of the reasons leading to his conclusion is that Cantonese has a large number of postpositional modifying elements while Mandarin only contains prepositional ones. For example,

(9) Cantonese: 飲杯添啦！(postpositional modifier)
jam bui tim laa
drink CL increase-in-quantity SFP
"(Let's) drink one more cup."

(10) Mandarin: 再喝一杯吧！(prepositional modifier)
zai he yi bei ba
again drink one CL SFP
"(Let's) drink one more cup."

VO languages tend to be head-initial. When modifying elements are placed after verbs, the language conforms to VO type, like Cantonese.

In addition to VP, compound nouns in Cantonese are also head-initial. For examples,

(11) Cantonese: 雞公 Mandarin: 公雞
gaigung gongji
chicken male male chicken
"a cock" "a cock"

(12) Cantonese: 菜乾 Mandarin: 乾菜

coigon gancai

vegetables dry dry vegetables

“dried vegetables” “dried vegetables”

(13) Cantonese: 人客 Mandarin: 客人

janhaak keren

person guest guest person

“a guest” “a guest”

(14) Cantonese: 布碎 Mandarin: 碎布

bouseoi suibu

cloth fragments fragments cloth

“small pieces of cloth” “small pieces of cloth”

Cantonese compound nouns tend to be head-initial (head—modifier) while Mandarin compound nouns tend to be head-final (modifier—head). This further shows that Cantonese has a greater resemblance to SVO type than Mandarin.

The present study is concerned about the fact that some postverbal elements in Cantonese can also be preverbal. The postverbal elements may either be replaced by their preverbal counterparts or co-exist with them in a single sentence to express similar meanings. In other words, there exist two different types of word order in Cantonese. This may be a result of language in contact; Cantonese assimilated the head-final word order of Mandarin; it now co-exists with the original head-initial word order in Cantonese, giving rise to a dialect mixture. This is especially true for the morpheme *sin1* 先 that will be discussed in the present study as the postverbal *sin* is the original one adopted in Cantonese to denote the temporal meaning; it now synchronically co-exists with the preverbal *sin* after being influenced by Mandarin. Although the influence of other dialects is one of the triggers for the co-existence of the two types of word order in Cantonese, the present study argues that they are not equivalent to each other

and they are not freely adopted. They serve to encode different linguistic meanings and functions, such as marking subjectivity.

### 1.3.2 Subjectivity and Subjectification

#### 1.3.2.1 The Definition of Subjectivity and Subjectification

The notions of "subjectivity" and "subjectification" have recently obtained a prominent place in linguistic theorizing. These terms, however, are used in different ways by various linguists. In general, "subjectivity" is defined as the way in which natural languages provide for the speaker's expression of himself and of his attitudes and beliefs (Lyons, 1977:739); while "subjectification" is defined by Finegan (1995:1) as "the structure and strategies that languages evolve in the linguistic realisation of subjectivity or to the relevant processes of linguistic evolution themselves." More specifically, there are currently two main approaches regarding the notions of "subjectivity" and "subjectification" which have been elaborated by Langacker and Traugott.

According to Langacker (1990, 2006), subjectivity and objectivity are defined as viewing relations between a perceiver and an object of perception. An entity or an event is said to be objectively construed to the extent that it goes "onstage" as an explicit, focused object of conception. On the contrary, an entity or an event is said to be subjectively construed to the extent that it remains "offstage" as an implicit, unselfconscious subject of conception. For instance, he considers (15a) to be maximally objective because *across* profiles actual movement without regarding to speaker-hearer position. Sentence (15b) is more subjective because the conceptualizer (speaker) traces a mental path to locate the trajectory with respect to a reference point (Veronica). Sentence (15c) is the most subjective because the (offstage) reference point is the speaker himself. Similarly,

(16) is regarded as subjective by Langacker because the earthquake is not directly controlling the event. Rather, the event-occurrence is foretold by the offstage speaker. He believes that subjectification is a kind of semantic "bleaching" or "fading away". A given meaning always comprises both subjectively and objectively construed elements; the objectively construed subject was attenuated in the process of subjectification. That is to say, the subjectively construed entity which remains as a vestige of an objectively construed counterpart was actually there all along, immanent in its conception; it simply becomes more evident when the objectively construed element is no longer there to mask it.

(15) a. Vanessa jumped across the table.

b. Vanessa is sitting across the table from Veronica.

c. Vanessa is sitting across the table.

(16) An earthquake is going to destroy that town.

Different from Langacker's approach, Traugott and Dasher (2005: 97-99) consider the context of an utterance when determining its degree of subjectivity. From their point of view, a sentence like (15c) is structurally neutral as the reference point is not necessarily the speaker if the context of utterance is considered. For example, in the context of a phone conversation like the one in (17), someone is describing a seating arrangement at dinner; the reference point can be Martha.

(17) Max is sitting next to Bill, and Bill is sitting next to Martha. Vanessa is

sitting across the table.

Traugott (1989) considers subjectification as one of the tendencies involved in semantic change, which is, if the meaning of a lexical item or construction is grounded in the sociophysical world of reference, it is likely that over time speakers will develop polysemies that are grounded in the speaker's world, such as his/her reasoning, belief or metatextual attitude to the discourse. In contrast with Langacker's view, she believes that some lexeme L is semiologically enriched if subjecification occurs, giving rise to explicit expression of the newly semanticized subjectivity. In other words, Traugott characterizes subjectification as involving pragmatic strengthening and enriching of the form-meaning pair with the speaker's perspective rather than attenuation of the objectively construed subject which has masked the subjectively construed one. Therefore, the subjectivity in (16) lies not in the absence of an overt reference to the speaker, but in the explicitness (marked by *is going to*) of the strength of speaker/writer's commitment to the likelihood of the event-occurrence (an earthquake destroys the town at some future time). Moreover, Traugott and Dasher (2005: 98) consider this speaker/writer's commitment in terms of speaker/hearer interaction, or intersubjectification, which is seen as arising out of subjectification. However, the notion of intersubjectivity/ intersubjectification (which will be discussed in the next section 1.3.2.2) does not exist in Langacker's model as it is only concerned with the speaker and his own conceptualization of a linguistic expression, but not the speaker/hearer dyad.

As a whole, Langacker focuses on subjectification in terms of construal relations while Traugott seems to be further reinforcing the pragmatic side. For the purpose of examining the semantic meanings and pragmatic functions of the

target morphemes, Traugott's approach is more applicable to the present study. Despite their distinct theoretical assumptions, the two approaches are not completely incompatible with each other. Therefore, the present study mainly adopts Traugott's conception of subjectivity and subjectification, but also considers Langacker's proposal when it is applicable.

#### 1.3.2.2 Subjectivity Versus Objectivity/Intersubjectivity

To further define "subjectivity", Lyons (1977) and Nuyts (2001) have suggested different ways to construe "subjective" meaning and "non-subjective" meaning.

Lyons (1977:797) distinguished "subjectivity" from "objectivity". According to him, objective epistemic modality indicates an objectively measurable chance that the state of affairs under consideration is true or not; while subjective epistemic modality involves a purely subjective guess of the speaker towards the truth of it. For example,

(18) Alfred may be unmarried. (Lyons 1977:797)

Example (18) is ambiguous. On one hand, the speaker may be understood as subjectively qualifying his commitment to the possibility of Alfred's being unmarried in terms of his own uncertainty; it is a subjective reading. On the other hand, an objective reading can be obtained. It may denote that, according to the speaker, there is a mathematically computable chance that Alfred is unmarried, for instance, the speaker knows that Alfred belongs to a community of ninety people, in which thirty people are unmarried, thus the probability of Alfred being unmarried is one-third.

Nuyts (2001) reframed Lyons's distinction between subjective and objective epistemic modality in terms of evidentiality (the quality of the evidence for an evaluation): an epistemic evaluation based on more reliable evidence is considered as "objective"; while one based on shaky evidence is considered as "subjective". With a different view from Lyons, he contrasts "subjectivity" with "intersubjectivity" (instead of "objectivity"). "Subjectivity" involves the speaker's indication that s/he alone knows (or has access to) the evidence and draws conclusions from it; whereas "intersubjectivity" involves his/her indication that the evidence is known to (is accessible by) a larger group of people who share the same conclusion based on it. He admitted that the "non-subjective" meaning can be construed by either way in some cases like (19). However, in cases like (20), the "non-subjective" meaning can hardly be construed in terms of the quality of the evidence.

(19) De oudste cultuurlagen in Japan tonen on seen jagers- en vissersvolk, zeer **waarschijnlijk** afstammelingen van immigranten van het vasteland van Azië. (Dutch)
"The oldest cultural layers in Japan show us a people of hunters and fishermen, very **probably** descendants of immigrants from the Asian mainland." (Nuyts, 2001)

(20) vanaf 18 mei hebben wij geen enkel teken van leven niet meer van mijn zoon gevonden. het zou **kunnen** zijn dat wij van 13 tot 18 mei een teken van leven hebben indien dat hij bankopvragingen heeft gedaan. (Dutch)
"After May 18th, we have not found any signs of life from my son anymore. It **might** be that from May 13th till 18th we do have a sign of life if he has made any bank withdrawals." (Nuyts, 2001)

In (19), the author is reporting on the results of long term research performed by a large community of scientists. The "non-subjective" meaning can be construed

as being based on either solid evidence (“objective”) or evidence shared by a large group of scientists including the readers (“intersubjective”). Different from (19), the epistemic evaluation in (20) is based on an explicit premise (“bank withdrawals”) in the discourse context; the evidence becomes shared knowledge due to the explicit mentioning of it. In such a case, the construal in terms of the quality of the evidence (“objectivity”) is less sensible than that in terms of shared knowledge of the reasoning leading to the epistemic evaluation among speaker/writer and hearer/reader (“intersubjectivity”). In addition to cases like (20), Nuyts (2001) further highlighted that the construal of “intersubjectivity” is more sensible than that of “objectivity” especially for cases involving common sense reasoning.

Despite the above discussions, Lyons (1977) remarked that the distinction between subjective modality and objective modality was very subtle. To draw a clear line between them is not an easy task in English, since they were not marked by any linguistic forms in English. How about the case in Cantonese? The present study will make an investigation on it. Both the notions of “objectivity” and “intersubjectivity” will be adopted in the present study in contrast with “subjectivity”. However, an important point which has to be emphasized in advanced is that what we called “subjective” and “objective”/“intersubjective” are just relative. They do not necessarily refer to the two extreme poles.

#### 1.3.2.3 The Syntactic Changes Caused by Subjectification

In the literature, the studies on subjectification have mainly focused on the semantic and pragmatic side. In addition to the semantic-pragmatic changes, there are also syntactic effects caused by subjectification. As summarized by

Company (2006), there are four syntactic changes or formal consequences related to subjectification being identified in the literature; examples in Spanish are given to illustrate the changes:

i. Weakening or Loss of Agent Control

The subject of the sentence is attenuated by subjectivity. A subjective expression does not take a human volitive agent capable of controlling the patient or acting in the event; it rather takes an inanimate nominal as the subject or lacks a subject. For example, in (21a), the verb "andar" (to walk) denotes its referential, etymological meaning of movement along a path towards the goal of it; it takes a human subject, "Blasillo", which takes the action of moving towards school (the goal). By contrast, the same verb in (21b) conveys a subjective meaning of exhorting somebody to do something; there is no subject, the verb here cannot take any subject nominal.

(21) a. De que Blasillo **ande** al escuela me e holgado mucho (Company, 2006)
because Blasillo walk/go to-the school rflx-me aux-1st-have enjoyed much
"I am very happy about Blasillo's going to school."

b. Á **ndale!**, vete por otra camisa y una charmarra! (Company, 2006)
walk-intensive go-you for another shirt and a jacket
"Andale, go and get me another shirt and a jacket!"

ii. Fronting and Widening of Predicational Scope

Subjective expressions typically have extrapropositional scope. Therefore, their positions in a discourse are rather flexible. However, in most of the cases, they occur at either the leftmost or rightmost position of an utterance. For instance, in (22a), the adverb "finalmente" (finally) preserves its

etymological meaning of introducing the last event in a series of actions; it is placed in the middle of the complex sentence, prior to the last verb. The same adverb in (22b) expresses a subjective meaning; it is placed at the beginning of the utterance, where it has wider scope.

(22) a. Primero se pelan las papas, después se remoja la cebolla en sal, luego se calienta bien el aceite, y **finalmente** se echa todo junto a freír
first rflx peel the potatoes afterwards rlfx soak the onion in salt later rflx heats well the oil and finally rflx put all together to fry
"First the potatoes are peeled, then the onions are soaked in salt, next the oil is heated and finally it is all fried together." (Company, 2006)

b. **Finalmente** me dieron la beca, no estuvo tan dificil
Finally me-dat gave-they the grant, not it-was so difficult
"I was finally given the grant. It wasn't so difficult." (Company, 2006)

iii. Fixation of Form and Autonomy of Predication

Subjectification may give rise to fixed expressions, especially the evolution of valorative discourse markers. They are prosodically independent, separated from the surrounding context by pause and/or intonation breaks, and syntactically isolated from the rest of the sentence in which they occur. As exemplified in (21b), the form "ándale" is a fixed expression constituting an autonomous predication. Similarly, the ditransitive transfer verb "dar" (to give) also exhibits this change. In (23a), "dieron" (gave-they) functions as a full ditransitive verb; an object "siete u ocho mantillas" (seven or eight blankets) is transferred to a new owner, the indirect object "su padre" (his father). In (23b) and (23c), the verb no longer means transference of an entity to a recipient; it forms a fixed expression with the dative clitic "le" which usually appears at the beginning of an utterance, isolated from other

constituent. An English translation of “dale” might be “not again!”.

(23) a. porque le **dieron** a su padre siete u ocho mantillas
because him-dat gave-they to his father-dat seven or eight little blankets-acc
“Because they gave his father seven or eight little blankets”
(Company, 2006)

b. ¡Y **dale**! ¿Pero no ves tú lo que cuesta mantener una familia?
and dale! but don’t see-you it-what costs to support a family?
“And dale!. Don’t you see how expensive it is to maintain a family?”
(Company, 2006)

c. **Dale** que **dale**!, pero qué pesada eres, siempre con lo mismo
dale what dale, but what terribly dull are-you, always with the same thing
“Dale, dale over and over again..Don’t you ever get tired?”
(Company, 2006)

iv. Loss of syntactic capacities

Subjectification may give rise to a rigidizing of the usual syntactic distribution of the forms undergoing the change. Therefore, the subjective expressions frequently display very restricted syntax, both in distribution and complementation. For example, the fixed expression “dale” mentioned above necessarily stands alone or occurs only with certain specific restricted form, in a fixed distribution. It can occur with an intensive “y” (and) in the fixed order “y dale!” as in (23b); or in a reduplicated structure “dale que dale!” as in (23c); or with the preposition “con” (with) as in “y dale con eso” (enough of that). Any other syntactic relation is cancelled. The addition of any other thing to “dale” is impossible as shown in (24a) and (24b).

(24) a. *Y **dale** a ello (Company, 2006)
and dale to it

b. *Y **dale** rápidamente/ siempre (Company, 2006)
and dale quickly/ always

Based on these syntactic changes, Company (2006) proposed that there is an inverse correlation between the syntactic capacity of a form and the subjective meaning it conveys, which is, more syntax, more objectivity (or less subjectivity); and on the contrary, less (or even zero) syntax, more subjectivity.

#### 1.3.2.4 Subjectivity Encoded by Word Order

Finegan (1995) mentioned that subjectivity can be marked in variegated ways in different languages, ranging from morphology, intonation to word order. Since the present work deal with subjectivity and word order in Cantonese, how subjectivity is encoded by word order in other languages should be in order. Keller (1995) and Verhagen (1995) demonstrated that subjectivity can be marked by word order in German and Dutch respectively.

In German, *weil* (because) can be factual or epistemic with different word order in the *weil*-clauses. In (25), the *weil*-clause gives the reason for his going home, talking about the fact of a headache. However, the speaker is talking about his knowledge of the reason for his going home in (26). The epistemic *weil* in (26) is marked by the occurrence of the verb "hatte" (had) in second rather than final position of the clause. Keller (1995) showed that the change in word order is a result of a change in meaning; the change in meaning of *weil* from factual to epistemic is a case of subjectification.

(25) Er ist nach Hause gegangen, *weil* er Kopfweh **hatte**. (factual)
He has home gone because he headache had (Keller, 1995:20)

(26) Er ist nach Hause gegangen, *weil* er **hatte** Kopfweh. (epistemic)
He has home gone because he had headache (Keller, 1995:20)

The difference between (27) and (28) in Dutch can also be described by subjectivity and subjectification. In (27), there is an act of promising performed by the referent of the subject "hij" (he); the infinitival complement represents the content of his promise. In (28), the subject "het debat" (the debate) is inanimate, thus is not able to perform any act of promising. The promise here must be attributed to a subjective evaluation by the conceptualiser, who is not referred to in the clause, foretelling the event's occurrence. The interpretation of "beloofde" (promised) in (28) is much more based on the speaker's belief or attitude towards the proposition when compared with (27). These examples illustrated that objective and subjective readings can be differentiated by different word orders in subordinate clauses in Dutch. In (27), the objective sense is marked by a word order of [S(O)$V_1$-O$V_2$] with a noun phrase "de grondwet" (the constitution) being put between the verb "beloofde" (promised) and the non-finite verb "te (zullen) vergedigen" (to defend); while in (28), the subjective sense is marked by a word order of [S(O)-$V_1V_2$] with the verb "beloofde" (promised) being juxtaposed with the non-finite verb "to worden" (to become) (Verhagen, 1995).

(27) toen $hij_s$ $beloofde_{v1}$ de $grondwet_o$ te zullen $vergedigen_{v2}$ (objective)
when he promised the constitution to shall defend
"when he promised to defend the constitution" (Verhagen, 1995:109)

(28) omdat het $debat_s$ spannend $beloofde_{v1}$ to $worden_{v2}$ (subjective)
because the debate exciting promised to become
"because the debate promised to become exciting (Verhagen, 1995:109)

In Cantonese, the choice of a preverbal or postverbal item will also lead to different word order, which can encode different subjectivity. Details will be

examined in the present study.

### 1.3.3 Grammatical Constituents: *Zhuangyu* 狀語 (Adverbial Modifier) versus *Buyu* 補語

The grammatical status of some postverbal morphemes in Cantonese such as *sin1* 先 and *tim1* 添 is highly controversial. Whether they are *zhuangyu* (adverbial modifier) or *buyu* have become a long term debate in Cantonese linguistics. In Mandarin, *zhuangyu* and *buyu* are simply distinguished by word order. As Zhu (1982; 125, 140, 151) has defined, *zhuangyu* is a modifier of any predicative element which is placed before the modified head; while *buyu* is a constituent which is placed after a verb to illustrate the result or state of the action signified by it. According to these definitions, the preverbal modifiers in Cantonese are undoubtedly regarded as adverbs realizing adverbial function. Then, how about the modifiers that are postverbal?

In English, adverbs can be identified by their morphological characteristics and syntactic functions. Most of the adverbs in English are marked morphologically by a derivational suffix *–ly* and syntactically function as either adverbials or modifiers of adjectives and adverbs (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:125). Unlike English adverbs, adverbs in Cantonese and Mandarin are not morphologically marked. Therefore, they can only be identified syntactically, by their grammatical functions. Zhu (1982:151,192) defined “adverb” in Mandarin as a function word which only functions as an adverbial (a modifier of any predicative element which is placed before the modified head), but not any other constituents such as an attributive modifier, predicate or *buyu*. If Zhu’s (1982) definition of Mandarin adverbs is applied to Cantonese analysis, the postverbal morphemes in Cantonese which share similar semantic meanings and functions

with their preverbal counterparts cannot be classified as adverbs; they should be classified as *buyu* rather than *zhuangyu* (adverbial modifiers). However, in opposition to this point of view, many linguists have already admitted the existence of postpositional adverbs/adverbial modifiers in Cantonese (for instance, Lin, 1963; Chen, 1982; Huang and Zhan, 1983; Zeng, 1991: 237, 247; Liu, 2000; Zhang, 2003b; Tang, 2006a, etc).[2]

Liu (2000) is one of the linguists who treat the postverbal morphemes in Cantonese as postpositional adverbs/adverbial modifiers. In order to support this claim, he attempted to explain the difference between *zhuangyu* (adverbial modifiers) and *buyu* in terms of information structure as follows. In an adverbial-head construction, the verb usually forms the main (new) information of the utterance with the adverbial modifier. In a verb-*buyu* construction, only the *buyu* is the main (new) information of the utterance while the verb is considered as known (old) information. For example, when the speaker utters (29), the hearer has not yet started speaking. The speaker is asking the hearer to speak and speak slowly; "slow" modifies the speed of speaking. The verb "speak" plus its modifier "slow" form the main information of (29). Different from it, the hearer has already started speaking in (30). The verb "speak" is the old information which is already known by both the speaker and the hearer. The speaker is just asking the hearer to speak slowly; "slow" alone is the new and main information of (30). Therefore, "slow" functions as an adverbial modifier in (29) but a *buyu* in (30). Similarly, in (31), the main information is the action of eating. However, in (32), the action of eating is already known; the main message conveyed by the utterance is the result of eating, which is being full. Hence, "full" functions as an adverbial modifier in (31) but a *buyu* in (32).

(29) Mandarin: 慢慢說。(adverbial-head) (Liu, 2000)
man man shuo
slow slow speak
"(You may start) speaking slowly."

(30) Mandarin: 說慢點兒。(verb-*buyu*) (Liu, 2000)
shuo man dianer
speak slow a-bit
"(Please) slow down (your pace of) speaking."

(31) Mandarin: 他飽吃了一頓。(adverbial-head) (Liu, 2000)
ta bao chi la yi dun
he full eat PERF one CL
"He has had a meal satisfyingly."

(32) Mandarin: 他吃飽了。(verb-*buyu*) (Liu, 2000)
ta chi bao la
he eat full SFP
"He has been full after eating."

Along this line of analysis, Liu (2000) claimed that the Cantonese postverbal *sin1* 先 (first) in (33) should also be treated as an adverb realizing adverbial function, because the speaker is telling others that s/he leaves; *sin* "first" serves to provide some temporal information regarding the speaker's leaving. Therefore, the verb "leave" together with *sin* "first" form the main message of (33). The Mandarin translation of (33) should be (34), in which a preverbal *xian* "first" is used. Liu (2000) added that a postverbal element can also be used to provide some temporal information to the verb in Mandarin as in (35). However, in (35), both the speaker and hearer have already known the fact about the subject's leaving; the verb "leave" does not convey any new information. The main message emphasized by the utterance should be "early", which is a *buyu* rather than an adverbial modifier. Therefore, the meaning conveyed by (35) is different

from that of (33) although both of them contain a postverbal temporal element.

(33) Cantonese: 我走先喇。 (verb-adverbial) (Liu, 2000)
ngo zau sin laa
I leave first SFP
"I leave first."

(34) Mandarin: 先走了。(adverbial-verb) (Liu, 2000)
xian zou la
first leave SFP
"(I) leave first."

(35) Mandarin: 他走早了。(verb-*buyu*) (Liu, 2000)
ta zou zao la
he leave early SFP
"He has left earlier (than the expected time)."

In his later study, Liu (2005) further denied the universality of the notion of *buyu* among various languages and dialects in the world.[3] He pointed out that *buyu* is different from *zhuangyu* (adverbial modifier) and *dingyu* 定語 (attributive modifier). *Zhuangyu* and *dingyu* are universal notions that can be applied in the analyses of all languages while *buyu* is created for the analysis of Modern Chinese, which did not even exist in Ancient Chinese. For this reason, *buyu* has not yet obtained any appropriate translation as what *zhuangyu* (adverbial modifier) and *dingyu* (attributive modifier) do. Sometimes, *buyu* is translated to "complement". However, *buyu* and "complement" are actually two completely different notions. "Complement" refers to any obligatory argument of a verb except the subject and object, which is mainly nominal; whereas *buyu* in Mandarin is adverbial or predicative in nature.

Furthermore, Liu (2005) claimed that word order should not be used as a

criterion for distinguishing grammatical constituents. This is because the same constituent could appear at different positions of a sentence. For example, the head of a predicate could occur at the sentence-initial position in VSO languages (such as Irish); it could also occur at the sentence-internal position in SVO languages (such as English) or the sentence-final position in SOV languages (such as Japanese). In the same language, the same constituent could also appear at different positions of a sentence. For example, attributive modifiers can be placed before or after nominal heads in English, resulting in both the word order of "attributive-head" and "head-attributive" as shown in (36) and (37).

(36) (his new) book (written in French with a pretty cover). (Liu, 2005)
(attribute)- head-(attribute)

(37) (my research) assistant (good at computer, who likes to play basketball).
(attribute)- head-(attribute) (Liu, 2005)

As attributives and adverbials are both modifiers, they should be given the same treatment. Adverbial modifiers should also be able to occur before or after predicative heads, giving rise to two types of word order including "adverbial-head" and "head-adverbial".

Recently, the validity of the term *buyu* has been challenged even in Mandarin. Jin (2009) agreed that a constituent should be regarded as an adverbial modifier if it is modifying the verb or adjective it attaches to; no matter it is placed before or after the modified head. For this reason, the distinction between preverbal adverbial modifier and postverbal *buyu* is not valid even in Mandarin. He suggested that the postverbal element which modifies the main predicator of a sentence is a *houzhi zhuangyu* 後置狀語 (postpositional adverbial modifier) rather than a *buyu*. For example, "slow" in (38a) is modifying the verb "write",

providing information about the speed of writing. Therefore, it should be a postpositional adverbial modifier. It can also appear at the preverbal position as a prepositional adverbial modifier as in (38b). In addition, Jin (2009) also treated what previously called *buyu* as secondary predicates. Secondary predicates are different from postpositional adverbial modifiers in the way that they are semantically referring to the nominal constituent such as the subject or object of a sentence instead of modifying the main predicator of it. Besides, most of them cannot appear at the preverbal position as what the postpositional adverbial modifiers do. For example, "clean" in (39a) is a secondary predicate. It is describing the state of the object, "clothes", after being cleaned, but not modifying the verb "wash". It cannot be placed at the preverbal position as in (39b).

(38) a. 李四寫得很慢。(postpositional adverbials) (Jin, 2009)
lisi xie de hen man
Lisi write PRT very slow
"Lisi writes in a very slow pace."

b. 李四很慢地寫。(prepositional adverbials) (Jin, 2009)
lisi hen man de xie
Lisi very slow PRT write
"Lisi writes very slowly."

(39) a. 他衣服洗得很乾淨。(secondary predicate) (Jin, 2009)
ta yifu xi de hen ganjing
he clothes wash PRT very clean
"His clothes were washed very clean."

b. *他很乾淨地洗衣服。 (Jin, 2009)
*ta hen ganjing de xi yifu
he very clean PRT wash clothes

Although “slow” modifies “write” in both (38a) and (38b), they are slightly different in meanings according to Jin (2009). In (38a), the main message falls on “slow”; the utterance conveys some negative meanings. In (39b), “write” forms the main message together with “slow”; the fact is stated neutrally. It shows that different word orders in Mandarin also serve various semantic-pragmatic functions.[4]

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this section, to confirm the grammatical status of some postverbal morphemes in Cantonese is really a difficult task; problems may arise in every direction. For example, some postverbal morphemes like *gang2* 梗 (which will be discussed in Chapter 2 of the present study) forms a very tight V-*gang* construction with the verb it attaches to; insertions of any other constituents or elements are all disallowed. As the postverbal *gang* is more restricted in syntax than its preverbal counterpart, it looks more like a *buyu* or even a suffix rather than an adverbial modifier. Despite these concerns, I tend to admit the existence of postpositional adverbs in Cantonese in this study as Company (2006) (cf. section 1.3.2.3) has summarized that the loss of syntactic capacities can be a result of subjectification. However, I will not deny the possibility that a morpheme X would gradually obtain some additional meanings/functions (such as serving as a *buyu*) or shift to other word classes (such as sentence final particles) after entering a “verb-X” construction. The morpheme *sin1* 先 which will be discussed in Chapter 3 has exhibited this kind of development, shifting from an adverb to a sentence final particle. No matter which direction to go, I believe that the origin of those postverbal morphemes should be related to adverbs/adverbial modifiers.

### 1.3.4 Positions, Scope, and Subjectivity of Adverbs/Adverbial Modifiers

The previous section has shown that the same adverbs/adverbial modifiers may occur at different positions in a sentence. It is also important to note that an adverb/adverbial modifier may modify different constituents when it is placed at different positions of a sentence, thus conveying various meanings.

As what Jackendoff (1972:49) has stated, in English, there are three basic positions in a sentence in which an adverb can occur, including initial position, final position and auxiliary position. He also distinguished various classes of adverb according to their occurrence in combinations of these three basic positions:

i. Adverbs which can occupy all three positions (such as cleverly, clumsily, happily, etc.)
ii. Adverbs which can only occur in initial and auxiliary position (such as evidently, probably, naturally, etc.)
iii. Adverbs which can only occur in auxiliary and final position (such as completely, easily, tremendously, etc.)
iv. Non *–ly* adverbs which occur only in the final position (such as hard, well, fast, etc.)
v. Adverbs which occur only in auxiliary position (such as merely, truly, simply, etc.)

He further pointed out that adverbs which have a reading in both initial and auxiliary position (including class i and ii listed above) can be understood as either speaker-oriented (relating the speaker's attitude towards the event expressed by the sentence) or subject-oriented (posing comments on the subject

of the sentence). In more detail, adverbs which can only occur in initial and auxiliary position (class ii), such as *evidently* in (40), are speaker-oriented, they can often be paraphrased as *it is Adj (to me) that S* or *I consider it Adj that S*; whereas adverbs which can occur in all three positions (class i), such as *cleverly* in (41) and *frankly* in (42), can be interpreted in different ways according to their positions: when they occur in the initial position, they can be speaker-oriented or subject-oriented adverbs; when they occur in the auxiliary position, they can be both manner, speaker-oriented or subject-oriented adverbs, giving rise to ambiguous sentences; when they occur in the sentence final position, they are manner adverbs.

(40) a. *Evidently* Horatio has lost his mind. (speaker-oriented)
(It is evident that Horatio has lost his mind.) (Jackendoff, 1972:50)

b. Horatio has *evidently* lost his mind. (speaker-oriented)
(It is evident that Horatio has lost his mind.) (Jackendoff, 1972:50)

(41) a. *Cleverly*, John dropped his cup of coffee. (subject-oriented)
(It was clever of John to drop his cup of coffee.) (Jackendoff, 1972:49)

b. John *cleverly* dropped his cup of coffee. (subject-oriented/ manner)
(It was clever of John to drop his cup of coffee.)
(The manner in which John dropped his cup of coffee was clever.)
(Jackendoff, 1972:49)

c. John dropped his cup of coffee *cleverly*. (manner)
(The manner in which John dropped his cup of coffee was clever.)
(Jackendoff, 1972:49)

(42) a. *Frankly*, John lied to Bill. (speaker-oriented)
(I am being frank in saying that John lied to Bill.) (Jackendoff, 1972:56)

b. John told the story to Bill *frankly*. (manner) (Jackendoff, 1972:56)

Adverbs in various positions are modifying different elements, thus resulting in the diverse readings. A manner reading is obtained when the adverb occurs in the auxiliary or final position, modifying the VP as in (41b), (41c) and (42b). A subject-oriented reading is obtained when the adverb occurs in the initial or auxiliary position, modifying the subject of the sentence as in (41a) and (41b). A speaker-oriented reading is obtained when the adverb occurs in the initial or auxiliary position, modifying the whole clause/sentence as in (40a) and (40b), or the covert speech act as in (42a). On the other hand, adverbs in various positions are different in scope according to some linguists, such as Ernst (2002). He uses the generative notion of C-command to establish "scope"—— a node that C-commands another node, also has scope over that node. In this way, manner adverbs are having scope over the VP; subject-oriented adverbs are having scope over the subject (and the VP); while speaker-oriented adverbs are having scope over the whole clause/sentence or the speech act operator. It can be seen that when the adverb has large scope over the whole clause/sentence or the speech act operator, it is able to convey the speaker's attitude or belief towards the proposition, thus expressing a more subjective meaning.

However, as what Fischer (2007:261) has stated, the notion of "scope" is hard to be defined. Regarding its formal properties, the definition heavily depends on the model used, because the position of an operator (the element that has scope) in a model's (underlying) structure does not necessarily coincide with the surface position of that element. A more profitable notion of "scope" is the semantic-pragmatic one, but this has been worked out mainly for negatives, quantifiers, and interrogatives. From the previous studies, it seems that the

c-commanding notion of “scope” works quite well with the analyses of English adverbs. However, it is found that some adverbial morphemes in Cantonese may also have scope over the whole clause/sentence or the speech act operator without c-commanding them. For this reason, the present study tends to follow the semantic-pragmatic notion of “scope” rather that the c-commanding one. The “scope” of a morpheme is also getting larger and larger when it applies to the sentential domain, propositional domain, discourse domain, and further to the speech act domain and epistemic domain. These linguistics domains are explained in the next section 1.3.5.

### 1.3.5 Semantic Change and Multiple Linguistic Domains

In semantic change, a form historically acquires new meanings and/or functions to replace or extend its old one. The past studies generally agreed that words do not acquire new senses randomly; the multiple synchronic senses are actually related to each other in a structured and unified manner (Traugott, 1989; Sweetser, 1990).

Sweetser (1990:77) suggested that new senses are acquired by a process of metaphorical structuring from one domain to another. Her proposal is illustrated by the different uses of “because” in the following sentences.

(43) a. John came back because he loved her.
b. John loved her, because he came back.
c. What are you doing tonight, because there’s a good movie on.

In (43a), the two clauses are connected by real-world causality, that is to say, his love was the cause of his coming back. However, (43b) does not mean that the return caused the love, but the speaker’s knowledge of “John’s return” (as a

premise) causes the conclusion of “John loved her”. Sentence (43c) would be completely incomprehensible if the conjunction were understood as expressing real-world causality. Rather, the because-clause gives the cause of the speech act contained in the main clause, meaning something like “I ask what you are doing tonight because I want to suggest that we go to see this good movie.” Sentences (43a-c) above clearly showed that how the semantics of “because” extends from the content domain, to the epistemic domain, and finally to the speech act domain.

With a diachronic approach, Traugott (1989) outlined three general tendencies in the process of semantic changes: 1) meanings based in the external described situation > meanings based in the internal (evaluative/ perceptual/ cognitive) described situation; 2) meanings based in the external or internal described situation > meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic situation; 3) meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition. She suggested that the shift involved in tendencies 1 and 2 can be seen as metaphorical transfers. However, the shift to epistemics of conclusion, belief, knowledge, hearsay, hypothetical conditionality, and so forth (like the shift from 43a to 43b above) has little of the analogical mapping from one conceptual domain onto another. Rather, the path can be seen as the conventionalizing of conversational implicatures. It is a kind of pragmatic strengthening, in which the coding of speaker informativeness about his or her attitude is increased. Therefore, Traugott (1989) also remarked that the rise of epistemic meanings is a kind of subjectification. The past studies mentioned above revealed the underlying process of semantic change and demonstrated how new meanings and functions of a lexical or grammatical item are formed. A continuous shift of meanings may further lead to grammaticalization, a process in

which a lexical item becomes a grammatical item, or a grammatical item become more grammatical.

Along these lines of analysis, I will explore the possible semantic extension of the selected morphemes and explain them by using various linguistic domains, including the sentential, propositional, discourse, speech act and epistemic domains. The sentential domain involves individual constituents within a sentence; the propositional domain involves the propositional content denoted by the whole sentence; the discourse domain is concerned with the connection between clauses or utterances; the speech act domain encompasses the action conveyed by the sentence; and the epistemic domain includes the epistemic knowledge of the interlocutors' towards the propositional content of a sentence. By examining the semantic extension of a morpheme from one domain to the others, I attempt to provide some explanations to the semantic-pragmatic differences between the preverbal and postverbal uses of it.

## 1.4 The Data

This study adopts a qualitative approach. The data presented are mainly based on my own introspection. Examples may be taken from the utterances heard in daily conversations, some local radio programs and Cantonese dramas/films. Besides, the study also draws examples from previous studies and some Cantonese Dictionaries. All the examples shown in the study are double-checked with peers to ensure their authenticity.

In addition to the above sources, data from Cantonese corpora are also considered. However, accessible Cantonese corpora are scarce and their sizes are rather small; related data that can be found are not enough for the illustration of my proposal. For this reason, they are not adopted in the present study.[5]

## 1.5 Romanization

In the present study, *JyutPing* is adopted for the phonetic transcription of Cantonese, which is based on the Romanization system proposed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (LSHK). *Hanyu Pinyin* is the Romanization system used for the Mandarin expressions. For typographical convenience in transcribing the Cantonese data, tone marks are not given in the examples. For the selected adverbial morphemes, tone marks are provided for their first occurrence in the dissertation.

# Notes

[1] As what has been discussed in the literature (such as Liu, 2005; Jin 2009), "complement" may not be an appropriate translation to *buyu* in Mandarin. The details regarding this matter will be discussed in section 1.3.3.

[2] There are still some linguists (such as Shi, 1995 and Cheung, 2007) who prefer following the Mandarin distinction between preverbal adverbial modifier and postverbal *buyu* in Cantonese analysis, denying the existence of postpositional adverbs/adverbial modifiers in Cantonese.

[3] Liu (2005) also explained the reasons why *buyu* failed to become a universal notion. First of all, it includes a group of elements with diverse semantics and syntax which makes the term difficult to be defined. Moreover, it is incomparable to constituents in other languages as many other languages contain postverbal adverbial modifiers but no *buyu*.

[4] More discussions on the various semantic-pragmatic functions denoted by different word orders in Mandarin can be seen in Zhang (2003a, 2007).

[5] One accessible Cantonese Corpus is consulted for the present study, which is the "Hong Kong Cantonese Adult Language Corpus" (HKCAC). The corpus has approximately 170, 000 characters transcribed from the recordings of more than 8 hours of phone-in programs and forums on the radio. Further information about HKCAC can be found in Leung and Law (2001).

# Chapter 2

# Adverbial of Modality: *Gang2* 梗

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the various semantic meanings of *gang* expressed with their different positions (preverbal or postverbal) in sentences and argues that they are different in subjectivity. According to the literature, *gang* denotes a modality meaning of certainty and doubtlessness (for instances, Cheng, 1997:263; Wu, 1997:85; Zhang and Ni, 1999:114). Shi (1995) noticed that *gang* can be situated either at the preverbal or postverbal position. Li et al. (1995:495,564) further remarked that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are actually not equivalent to each other although they share similar semantic properties. However, no elaboration on the differences between *gang* at different positions was provided. Since thorough discussions on the semantic differences between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are yet to come, the issue remains unclear.

I propose that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* share the same core meaning of certainty and necessity and they both carry epistemic modality. However, they are not interchangeable as they are different in subjectivity. Their semantic incompatibility further disallows their co-occurrence in the same sentence. For their syntactic function, they both serve as an adverbial modifier, modifying the whole clause/sentence.

In the following sections of this chapter, I first introduce the core meaning of *gang*; and then compare the differences in semantic meanings between the preverbal and postverbal *gang*. After that, I examine the feasibility of their co-occurrence in the same sentence and also their co-occurrence with various preverbal or postverbal elements expressing similar modality of certainty,

including the preverbal *yat1ding6* 一定, *sat6* 實 and the postverbal *ngaang6* 硬. Finally, I investigate their differences in grammatical properties and their grammatical status.

## 2.2 The Core Meaning of *Gang*

There is a consensus in the literature that *gang* denotes an epistemic modality of certainty and doubtlessness, expressing speakers' certainty towards the truth of a proposition (such as Cheng, 1997:263; Wu, 1997:85; Zhang and Ni, 1999:114). For example,

(1) 今次佢死梗。 (Wu, 1997:85)
gam ci keoi sei-gang
this CL s/he die-must
"This time s/he must die."

(2) 我梗知啦。 (Zhang and Ni, 1999:114)
ngo gang zi laa
I definitely know SFP
"Of course I know it."

Shi (1995) further highlighted the fact that the morpheme *gang* can be placed either at the preverbal position as in *gang sei* 梗死 (must die) or the postverbal position as in *sei gang* 死梗 (must die) to express similar meaning of certainty. For example,

(3) 魚無咗水梗死喇！ (Shi, 1995)
jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei laa
fish without-PERF water definitely die SFP
"It is doubtless that fish will die without water."

(4) 魚無咗水死梗喇！
jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang laa
fish without-PERF water die must SFP
“Fish must die without water.”

Li et al. (1995:495,564) also realized the two possible positions of *gang* as mentioned by Shi (1995). Furthermore, they remarked that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are in fact not equivalent to each other although they share some semantic properties. However, no further explanations on their differences were provided.

## 2.3 Differences in Semantic Meanings between the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*

I propose that the major difference between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* lies in their difference in subjectivity. This idea will be demonstrated step-by-step in this section.

### 2.3.1 Realis and Irrealis

At first glance, the preverbal *gang* tends to be found in events that happened before the time of speaking, while the postverbal *gang* in events that have not yet happened until the time of speaking.

(5) 琴日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋梗輸啦/ *佢哋輸梗啦！
kamjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei gang syu laa/ *keoidei syu gang laa
Yesterday CL football-match opponent so strong they definitely lose SFP/ they lose must SFP
“It is doubtless that they lost in yesterday’s football match as their opponent was so strong.”

(6) 聽日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋輸梗啦/ *佢哋梗輸啦 ！
tingjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei syu gang laa/ *keoidei gang syu laa
tomorrow CL football-match opponent so strong they lose must SFP/ they definitely lose SFP
"They would definitely lose in tomorrow's football match as their opponent is so strong."

In (5), the football match was held and finished on the day before the utterance is made. The speaker has already known the competition result and the performance of each team at the time of speaking. He is actually making a judgment on the inevitability of the result based on the facts known to him. Under this circumstance, only the preverbal *gang* can be used. In (6), the football match will only be held the day after that of the utterance. The speaker is not yet able to know the actual situation in the competition or its result at the time of speaking. He is just making a guess at the result of the coming competition based on what he has already known, such as the past performances of each team. In contrast with (5), only the postverbal *gang* can be used.

It seems that the time noun *kamjat* 琴日 (yesterday) or *tingjat* 聽日 (tomorrow) can indicate which *gang* (the preverbal one or the postverbal one) to be used as they can somehow mark a past or future event respectively with reference to the time of speaking. However, if we think *gang* marks the objective tense and look for the time words in an utterance for reference, we probably look in the wrong place. In many cases, the tense reference provided by the time words is not a definite clue for which *gang* to be used in an utterance. For instance, both the preverbal and postverbal *gang* can be used in (7) even though the activity involved is clearly a past event marked by the time noun *kamjat* 琴日 (yesterday).

(7) a. 琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，佢梗輸啦！
kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, keoi gang syu laa
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong s/he definitely lose SFP
“It is doubtless that s/he lost in yesterday’s drawing competition as the competitors were so strong.”

b. 琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，佢輸梗啦！
kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, keoi syu gang laa
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong s/he lose must SFP
“S/he would definitely lose in yesterday’s drawing competition as the competitors were so strong.”

Why such a difference between (5) and (7)? We have to note that unlike football matches, in a drawing competition, we may not be able to know the result immediately after the competitors have finished and submitted their drawings. If the result has not yet been released or the speaker does not know whether “s/he” has won or lost at the time of speaking, the preverbal *gang* still cannot be used even if the competition was held. Under this circumstance, only (7b) is grammatical or felicitous for the occasion. On the contrary, if the result of the competition has been released and the speaker knows that “s/he” has lost at the time of speaking, only the preverbal *gang* can be adopted, thus (7a) is grammatical or felicitous instead of (7b).

Resembling (7), it seems that either the preverbal or postverbal *gang* is acceptable in (8).

(8) a. 你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥啦！
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, gang fei laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; it's doubtless that you failed in the exam."

b. 你考試仲掛住打機，肥梗啦！
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, fei gang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; you would definitely fail in the exam."

However, (8a) and (8b) are felicitous for different contexts as follows.

Context 1

Student A: 你估我 Maths 會唔會肥吖嗱？好驚呀！
nei gu ngo maths wui-m-wui fei aa laa? ho geng aa!
you guess my Maths will-not-will fail SFP SFP very worry SFP
"Do you think I would fail in the Maths exam? I am worried about it."

Student B: (8b) 你考試仲掛住打機，肥梗啦！

(8a) #你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥啦！

Context 2

Student A: 我 Maths 肥咗呀！返到屋企實俾阿媽鬧啦！
ngo maths fei-zo aa! faan dou ukkei sat bei aa-maa naau laa
I Maths fail-PERF SFP back to home must by mother scold SFP
"I failed in Maths; I would definitely be scolded by my mum when I go back home."

Student B: (8a) 你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥啦！

(8b) #你考試仲掛住打機，肥梗啦！

In context 1, student A is asking student B to make a guess at his/her Mathematics examination result. This conversation can be made before or after the examination. The most important point is that they both do not know the examination result at the time of speaking. Therefore, student B uses the postverbal *gang* to express what he thinks must happen; he saw that student A kept on playing computer games without doing any revision during the revision period, so he guesses that student A would definitely fail in the examination. In context 2, student A has received the marked examination paper. Both student A and B know that student A has failed in it at the time of speaking. In this case, student B uses the preverbal *gang* to indicate that it is natural and inevitable for student A to fail in the examination as he did not do any revision.

I have demonstrated in the above paragraphs that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are not interchangeable. When the speaker is making a guess or a prediction towards the necessity of an event that has not yet happened (irrealis), only the postverbal *gang* can be adopted. When the speaker is making a judgment on the inevitability or doubtlessness of an event that has already happened (realis), only the preverbal *gang* can be used. Thus, the realis and irrealis contrast does not refer to the objective tense of an event, but the subjective epistemic status of the speaker towards an event.

### 2.3.2 *Gang* and Subjectivity

However, the distinction between realis and irrealis of the event involved discussed in section 2.3.1 is not yet the conclusive account of the word order of *gang*. To tighten up my generalization, I have to turn to conditional sentences since they pose some problems to my claim. In conditional sentences, some situations expressed are hypothetical (irrealis); the preverbal *gang* should be

infelicitous in these cases according to the above distinction. Nevertheless, the preverbal *gang* can also occur in them as well as the postverbal one as shown in (9).

(9) 如果唔識股票就學人炒股，梗蝕/蝕梗啦！
jyugwo m-sik gupiu zau hok jan caau gu, gang sit/sit gang laa
if not-know stock then learn people buy stock, definitely lose/lose must SFP
"If (someone who) does not have any knowledge about stock transactions buys stocks, (s/he) must lose money."

The most ready interpretation of (9) is that the speaker presents a hypothetical situation in the protasis; it is not necessary that there exists somebody who is ignorant of stocks has bought some stocks. Since the event has not really happened, the preverbal *gang* should not be felicitous. However, contrary to our prediction, both the preverbal and the postverbal *gang* are acceptable in the adoposis. To solve this puzzle, let me examine other conditional sentences as well. It is found that not all conditional sentences accept both preverbal and postverbal *gang*. As captured by (10) and (11), only the postverbal *gang* is grammatical.

(10) 如果我係李嘉誠，我買梗/ *梗買呢棟樓 。
jyugwo ngo hai lei-gaa-sing, ngo maai gang/ *gang maai nei dung lau
If I be Lee Ka Shing, I buy must/ definitely buy this CL building
"If I were Lee Ka Shing, I would definitely buy this building."

(11) 如果我琴日有出場，你輸梗/ *梗輸。
jyugwo ngo kamjat jau ceotcoeng, nei syu gang/ *gang syu
if I yesterday do show-up, you lose must/ definitely lose
"If I did participate in the competition yesterday, you would have lost in it definitely."

Both the protases of (10) and (11) present conditions that cannot be fulfilled: in (10), it is not possible for the speaker to become Lee Ka Shing; in (11), there is an imaginary situation which is contrary to the fact (the fact is that the speaker did not participate in the competition). The adoposes of (10) and (11) present the wish or opinion of the speakers which can never be verified, no matter how certain they are. Thus, only the postverbal *gang* can be used in these counter-factual conditional sentences. Let me turn back to (9). Sentence (9) is, in fact, ambiguous. Apart from the most readily obtained hypothetical reading as described above (which is marked by the postverbal *gang*), it also has a factual reading (which is marked by the preverbal *gang*). According to the factual reading, it is generally agreed in a community that if people buy stocks without any knowledge about stock transactions, there will be a very high probability for them to lose money; it is objective common knowledge shared among people. It sounds like a law of science to them. Thus, the preverbal *gang* is felicitous in the sentence under this reading.

According to the above observations, I conclude that word order of *gang* is a linguistic means to mark subjectivity, instead of the distinction between realis and irrealis, in Cantonese. If the speaker is making a speculation or a judgment which is just based on his own knowledge or belief (subjective), only the postverbal *gang* can be used; if the judgment is based on some concrete, reliable evidence (objective) or common sense, shared knowledge among people in the community (intersubjective), the preverbal *gang* is adopted.

### 2.3.3 Subjective Modality Versus Objective/Intersubjective Modality

As mentioned in section 1.3.2.2, it is not an easy task to draw a clear distinction between subjective modality and objective modality in English.

However, these two different types of modality are marked clearly by word order in Cantonese. From the observations and discussions in the previous sections, it is manifest that the preverbal *gang* expresses an objective epistemic modality while the postverbal *gang* denotes a subjective epistemic modality. Recalling example (7)-(8) here as (12)-(13),

(12) a. 琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，佢梗輸啦！ [the same as (7a)]
kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, keoi gang syu laa
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong s/he definitely lose SFP
"It is doubtless that s/he lost in yesterday's drawing competition as the competitors were so strong."

b. 琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，佢輸梗啦！ [the same as (7b)]
kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, keoi syu gang laa
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong s/he lose must SFP
"S/he would definitely lose in yesterday's drawing competition as the competitors were so strong."

(13) a. 你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥啦！ [the same as (8a)]
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, gang fei laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; it's doubtless that you failed in the exam."

b. 你考試仲掛住打機，肥梗啦！ [the same as (8b)]
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, fei gang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; you would definitely fail in the exam."

It can be seen that both the (a) sentences with preverbal *gang* require a realized event at the time of speaking in order to make the sentences grammatical or

felicitous, for example, “s/he” has lost in the competition when (12a) is uttered; and the hearer has failed in the examination when (13a) is uttered. These are facts but not the belief or speculations of the speakers. When comparing with speakers’ own belief or speculations, the facts available are relatively objective. It can be argued that “s/he” in (12) and the hearer in (13) might lose in the competition and fail in the examination respectively because of other reasons (such as having a fever) instead of what the speakers said; the utterances still involve the speakers’ subjective opinions. However, one has to recall our discussion in section 1.3.2.2 that the notion of subjectivity is a relative one; when comparing with (b) sentences, the (a) sentences are relatively objective. All the (b) sentences above with the postverbal *gang* involve speakers’ speculations or opinions towards a future event with respect to the time of speaking, thus they are relatively subjective.

The following examples further reflect the objective modality expressed by the preverbal *gang*.

(14) a. 樹堂哥逢親禮拜日梗嚟呢度搵人捉棋嘅。 (Li et al., 1995:495)
syutonggo fung can laibaaijat gang lai nei dou wan jan zukkei ge
Syu-tong-brother when PRT Sunday definitely come this place find people play-chess SFP
“Brother Syu-tong definitely comes here and finds people to play chess every Sunday.”

b. *樹堂哥逢親禮拜日嚟梗呢度搵人捉棋嘅。
*syutonggo fung can laibaaijat lai gang nei dou wan jan zukkei ge
Syu-tong-brother when PRT Sunday come must this place find people play-chess SFP

(15) a. 佢食親雪糕梗咳嘅。
keoi sik can syutgou gang kat ge
s/he eat PRT ice-cream definitely cough SFP
“S/he will definitely cough after eating ice-cream.”

b. *佢食親雪糕咳梗嘅。
* keoi sik can syutgou kat gang ge
s/he eat PRT ice-cream cough must SFP

Utterances (14a) and (15a) are related to habitual events that have happened for many times before the time of speaking. The speakers made these utterances by referring to their previous observations and experiences. The speaker utters (14a) because he knows that “Brother Syu-tong” goes to a specific place and plays chess with others every Sunday. He is not making a guess on “Brother Syu-tong’s” activity on a specific day. Similarly, the speaker utters (15a) because he knows that “s/he” coughs every time after eating ice-cream. He is again not making a guess on the reaction of “him/her” after eating ice-cream. The facts known by the speakers serve as the basis of their utterances. These are objective cases in which only the preverbal *gang* can be used.

The subjectivity of the preverbal and postverbal *gang* can be further tested by their compatibility with some subjective expressions. When speakers would like to express their own subjective point of views, they often add expressions like *ngo gu* 我估 (I guess) or *ngo nam* 我諗/ *ngo gokdak* 我覺得/ *ngo yingwai* 我認爲 (I think), gaingowaa 計我話 (in my opinion), etc. at the beginning of their utterances. The subjects of the sentences will then become the speakers themselves. This is a means to express subjectivity. The present study discovered that only the postverbal *gang* is compatible with the above expressions while the preverbal *gang* is not. The contrast is shown in (16)-(17) below.

(16) a. 琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，我估/諗佢輸梗。
kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, ngo gu/nam keoi syu gang
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong I guess/think s/he lose must
"I guess/think s/he would definitely lose in yesterday's drawing competition as the competitors were so strong."

b. *琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，我估/諗佢梗輸。
*kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, ngo gu/nam keoi gang syu
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong I guess/think s/he definitely lose
"I guess/think it is doubtless that s/he lost in yesterday's drawing competition as the competitors were so strong."

(17) a. 你考試仲掛住打機，我估/覺得你肥梗。
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, ngo gu/gokdak nei fei gang
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games I guess/think you fail must
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; I guess/think you would definitely fail in the exam."

b. *你考試仲掛住打機，我估/覺得你梗肥。
*nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, ngo gu/gok daknei gang fei
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games I guess/think you definitely fail
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; I guess/think it's doubtless that you failed in the exam."

The compatibility of the postverbal *gang* with the above subjective expressions further supports the idea that it expresses a relatively subjective modality. On the contrary, the preverbal *gang* is incompatible with the subjective expressions as it expresses a relatively objective modality. Due to their contradiction in subjectivity, the preverbal *gang* in the above examples (14a) and (15a) is also not

compatible with the subjective expressions as shown in (18) and (19) below.

(18) *我估/認爲樹堂哥逢親禮拜日梗嚟呢度搵人捉棋嘅。
*ngo gu/yingwai syutonggo fung can laibaaijat gang lai neidou wan jan zukkei ge
I guess/think Syu-tong brother when PRT Sunday definitely come this place find people play-chess SFP
"I guess/think Brother Syu-tong definitely comes here and finds people to play chess every Sunday."

(19) *我估/覺得佢食親雪糕梗咳嘅。
*ngo gu/gokdak keoi sik can syutgou gang kat ge
I guess/think s/he eat PRT ice-cream definitely cough SFP
"I guess/think s/he will definitely cough after eating ice-cream."

By adding the subjective expressions to the utterance, the distinction between the two readings marked by the preverbal and postverbal *gang* in (9) becomes more apparent. Example (9) is recalled as (20) here,

(20) 如果唔識股票就學人炒股，梗蝕/蝕梗啦！ [the same as (9)]
jyugwo m-sik gupiu zau hok jan caau gu, gang sit/sit gang laa
if not-know stock then learn people buy stock, definitely lose/lose must SFP
"If (someone who) does not have any knowledge about stock transactions buys stocks, (s/he) must lose money."

With the postverbal *gang*, the speaker is making a subjective judgment, so the subjective expression can be added as in (21a). On the contrary, the preverbal *gang* indicates common sense reasoning (intersubjective), hence, the subjective expression cannot be added as in (21b).

(21) a. 計我話，如果唔識股票就學人炒股，蝕梗啦！
gaingowaa, jyugwo m-sik gupiu zau hok jan caau gu, sit gang laa
in-my-opinion if not-know stock then learn people buy stock, lose must SFP
"In my opinion, if (someone who) does not have any knowledge about stock transactions buys stocks, s/he would definitely lose money."

b. *計我話，如果唔識股票就學人炒股，梗蝕啦！
*gaingowaa, jyugwo m-sik gupiu zau hok jan caau gu, gang sit laa
in-my-opinion if not-know stock then learn people buy stock, definitely lose SFP
"In my opinion, if (someone who) does not have any knowledge about stock transactions buys stocks, it's doubtless that s/he would lose money."

After examining all the cases above, let me turn to those related to the law of nature, in which either the preverbal *gang* or the postverbal *gang* can be adopted, such as (3) and (4) given at the beginning of this chapter. They are reminded as (22) and (23) below. Different from all the cases mentioned above including (9), a law of nature is more than common sense; it is absolutely inevitable and incontrollable; nobody can make a guess or predication on its occurrence; it will also be odd to take a law of nature as one's speculation. For this reason, it seems hard to relate it to subjectivity and it seems impossible to add the subjective expressions to both (22) and (23) to yield (24) and (25).

(22) 魚無咗水梗死喇！ [the same as (3)]
jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei laa
fish without-PERF water definitely die SFP
"It is doubtless that fish will die without water." (Shi, 1995)

(23) 魚無咗水死梗喇！ [the same as (4)]
jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang laa
fish without-PERF water die must SFP
“Fish must die without water.”

(24) *我估/諗魚無咗水梗死！
*ngo gu/nam jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei
I guess/think fish without-PERF water definitely die
“I guess/think it is doubtless that fish will die without water.”

(25) *我估/諗魚無咗水死梗！
* ngo gu/nam jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang
I guess/think fish without-PERF water die must
“I guess/think fish must die without water.”

However, I suggest that (22) and (23) are still different in subjectivity. Consider the following conversation,

(26) A: (a) 據我所知，魚無咗水死梗架！
geoi ngo so zi jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang gaa
according-to I what know fish without-PERF water die must SFP
“According to my knowledge, fish must die without water.”

(b) ?據我所知，魚無咗水梗死架！
?geoi ngo so zi jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei gaa
according-to I what know fish without-PERF water definitely die SFP
“According to my knowledge, it’s doubtless that fish will die without water.”

B: (a) 車！魚無咗水梗死啦！係人都知啦！使你講！
ce! jyu mou-zo seoi gang sei laa! hai jan dou zi laa! saai nei gong
PRT fish without-PERF water definitely die SFP be people all know SFP need you say
“Huh! Of course fish will die without water. Everybody knows it. You don’t have to tell me!”

(b) ?車！魚無咗水死梗啦！係人都知啦！使你講！

?ce! jyu mou-zo seoi sei gang laa! hai jan dou zi laa! saai nei gong

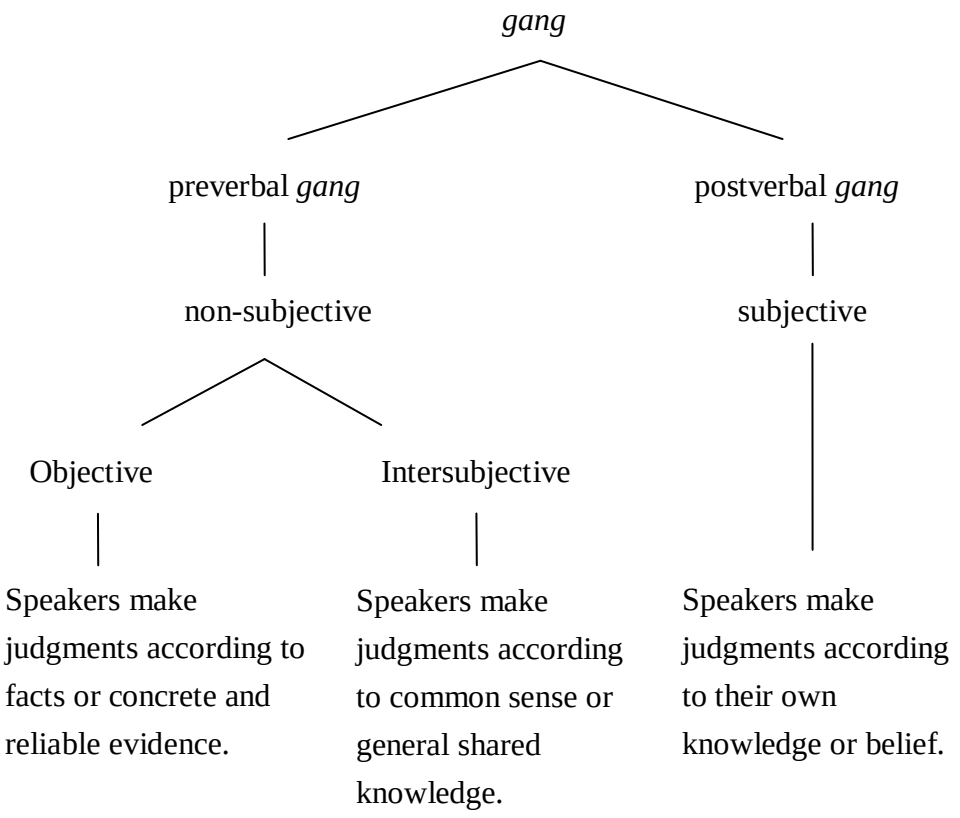
PRT fish without-PERF water die must SFP be people all know SFP need you say

"Huh! Fish must die without water. Everybody knows it. You don't have to tell me!"

In (26), speaker A is simply telling speaker B a fact about the death of fish without water according to his own knowledge; s/he did not care whether it is known by others or not. However, speaker B thinks that this is common sense that everybody knows, so needless to say. Under this circumstance, it will be more natural for speaker A to use the postverbal *gang* and speaker B to use the preverbal *gang*, because the postverbal *gang* indicates that the speaker draws a conclusion based by his own knowledge (subjective); whereas the preverbal *gang* denotes that the knowledge is known to a large group of people who share the same conclusion based on it (intersubjective).[1]

The semantic differences between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* can be summarized in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2. 1 Semantic Differences between the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*




2.4 Co-occurrence of Elements Expressing Modality of Certainty

There are various preverbal and postverbal elements expressing modality of certainty like *gang*. The preverbal elements include *yatding* 一定 and *sat* 實; the postverbal elements include *ngaang* 硬. In Cantonese, a preverbal element and a postverbal element with similar semantic meanings often co-occur in a single sentence, which is what Tang (2006a) called a discontinuous construction. For example,

(27) 佢一定升硬。 (Tang, 2006a)
keoi yatding sing ngaang
s/he definitely promote must
"S/he would definitely be promoted."

This section aims to examine the feasibility of co-occurrence of the above preverbal and postverbal elements in the same sentence.

### 2.4.1 Co-occurrence of the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*

The preverbal and postverbal *gang* cannot co-occur in a single sentence as in (28) and (29).

(28) *琴日個畫畫比賽對手咁強，佢梗輸梗啦！
*kamjat go waakwaa beicoi deoisau gam koeng, keoi gang syu gang laa
Yesterday CL drawing competition competitors so strong s/he definitely lose must SFP
"It is doubtless that s/he would definitely lose in yesterday's drawing competition as the competitors were so strong."

(29) *你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥梗啦！
*nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, gang fei gang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; it's doubtless that you would definitely fail in the exam."

As mentioned in section in 2.3.3, the preverbal *gang* expresses an objective modality while the postverbal *gang* expresses a subjective modality. They are contradictory to each other in subjectivity. This explains why they cannot co-occur in the same sentence. Example (28) and (29) are ungrammatical no matter the result of the drawing competition or the Mathematics examination has been known by the speaker and hearer or not.

### 2.4.2 Co-occurrence of the Preverbal or Postverbal *Gang* and Other Elements Expressing Modality of Certainty

The postverbal *gang* and *ngaang* are almost synonymous; both of them express a subjective epistemic modality. They can denote speakers' speculation on the necessity of an event that has not yet been realized at the time of speaking; Therefore, (30) is grammatical while (31) is ungrammatical. Due to their contradiction in subjectivity, the postverbal *ngaang* cannot occur with the preverbal *gang* as in (32). The sentence is ungrammatical no matter the examination result has been known by the interlocutors or not.

(30) 聽日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋輸硬啦！
tingjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei syu ngaang laa
tomorrow CL football-match opponent so strong they lose must SFP
"They would definitely lose in tomorrow's football match as their opponent is so strong."

(31) *琴日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋輸硬啦！
*kamjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei syu ngaang laa
Yesterday CL football-match opponent so strong they lose must SFP
"They would definitely lose in yesterday's football match as their opponent was so strong."

(32) *你考試仲掛住打機，梗肥硬！
*nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, gang fei ngaang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; it's doubtless that you would definitely fail in the exam."

In Cantonese, there are also some preverbal adverbs resembling the postverbal *gang* semantically, such as *yatding* 一定 and *sat* 實. They also signify a subjective epistemic modality. Therefore (33) and (35) are grammatical while

(34) and (36) are ungrammatical. As a result, both of them are able to co-occur with the postverbal *gang* which also denotes a subjective epistemic modality within a single sentence as in (37) and (38). They can be uttered when the examination result has not yet been known by the interlocutors to express the speaker's subjective speculation.

(33) 聽日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋一定輸啦！
tingjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei yatding syu laa
tomorrow CL football-match opponent so strong they definitely lose SFP
"They would definitely lose in tomorrow's football match as their opponent is so strong."

(34) *琴日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋一定輸啦！
*kamjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei yatding syu laa
yesterday CL football-match opponent so strong they definitely lose SFP
"They would definitely lose in yesterday's football match as their opponent was so strong."

(35) 聽日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋實輸啦！
tingjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei sat syu laa
tomorrow CL football-match opponent so strong they definitely lose SFP
"They would definitely lose in tomorrow's football match as their opponent is so strong."

(36) *琴日場球賽對手咁強，佢哋實輸啦！
*kamjat coeng kaucoi deoisau gam koeng, keoidei sat syu laa
yesterday CL football-match opponent so strong they definitely lose SFP
"They would definitely lose in yesterday's football match as their opponent was so strong."

(37) 你考試仲掛住打機，一定肥梗啦！
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, yatding fei gang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; you would definitely fail in the exam."

(38) 你考試仲掛住打機，實肥梗啦！
nei haausi zung gwaa-zyu dagei, sat fei gang laa
you exam still miss-DUR play-computer-games definitely fail must SFP
"You didn't stop playing computer games even during the exam period; you would definitely fail in the exam."

## 2.5 Differences in Grammatical Properties between the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*

Tang (2003) has examined some grammatical properties of the postverbal *gang*. He found that it is subject to the telicity requirement, the aspectual requirement, and the monosyllabic requirement. However, the differences in grammatical properties between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* have not yet been explored in the literature.

By converting the postverbal *gang* in Tang's (2003) examples to the preverbal *gang*, it is found that the preverbal *gang* is not subject to the telicity requirement (39b-40b), the aspectual requirement (41b), and the monosyllabic requirement (42b).

(39) a. 我贏梗。(Achievement) (Tang, 2003)
ngo jeng gang
I win must
"I must win."

b. 我梗贏。
ngo gang jeng
I definitely win
"It is doubtless that I won."

(40) a. *佢喺校園度慢慢行梗。 (Activity) (Tang, 2003)
*keoi hai haaujyun dou maanmaan haang gang
s/he in campus place slowly walk must
"S/he must walk in the campus slowly."

b. 佢梗喺校園度慢慢行。
keoi gang hai haaujyun dou maanmaan haang
s/he definitely in campus place slowly walk
"S/he must walk in the campus slowly."

(41) a. *佢地贏梗咗/過。 (Tang, 2003)
* keoidei jeng gang zo/gwo
they win must PERF/EXP
"They must have won."

b. 佢地梗贏咗/過。
keoidei gang jeng-zo/gwo
they definitely win-PERF/EXP
"Of course they have won."

(42) a. *佢調查梗呢件事。 (Tang, 2003)
*keoi diucaa gang nei gin si
s/he investigate must this CL matter
"S/he must investigate this matter."

b. 佢梗調查呢件事。
keoi gang diucaa nei gin si
s/he definitely investigate this CL matter
"It is doubtless that s/he would investigate this matter."

The differences in grammatical properties between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* can be summarized by Figure 2.2 below. It can be seen that the

postverbal *gang* imposes more constraints on the predicate than the preverbal one.

Figure 2. 2 Differences in Grammatical Properties between the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*

| | Preverbal *gang* | Postverbal *gang* |
|---|---|---|
| Atelic events | + | - |
| Aspect Markers | + | - |
| Disyllabic verbs | + | - |

## 2.6 The Grammatical Status of *Gang*

There is no doubt that the preverbal *gang* is an adverb which functions as an adverbial modifier. However, the grammatical status and function of the postverbal *gang* is controversial. According to traditional grammatical analyses in Mandarin, adverbial modifiers are preverbal while *buyu* are postverbal; positions of the two grammatical elements are distinct and fixed. The postposition of modifying elements in Cantonese has presented a great challenge to the grammatical analysis. In the literature, there were also some linguists who treated the postverbal *gang* as a suffix (such as Li et al., 1995:564). With a different view from them, this section attempts to show that the postverbal *gang* is neither a *buyu* nor a suffix, but a postpositional adverb.

### 2.6.1 The Postverbal *Gang* is Not a *Buyu*

Although both the postverbal *gang* and *buyu* are placed after the predicative, they are different in various aspects. Semantically, a *buyu* usually serves to provide some additional information about the predicative, such as denoting the

result, state or extent of it. However, the modality of certainty and necessity expressed by *gang* is not the result, state or extent of any predicatives.

Syntactically, *buyu* such as *jyun4* 完 (finish) are not subject to the telicity requirement, the aspectual requirement, and the monosyllabic requirement which constraint the existence of the postverbal *gang*. In contrast with the ungrammaticality of (40a), (41a) and (42a), the examples (43), (44) and (45) below are all grammatical.

(43) 佢行完公園。(atelic event)
keoi hang-jyun gungjyun
s/he walk-finish park
"S/he finished walking in the park."

(44) 佢睇完咗套戲。(aspect marker)
keoi tai-jyun-zo tou hei
s/he watch-finish-PERF CL movie
"S/he finished watching the movie."

(45) 佢調查完呢件事。(disyllabic verb)
keoi diucaa-jyun nei gin si
s/he investigate-finish this CL matter
"S/he finished investigating this matter."

Secondly, some markers of *buyu* such as *dak1* 得 (obtain), *m4* 唔 (not) and *dou3* 到 (until) can be inserted between a verb and its *buyu* as in (46a), (47a) and (48a). The first two of them mark the potentiality of the action/state specified by the verb-*buyu* construction while the last one can mark the extent of it. However, the same insertions are not allowed between verbs and the postverbal *gang* as in (46b), (47b) and (48b).

(46) a. 做得完。
zou dak jyun
do obtain finish
“(Someone) can finish doing (something).”

b. *做得梗。
*zou dak gang
do obtain must

(47) a. 做唔完。
zou m jyun
do not finish
“(Someone) cannot finish doing (something).”

b. *做唔梗。
*zou m gang
do not must

(48) a. 嬲到爆。
nau dou baau
angry until explode
“(Somebody is) extremely angry.”

b. *嬲到梗。
*nau dou gang
angry until must

The differences between the postverbal *gang* and a *buyu* can be summarized in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2. 3 Differences between the Postverbal *Gang* and a *Buyu*

| | Postverbal *gang* | *Buyu* |
|---|---|---|
| Atelic Events | - | + |
| Aspect Markers | - | + |
| Disyllabic Verbs | - | + |
| Insertion of *Buyu* Markers | - | + |

Based on the above discussion, I conclude that the postverbal *gang* should not be analyzed as a *buyu* in Cantonese.

### 2.6.2 The Postverbal *Gang* is Not a Suffix

Although some grammatical properties of the postverbal *gang* are similar to that of a suffix, it is hard to be considered as a suffix. According to Cheung (2007:148-150), suffixes have the following properties:

i. Versatility: a suffix is highly versatile; it can combine with various predicators. For *zo2* 咗 (perfective aspect marker), there are *sik6-zo2* 食咗 (have eaten), *taai6-zo2* 大咗 (have become bigger), *lai4-zo2* 嚟咗 (have come), *beng6-zo2* 病咗 (have been sick), etc.

ii. Bound Form: a suffix is usually a bound form which does not occur independently.

iii. Lack of a Concrete Meaning: a suffix is usually derived from a lexical item through grammaticalization; it lacks a concrete lexical meaning.

iv. Incompatibility with Other Suffixes: suffixes cannot co-occur with each others. For instance, two suffixes *zo2* 咗 (perfective aspect marker) and *gan2* 緊 (progressive aspect marker) cannot co-occur in the same sentence as in

(49b).

(49) a. 食咗飯。/ 食緊飯。
sik-zo faan/ sik-gan faan
eat-PERF rice/ eat-PROG rice
"(Someone) has had a meal."/ "(Someone) is having a meal."

b. *食咗緊飯。
*sik-zo-gan faan
eat-PERF-PROG rice

v. No Insertion of Potential Makers: the potential markers, *dak* 得 (obtain) and *m* 唔 (not) cannot be inserted between a verb and the suffix that follows it. For example,

(50) a. 寫緊字。
se-gan zi
write-PROG word
"(Someone) is writing."

b. *寫得緊字。/ *寫唔緊字。
*se-dak-gan zi/ *se-m-gan zi
write-obtain-PROG word/ write-not-PROG word

Furthermore, the occurrence of a suffix is not restricted by the monosyllabic requirement. When the postverbal *gang* in (42a) is converted to a suffix as in (51), the sentence becomes grammatical.

(51) 佢調查緊呢件事。
keoi diucaa-gan nei gin si
he investigate-PROG this CL matter
"He is investigating this matter."

The postverbal *gang* is incompatible with aspect markers (suffixes) and potential markers as exemplified in (41a), (46b) and (47b). It seems that the grammatical properties of the postverbal *gang* are similar to that of a suffix. However, it shares the same core meaning of certainty and necessity with the preverbal *gang*. Its modality meaning is a rather concrete one. It can be a relatively independent constituent as what the preverbal *gang* does. Moreover, it is less versatile as it is only compatible with monosyllabic verbs denoting telic events while a suffix is compatible with either monosyllabic or disyllabic verbs, telic or atelic events.

The similarities and differences between the postverbal *gang* and a suffix can be summarized in Figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2. 4 Similarities and Differences between the Postverbal *Gang* and a Suffix

| | Postverbal *gang* | Suffix |
|---|---|---|
| Versatile (compatible with either monosyllabic or disyllabic verbs, telic or atelic events) | - (only compatible with monosyllabic verbs denoting telic events) | + |
| Bound Form | (+) | + |
| Concrete Meaning | + | - |
| Compatibility with Other Suffixes | - | - |
| Insertion of Potential Makers | - | - |

### 2.6.3 The Postverbal *Gang* is a Postpositional Adverb/Adverbial Modifier

Although the postverbal *gang* forms a very tight verb-*gang* construction with the verb it attaches to and it is restricted in syntax like a *buyu* or a suffix, it is neither a *buyu* nor a suffix according to the above observations. I suggest that it is a postpositional adverb which functions as an adverbial. To facilitate my explanation, I have summarized the overall similarities and differences between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* in Figure 2.5 below.

First of all, it can be seen that the postverbal *gang* shares the same core semantic meaning and syntactic function with the preverbal *gang*; both of them serve to modify the whole clause/sentence, indicating the speaker's certainty towards the proposition expressed by it. As mentioned in section 1.3.3, it is agreed in the literature that a syntactic constituent should be identified according to its function rather than its position in a sentence (Liu, 2000, 2005; Jin, 2009). Therefore, the postverbal *gang* should be treated as an adverb realizing adverbial function as long as it functions as a modifier, like what the preverbal *gang* does.

Moreover, it is found that the syntactic distribution of the postverbal *gang* is more restricted when comparing with that of the preverbal one. This can be explained by the syntactic effects caused by subjectification, which have been summarized by Company (2006) (cf. section 1.3.2.3). He proposed that there is an inverse correlation between the syntactic capacity of a form and the subjective meaning it conveys, which is, more syntax, more objectivity (or less subjectivity); on the contrary, less (or even zero) syntax, more subjectivity. The postverbal *gang* is able to convey a more subjective meaning than the preverbal *gang*, so it is more restricted in syntax. Its loss of syntactic capacity is a result of subjectification. Therefore, I consider the postverbal *gang* as a postpositional adverb/adverbial modifier even if it is different from the preverbal *gang* in

syntax.

Figure 2. 5 Overall Similarities and Differences between the Preverbal and Postverbal *Gang*

| | | Preverbal *gang* | Postverbal *gang* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Core Meaning | | modality of certainty | modality of certainty |
| Syntactic Function | | modifying the whole clause/sentence | modifying the whole clause/sentence |
| Subjectivity | | objective/ intersubjective | subjective |
| Grammatical Properties | Atelic events | compatible | incompatible |
| | Aspect Markers | compatible | incompatible |
| | Disyllabic verbs | compatible | incompatible |

As I have mentioned in section 1.3.3, although I agree with the existence of postpositional adverbs in Cantonese, I do not deny the possibility that a morpheme X would gradually obtain some additional meanings/functions or shift to other word classes (such as sentence final particles) after entering a "verb-X" construction. The morpheme *sin1* 先 which will be discussed in the next Chapter has exhibited this kind of development, shifting from an adverb to a sentence final particle. No matter how far the postverbal morphemes have developed, I believe that the origin of them is still related to adverbs/adverbial modifiers.

## 2.7 Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* share the same core semantic meaning, denoting the modality of certainty and necessity. I then attempted to explore the semantic differences

between the two *gang*, and found that they cannot be differentiated in terms of realis and irrealis; they are actually different in subjectivity. The preverbal *gang* expresses an objective modality while the postverbal *gang* denotes a subjective modality. Subsequently, I investigated the feasibility of the preverbal and postverbal *gang* to co-occur in the same sentence and found that they failed to do so as they are contradictory to each others in terms of subjectivity. I also examined their co-occurrence with other elements expressing similar modality of certainty. The result is that the postverbal *gang* can co-occur with the preverbal adverbs *yatding* and *sat* as they also express a subjective modality; the preverbal *gang* cannot co-occur with the postverbal *ngaang* as they are opposed to each others in terms of subjectivity. In the last part of this chapter, I discussed the grammatical properties and status of the preverbal and postverbal *gang*. It can be seen that the postverbal *gang* imposes more constraints on the predicate than the preverbal one. For their grammatical status, I suggest that both the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are adverbs which function as adverbial modifiers. The loss of syntactic capacity of the postverbal adverb *gang* is a result of subjectification.

# Notes

[1] Although it has been shown in (26) that the preverbal and postverbal *gang* are still different in subjectivity in cases describing laws of nature, the use of the opposite *gang* in the (b) sentences by both speaker A and B do not result in any seriously ungrammatical or infelicitous sentences; they are just unnatural. It can be said that the difference in subjectivity between the preverbal and postverbal *gang* has become very subtle or has been neutralized in cases describing objective laws of nature.

# Chapter 3

# Adverbial of Time: *Sin1* 先

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses another morpheme which can be both preverbal and postverbal in Cantonese, which is *sin*. Unlike *gang*, the preverbal and postverbal *sin* can co-occur in a single sentence. In the literature (such as Cheng, 1990; Matthews and Yip, 1994:192; Li et al., 1995:500-501), *sin* has been defined as a temporal morpheme which indicates that the event signified by the utterance it attaches to precedes another reference event. Many linguists have specifically pointed out its different positions in Cantonese and Mandarin as exemplified in (1) (for instance, Huang and Zhan, 1983; Zeng, 1991:237, 247; Cheung, 2007:203, etc). They agree that the postposition of adverbs such as *sin* is a distinguished feature of Cantonese.

(1) 我走先。(我先走)
ngo zau sin
I go first
"I go first."

However, they failed to recognize that the adverb *sin* in Cantonese can also be placed at the preverbal position to denote the same temporal meaning, especially when the VP follows is a complex one. Apart from the core temporal meaning, the postverbal *sin* has been described as having some other meanings which cannot be replaced by the preverbal *sin* (cf. Cheng, 1990; Mai, 1993; Li et al., 1995: 501; Law and Lee, 1998; Luke, 2002; Tang, 2006c). On the other hand, there is another use of the preverbal *sin* which has been seen as an equivalent to the Mandarin adverb *cai* 才 (only…until…, just) (such as Li et al.,

1995:477-478; Cheung, 2007: 204; Rao et al., 2009: 243). It is found that different linguists have provided varied interpretations on the extensive meanings of the preverbal and postverbal *sin*; there is not yet a unified treatment on them; the semantic connections between these meanings are still under debate. I propose that the preverbal and postverbal *sin* share the same core meaning of temporal precedence. However, they are different in semantic extension, resulted in different subjectivity between them.

In the following sections of this chapter, I first examine the semantic extension of the postverbal *sin*, then move on to that of the preverbal *sin*. After that, I investigate their co-occurrence and discuss its motivation.

## 3.2 The Postverbal *Sin*

The postverbal *sin* in Cantonese is polysemous. Its different meanings are illustrated in (2)-(4). In the literature, varied interpretations have been provided for them, especially the ones in (3) and (4).

(2) 我揀先。
ngo gaan sin
I choose first.
"I choose first."

(3) 我未做完嘢，你坐下先。
ngo mei zou-jyun je, nei co-haa sin
I not-yet do-finish thing you sit-DEL first
"I have not yet finished my work; please sit down for a while (and wait)."

(4) 你咩意思先？
nei me jisi sin
you what meaning SFP
"(Tell me first) what do you mean?"

Similar to (1), *sin* in (2) has been generally described as a marker of temporal precedence which indicates that the speaker is the first one to carry out the action signified by the VP. The *sin* in (3) has been described as marking the immediacy or priority of an event over all other things (Mai, 1993; Li et al., 1995: 501; Law and Lee, 1998); giving a suggestion, advice or command (Cheng, 1990). The *sin* in (4) has been described as asking for additional information (Cheng, 1990); requesting for clarification before further actions or conversations (Mai, 1993; Li et al., 1995:501); functioning as a discourse marker (Luke, 2002); emphasizing the moment when the utterance is made (Leung, 2005:58-59); strengthening the interrogative mood (Tang, 2006c), etc. In spite of the various interpretations of the postverbal *sin* given, its usages can be characterized into three major types as follows. They are marked as $sin_1$, $sin_2$ and $sin_3$ respectively.

### 3.2.1 The Semantic Extension of the Postverbal *Sin*

In the previous studies, enormous effort has been put on the descriptions and classifications of the various meanings and usages of the postverbal *sin*. However, it should be noted that the different meanings of *sin* are not unrelated. I suggest that the meanings of $sin_2$ and $sin_3$ are derived from the core meaning of *sin* (the meaning of temporal precedence denoted by $sin_1$), through metaphorical mapping from one linguistic domain to the others.

#### 3.2.1.1 $Sin_1$ as a Marker of Temporal Order (The Core Meaning of *Sin*)

$Sin_1$ indicates that the event signified by the utterance it attaches to precedes another reference event as in (5). It can associate with various constituents such as the subject in (6), indicating that the speaker had his/her meal prior to his/her

partner; the object in (7), denoting that "rice (the meal)" was eaten before "fruit"; or the VP in (8), signifying that the action of "having the meal" preceded that of "doing homework". The encoding of temporal order by *sin* applies not only to past events, but also to present and future events such as (9) and (10) respectively. The postverbal *sin* in (2) above is also a $sin_1$, which indicates that the speaker is the first one to choose among something in a group of people.

(5) 我食飯先。
ngo sik faan sin
I eat rice first
"I have (my) meal first."

(6) 頭先，我食咗飯先，然後到我 partner 食. ($sin_1$ associates with the subject)
tausin, ngo sik-zo faan sin, jinhau dou ngo partner sik
just-now I eat-PERF rice first then turn my partner eat
"Just-now, I had (my) meal first, and then it was my partner's turn to eat."

(7) 頭先，我食咗飯先，然後食生果。 ($sin_1$ associates with the object)
tausin, ngo sik-zo faan sin, jinhau sik saanggwo
just-now I eat-PERF rice first then eat fruit
"Just-now, I had (my) meal first, and then ate (some) fruit."

(8) 頭先，我食咗飯先，然後做功課。 ($sin_1$ associates with the VP)
tausin, ngo sik-zo faan sin, jinhau zou gungfo
just-now I eat-PERF rice first then do homework
"Just-now, I had (my) meal first, and then did (my) homework."

(9) 而家，我食飯先，之後到我 partner 食。
jigaa, ngo sik faan sin, jinhau dou ngo partner sik
now I eat rice first then turn my partner eat
"Now, I have (my) meal first, and then it is my partner's turn to eat."

(10) 陣間，我食飯先，然後到我 partner 食。
zangaan, ngo sik faan sin, jinhau dou ngo partner sik
a-moment-later I eat rice first then turn my partner eat
"A-moment-later, I will have (my) meal first, and then it will be my partner's turn to eat."

3.2.1.2 *Sin*$_2$ as a Marker of Priority Event

The meaning of temporal precedence expressed by *sin* does not only apply to sentential elements. It may range over the whole sentence, assigning priority to the event signified by the propositional content, which usage is marked as *sin*$_2$. I propose that *sin*$_2$ is derived from *sin*$_1$ by metaphorical mapping, in which the core temporal meaning of *sin* is metaphorically mapped from the sentential domain (*sin*$_1$) to the propositional domain (*sin*$_2$). *Sin*$_2$ serves to interrupt or suspend an ongoing or impending event by reassigning priority to another event.[1]

In (11), the speaker is thirsty; he assigns priority to his action of drinking a cup of water at the moment of speaking by using *sin*$_2$. However, there may not be another planned event follows that of his water-drinking. Similarly, in (12), the speaker is requesting for a book from the hearer by assigning priority to the hearer's action of getting him the book at the moment of speaking by using *sin*$_2$; it may not be followed by any particular event. *Sin*$_2$ is restricted to volitive and imperative uses, such as requests, commands and suggestions. Therefore, it can never be used to refer to past events. The use of it is also subject to a volitionality requirement on the speakers. The postverbal *sin* in example (3) is also a *sin*$_2$.

(11) 飲杯水先。
jam bui seoi sin
drink CL water first
"(Let me) drink a cup of water."

(12) 你拎本書嚟先。
nei ling bun syu lai sin
you take CL book come first
“(Please) take the book to me (at the moment).”

Sometimes, sentences with *sin* are ambiguous as it can be applied to different linguistic domains. For example, the *sin* in (13) can be interpreted as either $sin_1$ or $sin_2$. We imagine that there is a primary school student Siu-ming who is having a fever; his classmates are trying to help him.

(13) 我哋通知老師先。
ngodei tungzi lousi sin
we inform teacher first
a.“We inform our teacher first (and inform other people later/ take other actions later).”
b. “(Let’s) inform our teacher.”

Context of (13)
Student A: 小明發燒呀！
Siuming faatsiu aa
Siuming have-a-fever SFP
“Siu-ming is having a fever.”

Student B: 我哋通知老師先（，然後通知佢屋企人。）
ngodei tungzi lousi sin (, jinhau tungzi keoi ukkeijan)
we inform teacher first (then inform his family-member)
“We inform our teacher first (then inform his family members).”

Student C: 我哋通知老師先（，然後送佢去休息室。）
ngodei tungzi lousi sin (, jinhau sung keoi heoi jausiksat)
we inform teacher first (then send him to rest-room)
“We inform our teacher first (then send him to the rest-room).”

Student D: 我哋通知老師先。
ngodei tungzi lousi sin
we inform teacher first
"(Let's) inform our teacher."

In the above context, the *sin* used by student B and C is different from that of student D. Student B and C are thinking about several actions to help Siu-ming. In the utterance of student B, *sin* associates with the object and marks that their teacher is the first one to be informed before Siu-ming's family members. In the utterance of student C, *sin* associates with the VP and marks that the action of "informing our teacher" precedes that of "sending him to the rest room". The *sin* used in the utterances of student B and C associates with various constituents in the sentences, which is a $sin_1$. Different from student B and C, Student D is only thinking about one thing to help Siu-ming, which is to inform their teacher about Siu-ming's situation; what to do next is not a concern of him, which will be decided by their teacher. The *sin* used by student D has scope over the whole proposition, which assigns priority to the whole event "We inform our teacher" among all other ongoing or impending events. Therefore, the *sin* used by him is a $sin_2$.

3.2.1.3 $Sin_3$ as a Marker of Priority Speech Act

The meaning of temporal precedence expressed by *sin* does not only apply to the sentential and propositional domains, but also the speech act domain as $sin_3$. It then serves to interrupt or suspend an ongoing conversation by reassigning priority to the speech act that it attaches to, urging the hearer to provide the required information first or accept a certain proposition first before further conversation. I suggest that $sin_3$ is derived from $sin_1$ by metaphorical mapping, in

which the core temporal meaning of *sin* is metaphorically mapped from the sentential domain to the propositional domain, and further to the speech act domain.[2]

*Sin*$_3$ must co-occur with interrogative structures, such as wh- questions as in (14), A-not-A questions as in (15)-(16), and alternative questions as in (17). In (14), (15) and (17), the speakers use *sin*$_3$ to interrupt the ongoing conversation and urge the hearer to provide the required information first. In (16), the speaker uses *sin*$_3$ to interrupt the ongoing conversation and urge the hearer to accept a certain proposition first before the conversation goes on.[3] The postverbal *sin* used in example (4) is also a *sin*$_3$.

(14) 幾時去先？(wh- question)
geisi heoi sin
when go SFP
"(Tell me first) when to go?"

(15) 你去唔去先？(A-not-A question)
nei heoi-m-heoi sin
you go-not-go SFP
"(Tell me first) will you go?"

(16) 你話佢係唔係好衰先？(A-not-A question)
nei waa keoi hai-m-hai hou seoi sin
you say s/he be-not-be very bad SFP
"(Tell me first) do you think s/he is bad?"

(17) 佢係日本人定韓國人先？(alternative question)
keoi hai jatbunjan ding hongwokjan sin
s/he be Japanese or Korean SFP
"(Tell me first) is s/he a Japanese or a Korean?"

Although *sin*$_3$ must co-occur with interrogative structures, the *sin* occurs in

questions is not necessarily a *sin*$_3$. For example, (18) is ambiguous as the *sin* in it can be interpreted as either *sin*$_1$ or *sin*$_3$. If the *sin* associates with the sentential element (object) as *sin*$_1$, it indicates that something is to be eaten first (before any other food). If the *sin* modifies the covert matrix clause "Tell me" as *sin*$_3$, the speaker is asking for an immediate reply from the hearer about what to eat.

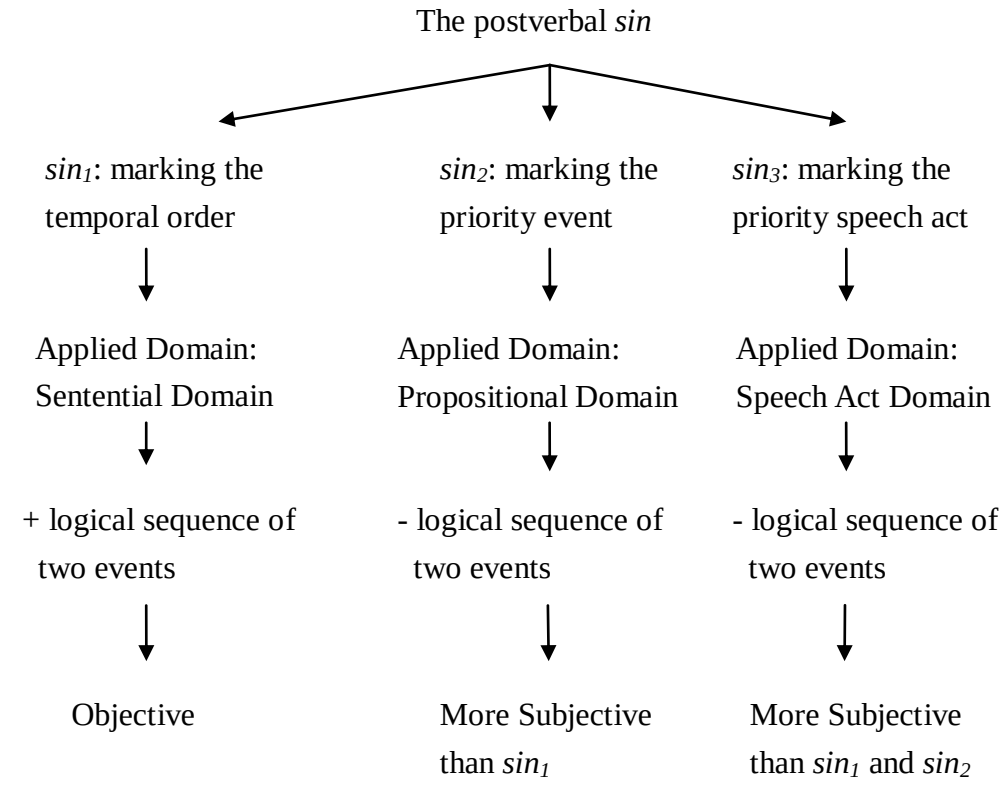
(18) 你想食咩先？
nei soeng sik me sin
you want eat what first/ SFP
a. "What do you want to eat first (before any other food)?" (*sin*$_1$)
b. "(Tell me first) what do you want to eat?" (*sin*$_3$)

### 3.2.2 The Subjectivity of the Postverbal *Sin*

In the above discussion, I have showed that different meanings of *sin* have been derived from its core temporal meaning through metaphorical mapping from the sentential domain to the propositional domain and further to the speech act domain. Along the way of semantic extension, the scope of application of *sin* is getting larger and larger: the scope of *sin*$_3$ is larger than that of *sin*$_2$, while the scope of *sin*$_2$ is larger than that of *sin*$_1$. *Sin*$_1$ is the most objective among the three *sin* as there is always a reference event presented overtly or covertly; a temporal sequence of the two events can be easily inferred. *Sin*$_2$ only indicates a priority event; there is no reference event follows, thus no logical temporal sequence of any two events can be found. Therefore, *sin*$_2$ is less objective (more subjective) than *sin*$_1$. *Sin*$_3$ neither indicates the temporal order of any two events specified in the propositional content nor marks the whole proposition as a priority event. It modifies the speech act performed by the speaker and marks the priority of the speech act, giving an exhortative sense. Hence, it is the most subjective among the three *sin*. The semantic meanings and subjectivity of the postverbal *sin* can be

summarized in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3. 1 The Semantic Meanings and Subjectivity of the Postverbal *Sin*



## 3.3 The Preverbal *Sin*

There are two preverbal *sin* in Cantonese. One of them is the preverbal counterpart of the postverbal $sin_1$, which will be marked as $sin_t$ in the following discussion; the other one corresponds to the Mandarin adverb *cai* 才 (only…until…, just), which will be marked as $sin_c$. I adopt Mai's (1993) proposal which suggested that the preverbal $sin_c$ is derived from the postverbal *sin* although they seem to be conveying converse temporal meanings. In the following subsections, I first discuss $sin_t$, then discuss $sin_c$ and demonstrate its semantic extension.

### 3.3.1 The Preverbal $Sin_t$

In the literature, extensive discussions have been made on the various meanings of the postverbal *sin*. However, most of them failed to recognize that *sin* can also be placed at the preverbal position in Cantonese to denote the temporal order like what the postverbal $sin_1$ does. Fung and Wong (2009) found that this preverbal $sin_t$ occurs especially when the VP follows is a complex one, such as serial verb phrases, forming the structure "$sin_t$ VP1VP2 …" as in (19). It modifies VP1 directly and marks that the action signified by VP1 precedes that of VP2. Thus, in (19), $sin_t$ marks that the action of "closing your eyes" (VP1) precedes that of "relaxing your body" (VP2) and "concentrating your mind" (VP3). In (20), the structure is "VP2 *cin4* $sin_t$ VP1". "VP2 *cin4*" means "before VP2", so the order of the VPs in (20) is still the same as that of "$sin_t$ VP1VP2…" where $sin_t$ marks that "taking a bath and having a meal" (VP1) precede "giving birth (to the baby)" (VP2). Note also that the speaker B in (20) gives a response with the postverbal $sin_1$ since the action "having a meal" it modifies is a simple VP.

(19) 你先眯埋雙眼，跟住就放鬆個人，然後就集中精神……
nei sin mei maai soeng ngaan, ganzyu zau fongsung go jan, jinhau zau zaapzung zingsan
you first close PRT pair eyes then then relax CL person then then concentrate mind
"You first close your eyes, then relax your body, then concentrate your mind…" (Fung and Wong, 2009)

(20) A: 聽講臨生前要先沖涼食飯，係咪真架？怕唔怕呀？
tenggong lam saang cin yiu sin cungloeng sikfaan, haimai zan gaa? paa-m-paa aa?
hear say just-before give-birth before need first take-a-bath eat-rice be-not-be true SFP fear-not-fear SFP
"(I have) heard that (we) need to take a bath and have a meal first before parturition, is that true? Is it alright (to do so)?"

B: 係呀，因爲通常無咁快生得，不如食飯先，咁到時先有力生，沖埋涼仲乾淨啲添呀。
hai aa, janwai tungsoeng mou gam faai saang dak, batjyu sikfaan sin, gam dousi sin yau lik saang, cung-maai-loeng zung gonzeng di tim aa
yes SFP because normally no so quick give-birth can had-better eat-rice first thus at-that-time only have energy give-birth take-also-a-bath still clean a-bit too SFP
"Yes, because normally (you) may not be able to be in labor that soon; you had better have a meal first; so that (you) can have enough energy when you are in labor. You would be even cleaner if you also take-a-bath (before that). (Fund and Wong, 2009)

3.3.1.1 The Semantic Extension of the Preverbal $Sin_t$

As demonstrated in section 3.2, the core meaning of the postverbal *sin* extends from the sentential domain to the propositional domain and further to the speech act domain, giving rise to the postverbal $sin_2$ and $sin_3$. In order to check if the preverbal $sin_t$ has got a similar path of semantic extension, examples (11), (12) with the postverbal $sin_2$ and (14)-(17) with the postverbal $sin_3$ are recalled here;

the postverbal *sin* in each example is then replaced by the preverbal $sin_t$. It is found that when the postverbal $sin_2$ is changed to the preverbal $sin_t$ as in (22) and (24), the sentences become odd. They will only become natural when they are followed by another event. This shows that the meaning of the preverbal $sin_t$ cannot range over the whole proposition but only applies to the sentential elements. When the postverbal $sin_3$ is changed to the preverbal $sin_t$ in (26), (28), (30) and (32), all sentences become ungrammatical. This shows that the preverbal $sin_t$ cannot modify any speech acts.

(21) 飲杯水先 ($sin_2$)。 [the same as (11)]
jam bui seoi sin
drink CL water first
"(Let me) drink a cup of water."

(22) ?先飲杯水。/ 先飲杯水，再食件餅。
? sin jam bui seoi/ sin jam bui seoi, zoi sik gin beng
first drink CL water/ first drink CL water again eat CL cake
"(I) drink a cup of water first, and then eat a piece of cake."

(23) 你拎本書嚟先 ($sin_2$)。 [the same as (12)]
nei ling bun syu lai sin
you take CL book come first
"(Please) take the book to me (at the moment)."

(24) ?你先拎本書嚟。/ 你先拎本書嚟，然後斟杯水俾我。
? nei sin ling bun syu lai/ nei sin ling bun syu lai, jinhau zam CL seoi bei ngo
you first take CL book come/ you first take CL book come then fill CL water give me
"(Please) take the book to me first, and then give me a cup of water."

(25) 幾時去先 (*sin*$_3$)？(wh- question) [the same as (14)]
geisi heoi sin
when go SFP
"(Tell me first) when to go?"

(26) *幾時先去？(wh- question)[4]
* geisi sin heoi
when first go

(27) 你去唔去先 (*sin*$_3$)？(A-not-A question) [the same as (15)]
nei heoi-m-heoi sin
you go-not-go SFP
"(Tell me first) will you go?"

(28) *你先去唔去？(A-not-A question)
*nei sin heoi-m-heoi
you first go-not-go

(29) 你話佢係唔係好衰先 (*sin*$_3$)？(A-not-A question) [the same as (16)]
nei waa keoi hai-m-hai hou seoi sin
you say s/he be-not-be very bad SFP
"(Tell me first) do you think s/he is bad?"

(30) *你話佢先係唔係好衰？(A-not-A question)
*nei waa keoi sin hai-m-hai hou seoi
you say s/he first be-not-be very bad

(31) 佢係日本人定韓國人先 (*sin*$_3$)？(alternative question) [the same as (17)]
keoi hai jatbunjan ding hongwokjan sin
s/he be Japanese or Korean SFP
"(Tell me first) is s/he a Japanese or a Korean?"

(32) *佢先係日本人定韓國人？(alternative question)
*keoi sin hai jatbunjan ding hongwokjan
s/he first be Japanese or Korean

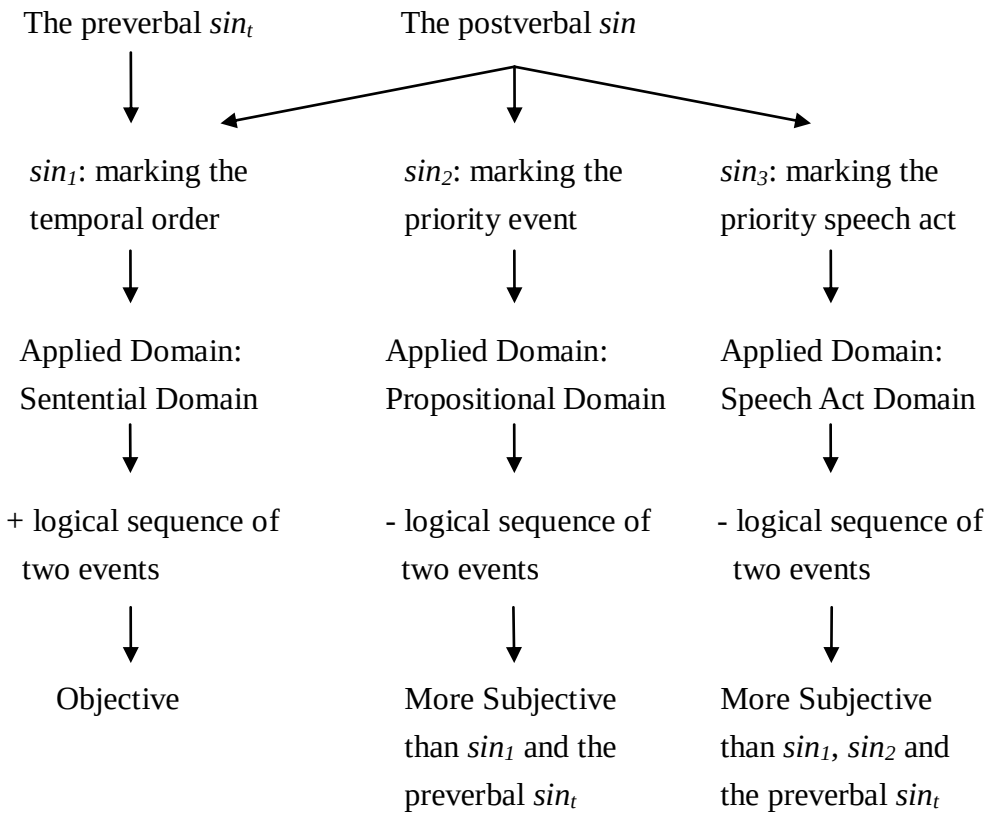
As a whole, it can be seen that the preverbal *sin*$_t$ shares the same core meaning of temporal precedence with the postverbal *sin*. However, this core

temporal meaning does not extend to the propositional and speech act domains for the preverbal *sin$_t$*.

3.3.1.2 The Subjectivity of the Preverbal *Sin$_t$*

As the preverbal *sin$_t$* only applies to various sentential elements, but not the whole proposition or the speech act performed by the speaker, it can only deliver a similar meaning as the postverbal *sin$_1$*, but neither *sin$_2$* nor *sin$_3$*. In addition, it appears in the structure "*sin$_t$* VP1VP2…"; the reference event (VP2) is always provided in the utterance; a temporal sequence between VP1 and VP2 is marked by this preverbal *sin$_t$*. Therefore, the preverbal *sin$_t$* is rather objective, like the postverbal *sin$_1$*. The differences in semantic meanings and subjectivity between the preverbal *sin$_t$* and the postverbal *sin* are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3. 2 The Semantic Meanings and Subjectivity of the Preverbal *Sin$_t$* and the Postverbal *Sin*



### 3.3.2 The Preverbal $Sin_c$

In Cantonese, there is another preverbal *sin* (marked as $sin_c$) which does not exist in a "*sin* VP1 VP2…" structure to mark the temporal precedence of VP1 relative to VP2 as what the preverbal $sin_t$ does. Instead, it appears in the structure "VP1 *sin* VP2", indicating that the event signified by VP2 happens later than that of VP1 (Fung and Wong, 2009). It corresponds to the Mandarin adverb *cai* 才 (only…until…, just). For example, "doing homework" is only carried out after "going back to school" in (33).

(33) 我返學校先做功課。
ngo faan hokhaau sin zou gungfo
I back school only do homework
"I only do homework when I have arrived at (my) school."
(Fung and Wong, 2009)

Apart from the above description, it has also been described as meaning "just now" as in (34) or "only" as in (35) (Cheng, 1990); denoting a late event as in (36); emphasizing the affirmative mood of the speaker as in (37) (Cheng 1990; Mai, 1993), etc. Despite the varied interpretations given, the different meanings and usages of the preverbal $sin_c$ can be characterized into three major types. They will be marked as $sin_{c1}$, $sin_{c2}$ and $sin_{c3}$ below. The seemingly unrelated senses are actually related to each other. The details will be discussed in succeeding sections.

(34) 今日先星期一。
gamjat sin singkeijat
today just Monday
"Today is just Monday."

(35) 我哋先得三個人。
ngodei sin dak saam go jan
we only have three CL people
“We have only there people.”

(36) 你而家先講。
nei jigaa sin gong
you now only say
“You say (it) only at this moment.”

(37) 你先曳。
nei sin jai
you only naughty
“You are the one who is really naughty.”

3.3.2.1 The Derivation of the Preverbal *Sin$_c$*

Before demonstrating the semantic extension of the preverbal *sin$_c$*, the core semantic meaning and the semantic features of the preverbal *sin$_c$* should be identified.

According to Mai (1993), the preverbal *sin$_c$* is actually derived from the postverbal *sin*. Sentences like (40) with the preverbal *sin$_c$* are actually derived from those like (38), including a postverbal *sin* in the first clause and a connective *zi3* 至 (then) at the beginning of the second clause. As the pause (represented by the comma) between *sin* and *zi* is always being neglected in daily speech, they finally merged to become a compound connective *sin1zi3* 先至 as in (39). Later, *sinzi* is further simplified to either *sin* or *zi*, resulted in the preverbal *sin$_c$*.

(38) 聽老王下晝返嚟先，至大家一齊嚟商量呢件事。
ting lou-wong haazau faan lai sin, zi daaigaa jatcai lai soengloeng nei gin si
wait old-wong afternoon back come only then we together come discuss this
CL matter
"(Let's) wait until Old-Wong comes back in the afternoon, then we discuss
this matter together." (Mai, 1993)

(39) 聽老王下晝返嚟先至大家一齊嚟商量呢件事。
ting lou-wong haazau faan lai sinzi daaigaa jatcai lai soengloeng nei gin si
wait old-wong afternoon back come only we together come discuss this CL
matter
"(Let's) wait until Old-Wong comes back in the afternoon, then we discuss
this matter together."

(40) 聽老王下晝返嚟，先大家一齊嚟商量呢件事。
ting lou-wong haazau faan lai, sin daaigaa jatcai lai soengloeng nei gin si
wait old-wong afternoon back come only we together come discuss this CL
matter
"(Let's) wait until Old-Wong comes back in the afternoon, then we discuss
this matter together." (Mai, 1993)

I assume Mai's (1993) proposal is correct, which means that the preverbal *sin*$_c$ shares the same core semantic meaning of temporal precedence with the postverbal *sin*. Although they seemingly denote a converse temporal reference (the VP modified by the postverbal *sin* precedes the reference event while the VP modified by the preverbal *sin*$_c$ follows the reference event), they are not contradictory to each other if the meaning of the preverbal *sin*$_c$ is treated in another way. I suggest that the preverbal *sin*$_c$ does not really mark the temporal order between any two events; it rather places some temporal restriction on the VP modified by it. In other words, the preverbal *sin*$_c$ places temporal restriction on VP2 in the "VP1 *sin*$_c$ VP2" structure, indicating that the event signified by VP2 is/will be realized only after that of VP1.

The temporal restriction expressed by the preverbal *sin*$_c$ is similar to that

expressed by “just” in English. As discussed by Lee (1987), the primary semantic function of “just” is to express a restrictive meaning; however, the type of restrictive meaning it expresses varies from one context to another. One of them is a temporal one such as (41) and (42).

(41) I just notice it when I get like this. (Lee, 1987)

(42) The two big ones have just been when I’m sitting down. (Lee, 1987)

Although “just” occurs before the main verb of the principal clause, it is interpreted semantically as governing the subordinate clause introduced by “when”. That is, the speaker states that a particular process identified by the main clause occurs only within the time frame(s) identified by the subordinate clause. Thus, in (41), the process of “noticing it” is said to occur only within the time frames in which the speaker “gets like this”. In (42), “the two big ones” (attacks of dizziness) occurred only within the time frames in which the speaker was being seated. Lee (1987) further explained schematically that the meaning of (41) and (42) can be represented by (43), from which the entailment (44) can be derived. For example, when uttering (41), the speaker commits herself to the truth of the proposition that she does not “notice it” when she is not “like this”.

(43) “P just when Q”

(44) “not P when not Q”

Moreover, (45) is different from (43) as it does not entail (44). Therefore, (46) is semantically anomalous whereas (47) is fine.

(45) “P when Q”

(46) *I just notice it when I’m in the kitchen and I also notice it when I’m in the dining room. (Lee, 1987)

(47) I notice it when I’m in the kitchen and I also notice it when I’m in the dining room. (Lee, 1987)

Similarly, “VP1 *sin*$_c$ VP2” in Cantonese also entails “not VP2 when not VP1”. Thus, in (33), “doing homework” (VP2) is carried out only when “going back to school” (VP1) has been realized; the speaker will not do his/her homework if s/he has not yet arrived at his/her school. For this reason, (48) is also anomalous.

(48) *我返學校先做功課，喺屋企都做功課。
*ngo faan hokhaau sin zou gungfo, hai ukkei dou zou gungfo
I back school only do homework at home also do homework
“I only do homework when I have arrived at (my) school; I also do homework (when I am) at home.”

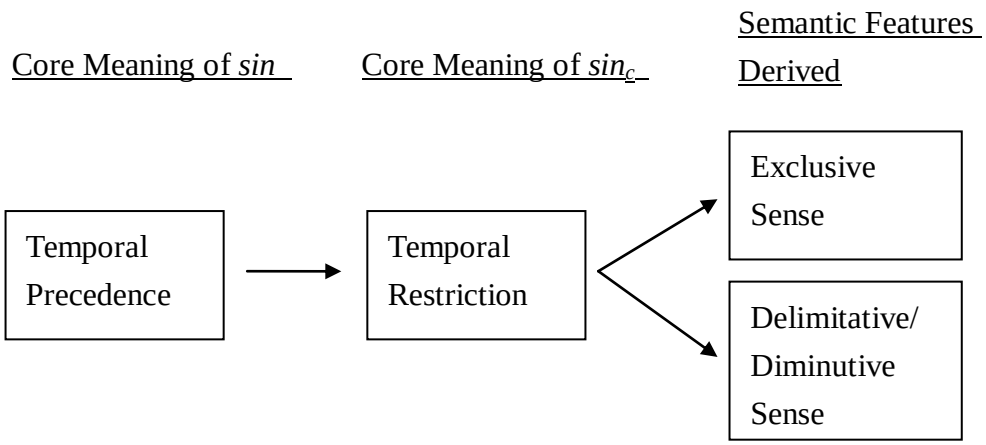
3.3.2.2 The Semantic Features Derived from the Core Meaning of the Preverbal *Sin*$_c$

As Fung (2000:34, 37-38) has suggested, scalar and evaluative senses can be derived from the meaning of restriction, giving rise to the semantic features of exclusive and delimitative/diminutive. The same thought can be applied to temporal restriction. The induction processes are as follows.

During restriction, only a limited number of entities are included in a proposition; the majority are excluded or negated, resulted in the exclusive sense. In addition, as the number of entities being signaled out from the discourse universe and included in the proposition is small and limited in the process of restriction, restrictive elements are able to encode evaluation, evaluating the

focused value as a minimal value, conveying a delimitative or diminutive sense. The semantic features derived from the core temporal meaning of the preverbal $sin_c$ are summarized in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3. 3 The Semantic Features Derived from the Core Temporal Meaning of the Preverbal $Sin_c$




3.3.2.3 The Semantic Extension of the Preverbal $Sin_c$

I suggest that the meanings of the preverbal $sin_{c2}$ and $sin_{c3}$ are derived from the meaning of temporal restriction denoted by $sin_{c1}$ when the exclusive and delimitative/diminutive senses of it extend from one linguistic domain to the others by metaphorical mapping.

3.3.2.3.1 The Preverbal $Sin_{c1}$

The preverbal $sin_{c1}$ appears in the structure "VP1 $sin_{c1}$ VP2", placing temporal restriction on VP2, indicating that the event signified by VP2 is realized only when VP1 has been realized (and not at any time when VP1 has not yet been realized). For example, "doing homework" (VP2) is carried out only after "going back to school" (VP1) in (49); the hearer only arrived after "s/he" has left in (50). The preverbal $sin_{c1}$ can also be applied to utterances where VP1 is a

necessary condition of VP2. For example, in (51), the speaker must first rank number one in class (VP1), which is a necessary condition for his mother to buy him a MP3 player (VP2). In (52), the hearer only tells the speaker about a certain matter at the time of speaking, but not at any time before it. Therefore, the speaker considers it as a late event.

(49) 我返學校先做功課。 [the same as (33)]
ngo faan hokhaau sin zou gungfo
I back school only do homework
"I only do homework when I have arrived at (my) school."
(Fung and Wong, 2009)

(50) 佢走咗你先嚟。
keoi zau-zo nei sin lai
s/he leave-PERF you only come
"You arrived only after s/he has left." (Fung and Wong, 2009)

(51) 我考到第一，阿媽先買部 MP3 俾我。
ngo haau dou daijat, aa-maa sin maai bou MP3 bei ngo
I take-an-exam until number-one aa-mother only buy CL MP3-player to me
"My mother will buy me a MP3 player only if I rank number-one in class."

(52) 你而家先講。 [the same as (36)]
nei jigaa sin gong
you now only say
"You say (it) only at this moment."

3.3.2.3.2 The Preverbal $Sin_{c2}$

The preverbal $sin_c$ also places restriction on the sentential elements and convey the delimitative/diminutive sense, giving rise to the meaning of $sin_{c2}$. With the preverbal $sin_{c2}$, the modified sentential elements are diminished. Therefore, "Monday" is considered as early in (53), "three people" is considered

as a small number of people in (54), while "one hundred dollar" is considered as cheap in (55) by the speaker.

(53) 今日先星期一。 [the same as (34)]
gamjat sin singkeijat
today just Monday
"Today is just Monday."

(54) 我哋先得三個人。 [the same as (35)]
ngodei sin dak saam go jan
we only have three CL people
"We have only there people."

(55) 兩件衫夾埋先賣一百蚊。
loeng gin saam gaap-maai sin maai jatbaakman
two CL shirt together only sell one-hundred-dollar
"The two shirts cost only one hundred dollar in total."

3.3.2.3.3 The Preverbal $Sin_{c3}$

The exclusive feature of the preverbal $sin_c$ may act on clauses or discourses, asserting the premise presented by one clause/utterance while negating the premise presented by the other clause/utterance, giving rise to the contrastive meaning. In other words, the exclusive sense of the preverbal $sin_c$ extends to the discourse domain, resulted in $sin_{c3}$. In (56), the preverbal $sin_{c3}$ contrasts the first premise "I feel dizzy whenever I see this group of naughty children", which implies "I can't handle this group of naughty children well", with the second premise "S/he can handle this group of naughty children well". In (57), the contrastive sense is less explicit, because the two premises are not overtly present. The first premise is presented by a rhetorical question, "Dr. Fung's office is at AG502?" which actually implies "Dr. Fung's office is not at AG502". The correct location is provided in the following utterance. In (58), the contrastive

sense conveyed by $sin_{c3}$ is even more implicit as there is only one premise in the sentence. However, when looking at the dialogue pair, it can be seen that the first premise, "You are very naughty", is actually conveyed by the utterance made by speaker A; the utterance made by speaker B is the second premise which refutes speaker A's opinion

(56) 我見到班百厭鬼就頭暈，係佢先搞得掂。
ngo gin dou baan baakjimgwai zau tauwan, hai keoi sin gaau dak dim
I see until CL naughty-children then head dizzy, be s/he only handle can good
"I feel dizzy whenever I see this group of naughty children, only s/he can handle them well."

(57) Dr. Fung 個 office 喺 AG502 咩？AG512 先啱呀！
Dr Fung go office hai AG502 me? AG512 sin ngaam aa
Dr Fung CL office at AG502 SFP AG512 only right SFP
"Dr. Fung's office is at AG502? It should be AG512."

(58) A: 乜你咁曳架！
mat nei gam jai gaa
what you so naughty SFP
"You are so naughty."

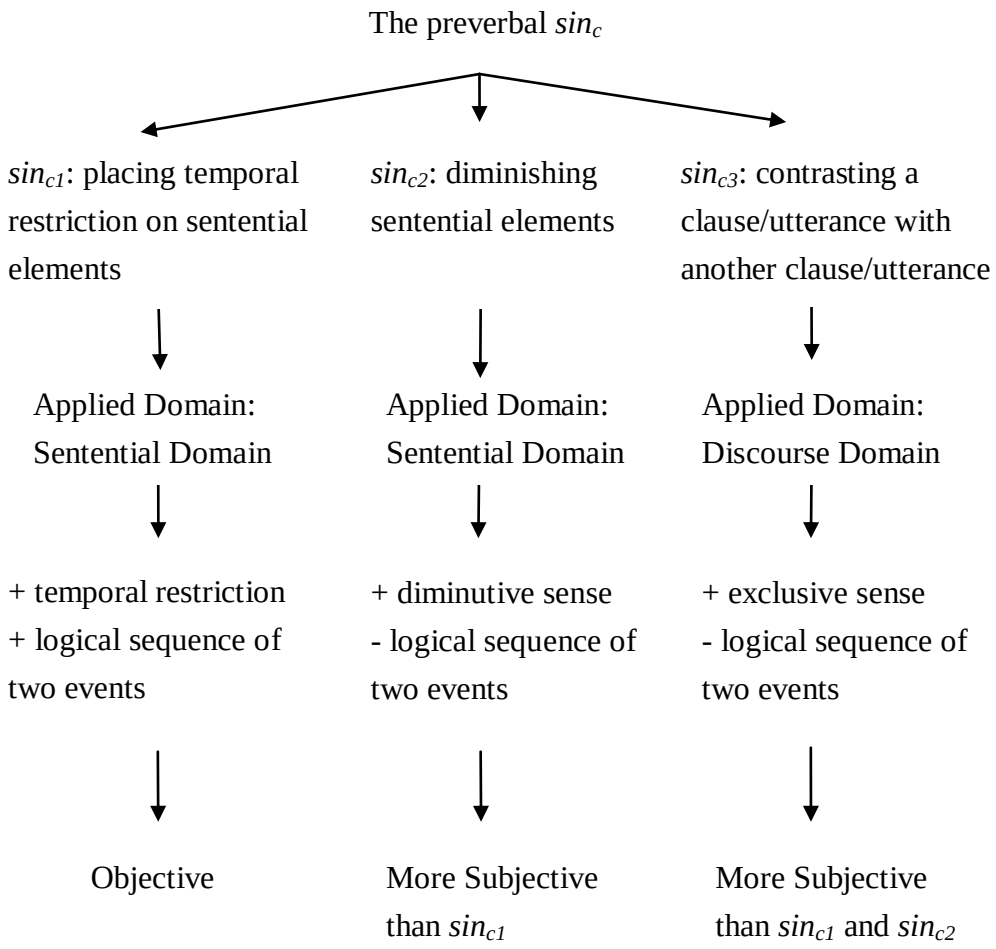
B: 你先曳。 [the same as (37)]
nei sin jai
you only naughty
"You are the one who is really naughty."

3.3.2.4 Subjectivity of the Preverbal $Sin_c$

As $sin_{c1}$ only places temporal restriction on the sentential elements and marks the temporal sequence of VP1 and VP2 in a "VP1 $sin_c$ VP2" structure, it is the most objective among the three $sin_c$. $Sin_{c2}$ does not occur in a "VP1 $sin_c$ VP2" structure and no logical temporal sequence between any two events can be found.

Moreover, it conveys a diminutive sense which involves the speaker's evaluation. Thus, *sin*$_{c2}$ is more subjective than *sin*$_{c1}$. However, it is still more objective than *sin*$_{c3}$ because its application remains at the sentential domain. As the semantic features of *sin*$_{c3}$ have extended to the discourse domain, it is the least objective (the most subjective) one among the three *sin*$_c$. The semantic meanings and subjectivity of the preverbal *sin*$_c$ are summarized in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3. 4 The Semantic Meanings and Subjectivity of the Preverbal *Sin*$_c$



3.4 Subjectivity of All *Sin* (the Preverbal $Sin_t$, $Sin_c$ and the Postverbal *Sin*)

From the above discussions, it is clear that all the preverbal $sin_t$, $sin_c$ and the postverbal *sin* can convey an objective meaning which is related to the temporal order of any two events. As the reference event is always overtly or covertly present in the propositional content, an objective temporal sequence of the two events is explicit. Besides, both the preverbal $sin_c$ and postverbal *sin* can convey a subjective meaning. However, when considering their overall performance, the postverbal *sin* is more subjective than the preverbal $sin_c$, because the semantic features of the postverbal *sin* extend from the sentential domain to the propositional domain and further to the speech act domain, while that of the preverbal $sin_c$ only extend to the discourse domain and not further. Parallel to the conclusion made in Chapter 2, the subjectivity encoded by the postverbal *sin* is shown to be stronger than that of its preverbal counterpart.

3.5 The Co-occurrence of the Preverbal and Postverbal *Sin*

The preverbal $sin_t$ can co-occur with the postverbal *sin* to strength the temporal meaning or resolve the ambiguity caused by the polysemous postverbal *sin*. Li et al. (1995:569) and Cheung (2007:204-205) also realized the co-existence of the preverbal $sin_t$ and the postverbal *sin* as in (59) and (60). In these cases, both of them serve as a marker of temporal order, their temporal meaning is strengthened. Furthermore, I think that the co-occurrence of the two *sin* would be more natural if the VP is a more complex one like that of (61).

(59) 先攞起一份先。（先拿起一份。）
sin lo-hei yat fan sin
first take-up one CL first
"Take a copy first." (Li et al., 1995: 569)

(60) 我哋先讀書先。（我們先看着書。）
ngodei sin duksyu sin
we first read-book first
“We read books first.” (Cheung, 2007:204)

(61) 你先返屋企同屋企人商量下先！
nei sin faan ukkei tung ukkeijan soengloeng-haa sin
you first back home with family-members discuss-DEL sin
“You (should) first go back home and discuss (it) with your family members.”

As discussed above, the postverbal *sin* is polysemous; sentences with it can be ambiguous as (62). It can be interpreted as either “Where do we go first?” in which the *sin* is a $sin_{1;}$ or “(Tell me first) where do we go?” in which the *sin* is a $sin_3$. When a preverbal $sin_t$ is added to (62) to give (63), the different meanings expressed by the postverbal *sin* can be shared among the two *sin*. The preverbal $sin_t$ serves as a marker of temporal order, indicating the place where they would go prior to other places; while the postverbal *sin* assigns priority to the speech act “Tell me…”. In other words, the preverbal $sin_t$ takes the meaning of $sin_1$, and then the postverbal *sin* would only be interpreted as $sin_3$. In this way, the sentence is no longer ambiguous.

Based on this observation, I suggest that the postverbal *sin* is basically used in Cantonese to express a temporal meaning; however, the semantic extension of its core meaning has given rise to a number of various meanings, making it a polysemy which causes ambiguity easily. In order to solve this problem, the preverbal $sin_t$ is used to reinforce the core temporal meaning of *sin*.

(62) 去邊先？
heoi bin sin
go where first/SFP
a. “Where do we go fist?”
b. “(Tell me first) where do we go?”

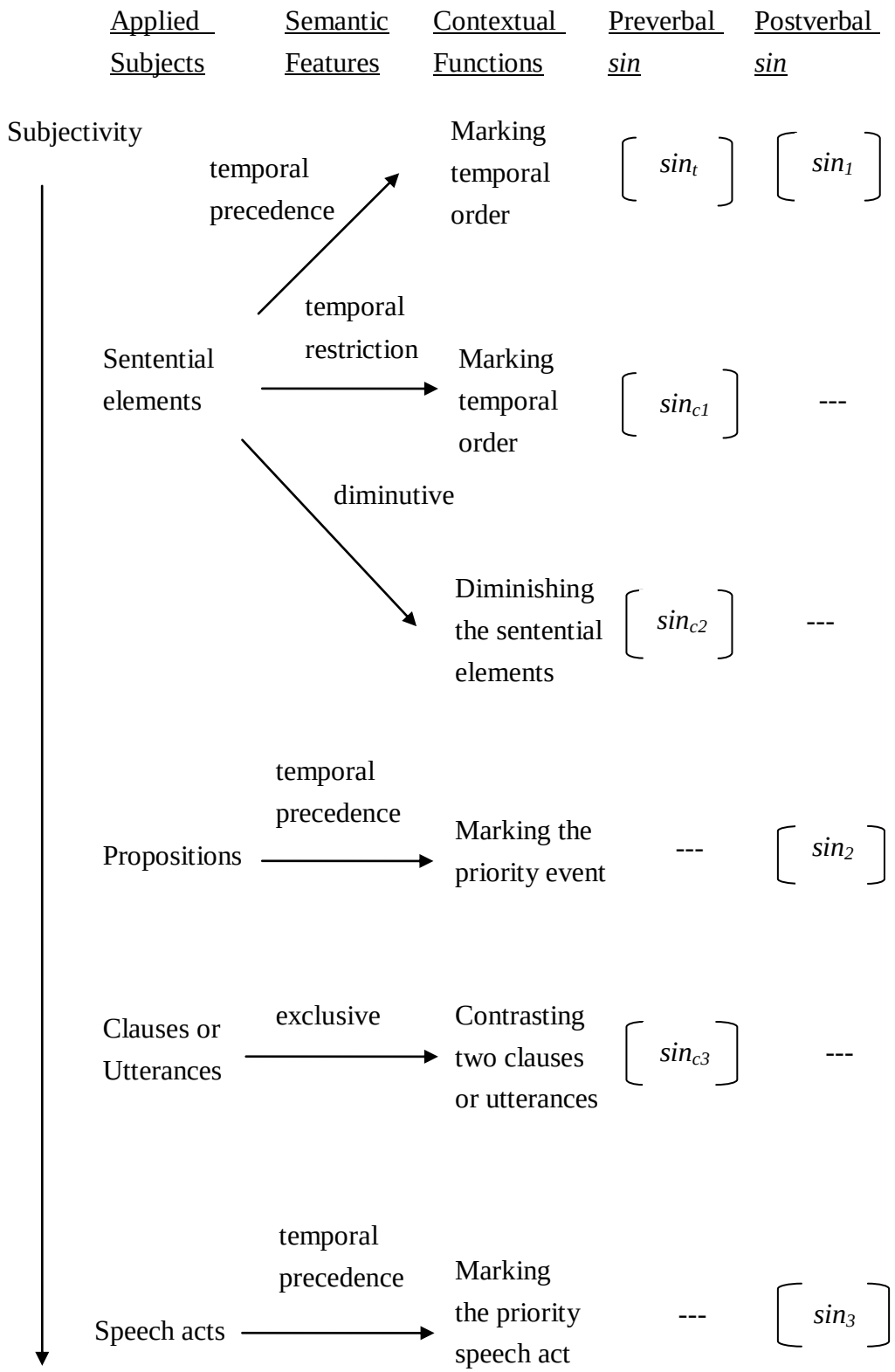
(63) 先去邊先？
sin heoi bin sin
first go where SFP
“(Tell me first) where do we go first?”

## 3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I first examined the postverbal *sin*. I proposed that “temporal precedence” is the core semantic meaning of it and described how this core meaning extended from the sentential domain to the propositional domain and the speech act domain, giving rise to totally three major types of related meanings. I then proceeded to the investigation on the preverbal *sin* which can be divided into the preverbal $sin_t$ and $sin_c$. I suggested that the preverbal $sin_t$ shares the same core meaning of “temporal precedence” with the postverbal *sin*. It is found that the core meaning of the preverbal $sin_t$ did not extend to various linguistic domains as that of the postverbal *sin*. After that, I moved on to discuss the preverbal $sin_c$. I proposed that it also shares the same core semantic meaning with the postverbal *sin*. However, the temporal meaning should be treated as a kind of temporal restriction for the preverbal $sin_c$. I then described how the exclusive and delimitative/diminutive features were derived from the meaning of temporal restriction and outlined how the meaning of temporal restriction and its associated features extended from the sentential domain to the discourse domain. Due to their different extent of semantic extension, I concluded that the postverbal *sin* is more subjective than the preverbal *sin*. At the end of this chapter,

I discussed the co-existence of the preverbal *sin*$_t$ and the postverbal *sin* in a single sentence and suggested that the preverbal *sin*$_t$ serves to reinforce the core temporal meaning and solves the ambiguity caused by the polysemous postverbal *sin*. A summary on the semantic extension of the core meaning of *sin* is given in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3. 5 The Semantic Extension of *Sin*



# Notes

[1] Liu (2008) suggested that *sin₂* is derived from *sin₁* by metaphorical mapping, in which the core temporal meaning of *sin₁* is metaphorically mapped from the content domain（行域）to the speech act domain（言域）. The covert speech act verb involved is "suggest/propose". For example, the *sin* in (i) is modifying the covert matrix clause "I suggest…" and the interpretation of (i) is (ia).

(i) 搞掂呢件事先。 (Liu, 2008)
gaau-dim nei gin si sin
solve this CL matter first
"(I first suggest that we should) solve this matter."

(ia) 我先提議解決這件事。[the interpretation of (i) suggested by Liu (2008)]
ngo sin taiji gaaikyut ze gin si
I first suggest solve this CL matter
"I first suggest that (we should) solve this matter."

I do not agree with Liu's (2008) suggestion as I think that the interpretation of (i) should be (ib) instead of (ia). *Sin₂* is a marker of priority events. In (i), the priority event should be "(we) solve this matter", which is the propositional content, but not the speech act "I suggest…". If (i) is interpreted as (ia), "I suggest…" becomes the priority event which should be carried out prior to all other ongoing or impending events; whether "(we) solve this matter" is carried out prior to all other ongoing or impending events or not becomes unimportant. The meaning of (i) will be distorted if it is interpreted in this way.

(ib) 我提議先解決這件事。
ngo taiji sin gaaikyut ze gin si
I suggest first solve this CL matter
"I suggest that (we should) solve this matter first."

[2] Although both Liu (2008) and I have the same thought towards the derivation of *sin₃*, agreeing that it is derived from the core temporal meaning of *sin₁* through metaphorically mapping from the sentential domain to the speech act domain, I cannot agree with his explanation to the meaning of *sin₃*. He stated that *sin₃* is modifying a covert matrix clause "I would like to ask…", which is a speech act performed by the speaker, giving rise to the interpretation of "I would first like to

ask…". However, I think the covert matrix clause that *sin*$_3$ is modifying should be "Tell me…", forming the meaning of "Tell me first…", because the speaker is actually using *sin*$_3$ to request for a prompt answer or reply from the hearer rather than to indicate his wish of asking the question first.

[3] According to Law and Lee (1998), this use of *sin*$_3$ is a rhetorical device, marking the proposition that the speaker would like the hearer to confirm or accept as a premise before further discussion. The utterance is often interpreted as a rhetorical question rather than an information-seeking question. However, it can be seen that (14), (15) and (17) are still information-seeking questions. Whether the utterance should be interpreted as a rhetorical question or an information-seeking question depends on the nature of the question, but not the existence of *sin*$_3$. Example (16) is still rhetorical even without *sin*$_3$ as in (ii) below.

(ii) 你話佢係唔係好衰？
nei waa keoi hai-m-hai hou seoi
you say s/he be-not-be very bad
"Do you think s/he is bad?"

[4] Although the *sin* in (iii) can be understood as corresponding to the Mandarin adverb *cai* 才 (only…until…, just), we do not consider this *sin* in this section. Therefore, (26) is considered as ungrammatical.

(iii) 幾時先去？(何時才去？)
geisi sin heoi
when until go
"Until what time will (we) go?"

# Chapter 4

# Adverbial of Restriction: *Z-*

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines a large family of preverbal and postverbal morphemes, named *Z-*, including the preverbal *zaai1* 齋, *zi2* 只 (or *zi2hai6* 只係), *zing6* 淨 (or *zing6hai6* 淨係) and the postverbal *zaa3* 咋, *ze1* 啫, *zek1* 嘟, *zi1maa3* 之嘛, etc.[1] Due to the difference in phonological form between the preverbal and postverbal *Z-*, they have never been considered as cognate words in the previous studies.[2] In the literature, the preverbal members were rarely discussed. They were simply described as adverbs restricting the scope or quantity of the following constituents, semantically similar to "only" (such as Matthews and Yip, 1994: 189; Li et al., 1995:482; Zhang and Ni, 1999: 56, 75; Cheung, 2007:101, 412; Rao et al., 2009: 111). Conversely, the postverbal members have attracted much attention. Specialized studies about them can be found (for example, Kwok, 1984; Fung, 2000; Leung, 2005). In addition to the meaning of "only", they have also been associated with a variety of meanings and features, such as delimiting, downplaying, contrasting, persuading, exhorting, expressing contempt, etc.

However, it should be noted that they all bear the same onset *z* and the same core meaning of restriction. Therefore, I propose that all the above surface forms are evolved from the same semantic prime of restriction. Due to their difference in semantic extension, the preverbal *Z-* members are more objective adverbs, whereas the postverbal *Z-* members become more subjective sentence-final particles.

Below, I first discuss the core meaning of restriction possessed by *Z-* and the derivation of several semantic features from this core meaning. Then I move on to explore the semantic extension of the preverbal *Z-* and compare the functions

and subjectivity between different surface forms. After that, I investigate the semantic extension of the postverbal *Z*- and compare the functions and subjectivity between different manifestations. Finally, I examine the co-occurrence of the preverbal and postverbal *Z*-.

## 4.2 The Core Meaning of *Z*-

I propose that the core semantic meaning of all the preverbal and postverbal surface forms in the family of *Z*- is that of restriction. They can place restrictions on various constituents of a sentence, such as the subject in (1)-(2), the VP in (3)-(4) and the object in (5)-(6). *Z*- restricts the alternatives to the value of the focused expression, indicating that none of the alternatives under consideration satisfies the truth condition of the sentence (cf. Köing, 1991). For example, in (1) and (2), *Z*- restricts the subject of the VP, indicating that apart from the speaker "I", there is no other entity that can serve as an alternative for the subject in that particular sentence. Similar meaning of restriction is conveyed by *Z*- in (3)-(4) and (5)-(6); the constituents being restricted in these cases are the VP and the object respectively.

(1) 淨/淨係/只係我一個去。 (subject restriction)
zing/zinghai/zihai ngo jat go heoi
only I one CL go
"Only I (and nobody else) go."

(2) 我一個去咋/啫/嘟/之嘛。 (subject restriction)
ngo jat go heoi zaa/ze/zek/zimaa
I one CL go only
"Only I (and nobody else) go."

(3) 我淨係/只係/齋飲嘢。 (VP restriction)
ngo zinghai/zihai/zaai jam je
I only drink thing
"I only drink something (and did nothing else)."

(4) 我飲嘢咋/啫/嘟/之嘛。 (VP restriction)
ngo jam je zaa/ze/zek/zimaa
I drink thing only
"I only drink something (and did nothing else)."

(5) 佢淨係/只/只係識中文。 (object restriction)
keoi zinghai/zi/zihai sik zungman
s/he only know Chinese
"S/he knows only Chinese (, but none of the other languages)."

(6) 佢識中文咋/嘟。 (object restriction)
keoi sik zungman zaa/zek
s/he know Chinese only
"S/he knows only Chinese (, but none of the other languages)."

The above examples illustrated that the postverbal members of *Z*- always occupy the sentence final position, although they may be used to modify different constituents within the sentence. By contrast, the preverbal members can occur at different positions, depending on which constituent is being modified. They always appear in front of the modified constituent. If the subject is being restricted, they appear in front of the subject. If the VP or the object is being restricted, they appear in front of the VP. For this reason, some sentences with *Z*- can be ambiguous, having two or even more interpretations, especially the ones involving the postverbal *Z*-. For instance, (7) with the postverbal *Z*- has up to three possible interpretations, which are shared among (8) and (9) with the preverbal Z-, although (9) is also an ambiguous sentence with two possible interpretations.

(7) 佢食咗你啲嘢咋。

keoi sik-zo nei di je zaa

s/he eat-PERF you POSS thing only

a. “Only s/he (and nobody else) has eaten your food.” (subject restriction)

b.“S/he has only eaten your food (and done nothing else).” (VP restriction)

c. “S/he has eaten only your food (and nothing else).” (object restriction)

(8) 淨係佢食咗你啲嘢。

zinghai keoi sik-zo nei di je

only s/he eat-PERF you POSS thing

“Only s/he (and nobody else) has eaten your food.” (subject restriction)

(9) 佢淨係食咗你啲嘢。

keoi zinghai sik-zo nei di je

s/he only eat-PERF you POSS thing

a. “S/he has only eaten your food (and done nothing else).” (VP restriction)

b. “S/he has eaten only your food (and nothing else).” (object restriction)

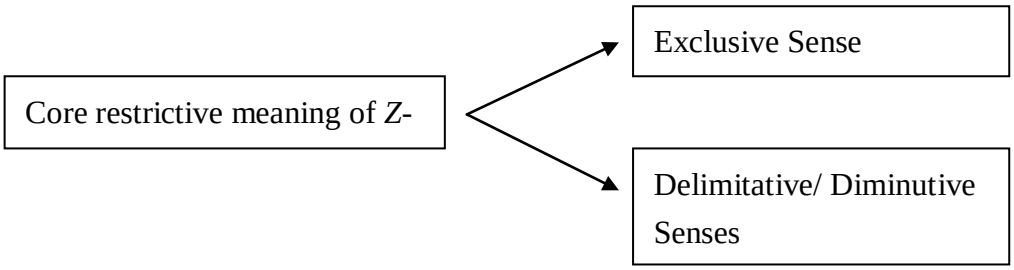
4.3 Semantic Features Derived from the Core Meaning of *Z*-

As Fung (2000) has suggested, scalar and evaluative senses can be derived from the meaning of restriction, giving rise to the semantic features of exclusive and delimitative/diminutive. The deriving processes are as follows.

During restriction, only a limited number of entities are included in a proposition; the majority are excluded or negated, resulted in the exclusive sense. In addition, as the number of entities being signaled out from the discourse universe and included in the proposition is small and limited in the process of restriction, restrictive elements are able to encode evaluation, evaluating the focused value as a minimal value, conveying a delimitative or diminutive sense. The semantic features derived from the core restrictive meaning of *Z*- are summarized in Figure 4.1.

When these features further extend from the sentential domain to other larger linguistic domains, such as the propositional, discourse, speech act and epistemic domains, various functions are derived. I suggest that the above features only extended from the sentential domain to the propositional and discourse domain for the preverbal *Z*-, but up to the speech act and epistemic domain for the postverbal *Z*-, resulted in different functions and subjectivity between them.

Figure 4. 1 The Semantic Features Derived from the Core Restrictive Meaning of *Z*-




## 4.4 The Semantic Extension of the Preverbal *Z*-

For the preverbal *Z*-, I suggest that the semantic features of exclusive and delimitative/diminutive described in the previous section extend from the sentential domain to the propositional and discourse domains, giving rise to the functions of diminishing sentential elements, downplaying propositional content and contrasting two clauses or utterances.

### 4.4.1 Sentential Domain: Diminishing the Sentential Elements

When the delimitative/diminutive feature of the preverbal *Z*- applies to sentential elements, they can diminish the sentential elements and convey a

diminutive sense as in (10)-(12). In (10), the mother of the speaker would like to look after the guest that her son has brought home. The speaker uses *zihai* to diminish the subject, indicating that "my classmate" is not someone special although s/he is a guest, telling his/her mother that there is no need to take care of this guest. In (11), the speaker would like to sell his/her computer on the internet. In the advertisement, s/he uses *zihai* to diminish the VP, telling his/her buyer that s/he has only carried out the first step of checking since buying the computer, implying that it is still very new. In (12), the speaker uses *zihai* to diminish the object, "manager", conveying that it is just a small post. This is no big deal even if the subject "s/he" has got promoted.

(10) 只係我同學嚟咗，你繼續做嘢啦，唔使招呼佢架！ (subject restriction)
zihai ngo tunghok lai-zo, nei gaizuk zou je laa, m-sai ziufu keoi gaa
only my classmate come-PERF you continue do thing SFP not-need look-after him/her SFP
"It's just my classmates (not a special guest) who has come, you may continue your (own) work; don't need to look after him/her."

(11) Windows 仲未安裝，只/只係開過一次機 check 死點。 (VP restriction)
windows zung mei onzong, zi/zihai hoi-gwo jat ci gei check seidim
windows still not-yet install only switch-on-EXP one CL machine check dead-pixels
"The Windows has not yet been installed; (I) only switched on (the computer) once for checking the dead pixels. (Only the first step of checking has been carried out since buying the computer; so it is still very new)"

(12) 佢只係做咗經理，使唔駛使咁囂呀？ (object restriction)
keoi zihai zou-zo ginglei, sai-m-sai gam hiu aa
s/he only do-PERF manager need-not-need so arrogant SFP
"S/he has become a manager only (just a small post), does s/he need to be so arrogant?"

Among all the preverbal *Z-*, it seems that only *zi* and *zihai* are able to diminish the sentential elements and convey the diminutive sense. In (13), *zi* or *zihai* marks that five hundred dollars is a small amount while *zaai*, *zing* and *zinghai* in (14) fail to do so.

(13) 呢部新電話只/只係賣五百蚊。
nei bou san dinwaa zi/zihai maai ngbaak man
this CL new mobile-phone only sell five-hundred dollar
"This new mobile phone costs five hundred dollars only."

(14) *呢部新電話齋/淨/淨係賣五百蚊。
*nei bou san dinwaa zaai/zing/zinghai maai ngbaak man
this CL new mobile-phone only sell five-hundred dollar

In (15), the speaker is complaining that his/her last trip to USA was too packed; s/he could sleep for only ten hours within the five days, which made her very tired. The preverbal *zi* or *zihai* indicates that the speaker slept no more than ten hours, which is too little and not enough, giving rise to the diminutive implication.

(15) 上次去 USA 完全癲倒，去五日只/只係瞓咗十個鐘，好辛苦呀！
soengci heoi USA jyuncyun dindou, heoi ng jat zi/zihai fan-zo sap go zung, hou sanfu aa
last-time go USA totally inverted go five day only sleep-PERF ten CL hour very toilsome SFP
"Last time (when we) went to USA, (our days and nights were) completely inverted; (we) slept for only ten hours within the five days; it's really exhausting."

However, if *zi* or *zihai* is replaced by other preverbal *Z-*, *zaai*, *zing* or *zinghai*, as in (16), the meaning conveyed becomes: the speaker did not do anything other

than “sleeping for ten hours” in the five-day trip, which does not make any sense.

(16) *上次去 USA 完全癲倒，去五日齋/淨/淨係瞓咗十個鐘，好辛苦呀！
*soengci heoi USA jyuncyun dindou, heoi ng jat zaai/zing/zinghai fan-zo sap go zung, hou sanfu aa
last-time go USA totally inverted go five day only sleep-PERF ten CL hour very toilsome SFP
“Last time (when we) went to USA, (our days and nights) were completely inverted; (we) only slept for ten hours within the five days (and did nothing else); it’s really exhausting.”

It can be seen that *zaai*, *zing* and *zinghai* only convey the core meaning of restriction and the exclusive sense, whereas *zi* and *zihai* are also able to denote a diminutive sense. Therefore, all *zaai*, *zinghai* and *zihai* can be adopted in (17) where they place restriction on the VP and denote a restrictive and exclusive meaning, telling that “s/he” did not do anything besides “sleeping” during the whole movie.

(17) 同佢去睇戲，佢全程齋/淨係/只係瞓，搞到我好無癮！
tung keoi heoi taihei, keoi cyuncing zaai/zinghai/zihai fan, gaau dou ngo hou moujan
with him/her go watch-movie s/he the-whole-course only sleep make until me very no-mood
“(I) watched a movie with him/her (before), (but) s/he just fell asleep throughout the whole movie; my mood was totally spoiled.”

### 4.4.2 Propositional Domain: Downplaying the Propositional Content of the Whole Sentence

The diminutive feature of the preverbal *Z-* described above does not only apply to sentential elements. It may also range over the whole sentence, diminishing the significance of the propositional content. In (18), the subject “s/he” has stolen something and got arrested. His/her mother utters (18) to the

policeman to beg for his/her discharge. The preverbal *zihai* serves to downplay the seriousness of the proposition "s/he has stolen something." In (19), the subject "s/he" has offended the school regulation. S/he considers being expelled from school as the worst case among all the punishments. However, s/he thinks that it is still acceptable; s/he does not afraid of it. In other words, even the worst case is not too bad. Here, *zihai* serves to downplay the undesirability of the situation described, denoting that there is nothing to worry about. In (20), the first clause indicates that the speaker is happy about winning the competition; s/he did not think of it before. However, s/he thinks that even so; this is no big deal; it does not deserve any celebration. In the second clause, *zihai* serves to downplay this joyous success.

(18) 佢只係偷嘢，俾次機會佢啦！
keoi zihai tauje, bei ci geiwui keoi laa
s/he only stealing give CL chance him/her SFP
"S/he just stole something (this is just a slight matter); please give him/her a chance."

(19) 最多只係踢出校，怕咩呀？
zeoido zihai tek ceot haau, paa me aa
at-most only kick out school fear what SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school (this is just a slight matter); what is worth to be scared?"

(20) 雖然係好意外好開心，不過只係贏咗比賽，唔使慶祝啦！
seoijin hai hou jingoi ho hoisam, batgwo zihai jeng-zo beicoi, m-sai hingzuk laa
although be very surprise very happy but only win-PERF competition no-need celebrate SPF
"Although (we are) surprised and happy, (I) just won a competition (this is no big deal); (you) don't need to celebrate (with me)."

Among the preverbal *Z*-, only *zihai* can perform the downplaying function as in the above examples while the other preverbal *Z*- cannot. They simply place restriction on the sentential elements, conveying a restrictive and exclusive sense, such as (21)-(23). Therefore, if the *zihai* in (18)-(20) is replaced by other preverbal *Z*- as in (24)-(26), the sentences become ungrammatical.

(21) 佢只/齋/淨/淨係偷嘢。
keoi zi/zaai/zing/zinghai tauje
s/he only stealing
"S/he only stole something (and did nothing else)."

(22) 只/齋/淨/淨係踢出校。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai tek ceot haau
only kick out school
"Only being expelled from school (; nothing else is going to happen)."

(23) 只/齋/淨/淨係贏咗比賽。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai jeng-zo beicoi
only win-PERF competition
"Only won a competition (and nothing else happened)."

(24) *佢只/齋/淨/淨係偷嘢，求你俾次機會佢啦！
*keoi zi/zaai/zing/zinghai tauje, kau nei bei ci geiwui keoi laa
s/he only stealing beg you give CL chance him/her SFP
"S/he only stole something (and did nothing else); (I) beg you to give him/her a chance."

(25) *最多只/齋/淨/淨係踢出校，怕咩呀？
*zeoido zi/zaai/zing/zinghai tek ceot haau, paa me aa
at-most only kick out school fear what SFP
"The worst case is being expelled from school (; nothing else is going to happen); what is worth to be scared?"

(26) *雖然係好意外好開心，不過只/齋/淨/淨係贏咗比賽，唔使慶祝啦！
*seoijin hai hou jingoi ho hoisam, batgwo zi/zaai/zing/zinghai jeng-zo beicoi, m-sai hingzuk laa
although be very surprise very happy but only win-PERF competition no-need celebrate SPF
"Although (we are) very surprised and happy, (I) only won a competition (; nothing else happened); (you) don't need to celebrate (with me)."

### 4.4.3 Discourse Domain: Contrasting Two Clauses or Utterances

The semantic extension of the core meaning of the preverbal *Z-* does not stop at the propositional domain; it further extends to the discourse domain. The exclusive feature of the preverbal *Z-* can act in the discourse domain, asserting the premise presented by one clause while negating the premise presented by another clause, generating a contrastive or disjunctive meaning.

In each of the following examples, there are two premises that are placed side by side with an implied contrast. In (27), *zihai* contrasts the second premise "(S/he always) takes action without considering the consequence and always fails because of impetuosity" with the first premise "S/he is good at all aspects", telling that s/he still has a shortcoming although s/he seems perfect. In (28), the first premise reminds the hearer that "Actually she is very pretty"; the second premise explains that "She does not know how to dress herself", which is the reason why she does not look pretty. In (29), the first premise is presented by a rhetorical question, "You think I want to do it (to help with the computer problem)?" which actually implies "I do not want to do it". The following premise explains the reason why the speaker did deal with the computer problem eventually. In (30), *zihai* conjoins two utterances in a dialogue pair. The first premise is conveyed by the utterance of speaker A; s/he complains that the questions in the assignment are too difficult. The second premise is conveyed by

the utterance of speaker B, which is a refutation against the opinion of speaker A, implying that the questions are not difficult.

(27) 佢個人樣樣都好，只係做嘢唔諗後果，成日衰衝動。
keoi go jan joengjoeng dou hou, zihai zou je m nam haugwo singjat seoi cungdung
s/he CL person everything all good only do thing not think consequence always fail impetuosity
"S/he is good at all aspects, but (s/he always) takes action without considering the consequence and always fails because of impetuosity."

(28) 其實佢生得幾靚，只係唔識打扮。
keisat keoi saang dak gei leng, zihai m sik daabaan
actually she born ADV quite pretty only not know dressing
"Actually, she is quite pretty; she just doesn't know how to dress herself."

(29) 你估我想架咩？只係識電腦嘅人走晒，咁我迫住幫手啦！
nei gu ngo soeng gaa me? zihai sik dinnou ge jan zau saai, gam ngo bik zyu bongsau laa
you guess I want SFP SFP only know computer LP person leave all then I force stopped help SFP
"You think I want (to do it)? It's just (because) all the people who have got computer knowledge have left. I was forced to offer help."

(30) A: 我唔識做呀！乜啲題目咁深架？
ngo m sik zou aa! mat di taimuk gam sam gaa
I not know do SFP what CL questions so difficult SFP
"I don't know how to answer (the questions). How come they are so difficult? "

B: 只係你唔肯用腦，咪咁多怨言呀！
zihai nei m hang jung nou, mai gam do jyunjin aa
only you not willing use brain do-not so much complain SFP
"It's just (because) you are not willing to use your brain (to think about the solutions), don't complain that much."

Among all the preverbal *Z-*, only *zihai* can perform the above contrastive/disjunctive function while others cannot. When *zihai* in the above examples is replaced by other preverbal *Z-* as in (31)-(34), the sentences become ungrammatical.

(31) *佢個人樣樣都好，只/齋/淨/淨係做嘢唔諗後果，成日衰衝動。
*keoi go jan joengjoeng dou hou, zi/zaai/zing/zinghai zou je m nam haugwo, singjat seoi cungdung
s/he CL person everything all good only do thing not think consequence always fail impetuosity
"S/he is good at all aspects; (s/he) only takes action without considering the consequence and always fails because of impetuosity."

(32) *其實佢生得幾靚，只/齋/淨/淨係唔識打扮。
*keisat keoi saang dak gei leng, zi/zaai/zing/zinghai m sik daabaan
actually she born ADV quite pretty only not know dressing
"Actually, she is quite pretty; she only doesn't know how to dress herself (and knows all other things)."

(33) *你估我想架咩？只/齋/淨/淨係識電腦嘅人走晒，咁我迫住幫手啦！
*nei gu ngo soeng gaa me? zi/zaai/zing/zinghai sik dinnou ge jan zau saai, gam ngo bik zyu bongsau laa
you guess I want SFP SFP only know computer LP person leave all then I force stopped help SFP
"You think I want (to do it)? All the people who have got only computer knowledge (but not any other kinds of knowledge) have left. I was forced to offer help."

(34) A: 我唔識做呀！乜啲題目咁深架？
ngo m sik zou aa! mat di taimuk gam sam gaa
I not know do SFP what CL questions so difficult SFP
"I don't know how to answer (the questions). How come they are so difficult? "

B: *只/齋/淨/淨係你唔肯用腦，咪咁多怨言呀！

* zi/zaai/zing/zinghai nei m hang jung nou, mai gam do jyunjin aa
only you not willing use brain do-not so much complain SFP
"Only you (but not any other people) are not willing to use the brain (to think about the solutions), don't complain that much."

Although (35)-(38) are grammatical, the preverbal *Z-* there only restricts the sentential elements, "taking action" (VP) in (35), "dressing (herself)" (object) in (36), "computer" (object) in (37), and "you" (subject) in (38), conveying a restrictive and exclusive meaning. They cannot contrast the whole clause or utterance with the previous clause or utterance as what *zihai* did in (27)-(30).

(35) 只/齋/淨/淨係做嘢唔諗後果。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai zou je m nam haugwo
only do thing not think consequence
"(S/he) only takes action, but does not think about the consequence."

(36) 只/齋/淨/淨係唔識打扮。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai m sik daabaan
only not know dressing
"(She knows all other things), only doesn't know how to dress herself."

(37) 只/齋/淨/淨係識電腦嘅人走晒。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai sik dinnou ge jan zau saai
only know computer LP person leave all
"The people who have got only computer knowledge (but not any other kinds of knowledge) have all left."

(38) 只/齋/淨/淨係你唔肯用腦。
zi/zaai/zing/zinghai nei m hang jung nou
only you not willing use brain
"Only you (but not any other people) are not willing to use the brain (to think)."

### 4.4.4 Subjectivity of the Preverbal *Z-*

The core restrictive meaning of *Z-* simply expresses that some entities are being included in the proposition while the others are being excluded; this is a rather logical and objective meaning. However, this objective meaning becomes less apparent or fades gradually when the semantic features of *Z-* extend to larger and larger linguistic domains. Instead, its meanings and functions become more and more subjective and speaker-oriented, such as the diminutive meaning and the downplaying and contrastive functions.

Among the preverbal *Z-*, *zihai* is the most subjective manifestation as it can perform all the functions from diminishing the sentential elements, downplaying the propositional content, to contrasting two clauses or utterances. *Zi* is less subjective than *zihai* as it can only diminish the sentential elements, but cannot go further to perform the other two functions. Others are all objective as they can only denote the logical restrictive and exclusive meanings at the sentential level. The semantic extension of the preverbal *Z-* is summarized in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4. 2 The Semantic Extension of the Preverbal *Z-*

| Manifestations | | *zi* | *zihai* | *zing* | *zinghai* | *zaai* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Core Meaning | Restriction | + | + | + | + | + |
| Semantic Features | Exclusive Sense | + | + | + | + | + |
| | Delimitative/Diminutive Sense | + | + | - | - | - |
| Applied Domain | Sentential Domain: Diminishing the Sentential Elements (Conveying the Diminutive Meaning) | + | + | - | - | - |
| | Propositional Domain: Downplaying the Propositional Content | - | + | - | - | - |
| | Discourse Domain: Contrasting Two Clauses or Utterances | - | + | - | - | - |
| Subjectivity (S=Subjective) (O=Objective) | | >S | S | O | O | O |

## 4.5 The Semantic Extension of the Postverbal *Z*-

In addition to the propositional and discourse domains, the semantic features of the postverbal *Z*- further extend to the speech act and epistemic domains, giving rise to more functions, such as persuading, exhorting, reporting, posing judgment, etc., which cannot be performed by the preverbal *Z*-.

### 4.5.1 Sentential Domain: Diminishing the Sentential Elements

Similar to the preverbal *Z*-, the postverbal *Z*- can diminish the sentential elements and convey a diminutive sense when its delimitative/diminutive feature applies to the sentential elements, such as (39)-(41).

(39) 我同學嚟咗啫/之嘛，你繼續做嘢啦，唔使招呼佢架！(subject restriction)
ngo tunghok lai-zo ze/zimaa, nei gaizuk zou je laa, m-sai ziufu keoi gaa
my classmate come-PERF only you continue do thing SFP not-need look-after him/her SFP
"It's just my classmates (not a special guest) who has come, you may continue your (own) work; don't need to look after him/her."

(40) Windows 仲未安裝，開過一次機 check 死點咋/喞。 (VP restriction)
windows zung mei onzong, hoi-gwo jat ci gei check seidim zaa/zek
windows still not-yet install switch-on-EXP one CL machine check dead-pixels only
"The Windows has not yet been installed; (I) only switched on (the computer) once for checking the dead pixels. (Only the first step of checking has been carried out since buying the computer; so it is still very new)"

(41) 佢做咗經理啫/之嘛，使唔使咁囂呀？ (object restriction)
keoi zou-zo ginglei ze/zimaa, sai-m-sai gam hiu aa
s/he do-PERF manager only need-not-need so arrogant SFP
"S/he has become a manager only (just a small post), does s/he need to be so arrogant?"

Although all the postverbal *Z-* members studied in the present study are able to diminish the sentential elements and convey a diminutive sense, they are not always interchangeable. This is because they convey different presuppositions of the speaker.[3] With *zaa* and *zek*, the speaker presupposes a higher point on the scalar, but it turns out to be lower. On the contrary, with *ze* and *zimaa*, the speaker presupposes a lower point on the scalar, but it turns out to be higher. Considering (42) and (43),

(42) 我仲預咗一千蚊添，原來賣二百蚊咋/喞/*啫/*之嘛。
ngo zung jyu-zo jatcin man tim, jyunloi maai jibaak man zaa/zek/*ze/*zimaa
I still prepare-PERF one-thousand dollar SFP, actually sell two-hundred dollar only
"I have prepared one thousand dollars, but it turns out to be two hundred dollars only."

(43) 貴係貴咗啲，不過都係二百蚊啫/之嘛/*咋/*喞。
gwai hai gwai-zo di, batgwo dou hai jibaak man ze/zimaa/*zaa/*zek
expensive be expensive-PERF a-bit but all be two-hundred dollar only
"(True), it's a bit expensive. Even so, it's just two hundred dollars only."

In (42), the first clause tells that the speaker assumes the amount required is one thousand dollars. The second clause points out that the product costs only two hundred dollars in reality, which is less than what the speaker expected. Hence, *zaa* and *zek* are grammatical for the utterance due to their semantic compatibility while *ze* and *zimaa* are not. In (43), the first clause indicates that the focused value "two hundred dollars" is more expensive than what the speaker expected. The second clause then states that even so, the amount is still acceptable. *Ze/zimaa* is indeed downplaying the amount of the price. They can be used to reassure the hearer that the price, though higher, is not too excessive and

is still affordable. Therefore, only *ze* and *zimaa* can be adopted; z*aa* and *zek* cannot be used since they are incompatible with the assumption made.

When comparing the preverbal *Z-*, *zi/zihai*, with the postverbal *Z-* in this aspect, it can be seen that the preverbal *zi/zihai* does not indicate the speakers' presuppositions as both (44) and (45) below are grammatical.

(44) 我仲預咗一千蚊添，原來只係賣二百蚊。
ngo zung jyu-zo jatcin man tim, jyunloi zihai maai jibaak man
I still prepare-PERF one-thousand dollar SFP actually only sell two-hundred dollar
"I have prepared one thousand dollars, but it turns out to be two hundred dollars only."

(45) 貴係貴咗啲，不過都只係二百蚊。
gwai hai gwai-zo di, batgwo dou zihai jibaak man
expensive be expensive-PERF a-bit but all only two-hundred dollar
"(True), it's a bit expensive. Even so, it's just two hundred dollars only."

### 4.5.2 Propositional Domain: Downplaying the Propositional Content of the Whole Sentence

As what the preverbal *Z-* does, the delimitative/diminutive feature of the postverbal *Z-* may also range over the whole sentence, diminishing the significance or seriousness of the propositional content as in (46)-(48).

(46) 佢偷嘢啫/之嘛，俾次機會佢啦！
keoi tauje ze/zimaa, bei ci geiwui keoi laa
s/he stealing only give CL chance him/her SFP
"S/he just stole something (this is just a slight matter); please give him/her a chance."

(47) 最多踢出校啫/之嘛，怕咩呀？
zeoido tek ceot haau ze/zimaa, paa me aa
at-most kick out school only fear what SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school (this is just a slight matter); what is worth to be scared?"

(48) 雖然係好意外好開心，不過贏咗比賽啫/之嘛，唔使慶祝啦！
seoijin hai hou jingoi ho hoisam, batgwo jeng-zo beicoi ze/zimaa, m-sai hingzuk laa
although be very surprise very happy but win-PERF competition only no-need celebrate SPF
"Although (we are) surprised and happy, (I) just won a competition (this is no big deal); (you) don't need to celebrate (with me)."

By considering (49) and (50), it is found that *zaa* and *zek* are unable to downplay the significance or seriousness of the propositional content as what *ze* and *zimaa* do.[4] This is also related to the different speakers' presuppositions conveyed by them as mentioned in the previous section 4.5.1: with *ze* and *zimaa*, the speaker presupposes a lower point on the scalar, but it turns out to be higher; conversely, with *zaa* and *zek*, the speaker presupposes a higher point on the scalar, but it turns out to be lower.

(49) 最多踢出校啫/之嘛/*咋/*喞，怕咩呀？
zeoido tek ceot haau ze/zimaa/*zaa/*zek, paa me aa
at-most kick out school only fear what SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school (this is just a slight matter); what is worth to be scared?"

(50) 最多踢出校咋/喞/*啫/*之嘛，算佢好彩啦！
zeoido tek ceot haau zaa/zek/*ze/*zimaa, syun keoi houcoi laa
at-most kick out school only count s/he good-luck SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school; s/he is lucky."

The speaker of (49) considers being expelled from the school as the worst case among all other punishments that s/he can imagine. However, s/he still thinks that this is not a big deal and s/he is not afraid of it. In other words, the speaker does not consider even the worst scenario highly detrimental. Here, either *ze* or *zimaa* can downplay the undesirability of the situation described, denoting that there is nothing to worry about. The ungrammaticality of *zaa* and *zek* indicates that they cannot perform the downplaying function. On the other hand, *zaa* and *zek* in (50) convey that the utmost punishment in the reality, "being expelled from school", ranks lower than the speaker's scalar presupposition. S/he expects some more serious punishments, such as sending the offender to the police station. However, all other more serious punishments will not be carried out, so s/he thinks that the offender is lucky. Hence, *ze* or *zimaa* are not grammatical in this case.

Unlike *ze* and *zimaa*, *zek* fails to diminish the seriousness of a situation or a matter as illustrated in the above examples. However, it can be used to downplay the propositional content and show the disapproval attitude of the speaker with a sense of contempt as in (51)-(53). This function cannot be performed by *zaa*.

(51) 你咁煩架喫/*咋/*啫/*之嘛！
nei gam faan gaa zek/*zaa/*ze/*zimaa
you so troublesome SFP SFP
"You are so troublesome."

(52) 我呀(aa3)，真係唔忍得你敲詐勒索喫/*咋/*啫/*之嘛！ (Fung, 2000: 52)
ngo aa, zanhai mjandak nei haauzaa-laaksok zek/*zaa/*ze/*zimaa
I SFP really-be not-stand-able you blackmail SFP
"I really can't stand your blackmailing!"

(53) 媽，你真係論盡嘅嘢/*咋/*啫/*之嘛！ (Fung, 2000: 53)
maa, nei zanhai leonzeon ge zek/*zaa/*ze/*zimaa
mom you really-be clumsy SFP SFP
"Mom, you're so clumsy (careless, dump)!"

Although *ze* and *zimaa* can also downplay the significance of the propositional content, they are not interchangeable with *zek* in (51)-(53) to show the strong sense of dissatisfaction. As explained in the previous paragraphs, *ze* and *zimaa* can downplay the unacceptability or undesirability of a situation/matter to make it become acceptable. This is incompatible with the disapproval attitude of the speaker conveyed in the utterances of (51)-(53). On the other hand, *zek* indicates something which ranks lower than the speaker's expectation. This is not necessarily contradictory to the sense of contempt or disapproval attitude.

As discussed in section 4.4.2, the preverbal *zihai* can also perform the downplaying function. However, it is only able to make a situation/matter less serious as what *zek* and *zimaa* do, such as (19) (which is reminded as (54) here), but not able to convey the disapproval attitude of the speaker. Hence, (55)-(57) are all ungrammatical. Even if (57) is acceptable, *zihai* there only restricts the predicate "clumsy" and conveys the restrictive and exclusive sense at the sentential level.

(54) 最多只係踢出校，怕咩呀？ [the same as (19)]
zeoido zihai tek ceot haau, paa me aa
at-most only kick out school fear what SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school (this is just a slight matter); what is worth to be scared?"

(55) *媽，只係你真係論盡嘅！
*maa, zihai nei zanhai leonzeon ge
mom only you really-be clumsy SFP

(56) *媽，你只係真係論盡嘅！
*maa, nei zihai zanhai leonzeon ge
mom you only really-be clumsy SFP

(57) #媽，你真係只係論盡。
#maa, nei zanhai zihai leonzeon
mom you really-be only clumsy
"Mom, you are only clumsy; it's true (you don't have any other shortcomings)."

4.5.3 Discourse Domain: Contrasting Two Clauses or Utterances

Similar to the preverbal *Z-*, the exclusive feature of the postverbal *Z-* further extends to the discourse domain, asserting the premise presented by one clause/utterance while negating the premise presented by another clause/utterance, generating a contrastive or disjunctive meaning as in (58)-(61) below.

(58) 呢邊啱啱鋪好咋/喞/之嘛，嗰邊又挖開嚟整水管喎！
nei bin ngaamngaam pouhou zaa/zek/zimaa, go bin jau waathoi lai zing seoigun wo
this side just pave-over SFP that side again dug-up come fix water-pipe SFP
"This side has just got paved over, (now) that side is dug up to fix the pipe."

(59) 好彩睇得早咋/喞，唔係變成肺炎唔係重牙煙啦（*laa1*）！[5]
houcoi tai-dak zou zaa/zek, m-hai binsing faijim m-hai zung ngaajin laa
lucky see-PRT early SFP not-be become pneumonia not-be even dangerous SFP
"Good thing (he) saw (the doctor) early, otherwise (it'll be) worse (when it) turns into pneumonia."

(60) 你估我想架咩？識電腦嘅人走晒咋，咁我迫住幫手啦！
nei gu ngo soeng gaa me? sik dinnou ge jan zau saai zaa, gam ngo bik zyu bongsau laa
you guess I want SFP SFP know computer LP person leave all SFP then I force stopped help SFP
"You think I want (to do it)? It's just (because) all the people who have got computer knowledge have left. I was forced to offer help."

(61) A: 我唔識做呀！乜啲題目咁深架？
ngo m-sik zou aa! mat di taimuk gam sam gaa
I not-know do SFP what CL questions so difficult SFP
"I don't know how to answer (the questions). How come they are so difficult? "

B: 你唔肯用腦啫/之嘛，咪咁多怨言呀！
nei m-hang jung nou ze/zimaa, mai gam do jyunjin aa
you not-willing use brain SFP do-not so much complain SFP
"It's just (because) you are not willing to use your brain (to think about the solutions), don't complain that much."

Although both the preverbal *Z-* (*zihai*) and the postverbal *Z-* can contrast two clauses or utterances, they are not always interchangeable. The above examples showed that the postverbal *Z-* can either occur at the first premise to contrast it with the second premise as in (58) and (59); or occur at the second premise to contrast it with the first premise as in (60) and (61). However, the preverbal *Z-* (*zihai*) can only occur in the second premise to contrast it with the first premise, but not vice versa. Therefore, the postverbal *Z-* in the first premise of (58) and (59) above cannot be replaced by the preverbal *zihai*.

(62) *只係呢邊啱啱鋪好，嗰邊又挖開嚟整水管喎！
*zihai nei bin ngaamngaam pouhou, go bin jau waathoi lai zing seoigun wo
only this side just pave-over that side again dug-up come fix water-pipe SFP

(63) ?呢邊只係啱啱鋪好，嗰邊又挖開嚟整水管喎！

? nei bin zihai ngaamngaam pouhou, go bin jau waathoi lai zing seoigun wo
this side only just pave-over that side again dug-up come fix water-pipe
SFP

"This side has just got paved over, (now) that side is dug up to fix the pipe."

(64) *呢邊啱啱只係鋪好，嗰邊又挖開嚟整水管喎！

*nei bin ngaamngaam zihai pouhou, go bin jau waathoi lai zing seoigun wo
this side just only pave-over that side again dug-up come fix water-pipe
SFP

(65) *只係好彩睇得早，唔係變成肺炎唔係重牙煙啦！

*zihai houcoi tai-dak zou, m-hai binsing faijim m-hai zung ngaajin laa
only lucky see-PRT early not-be become pneumonia not-be even
dangerous SFP

(66) *好彩只係睇得早，唔係變成肺炎唔係重牙煙啦！

* houcoi zihai tai-dak zou, m-hai binsing faijim m-hai zung ngaajin laa
lucky only see-PRT early not-be become pneumonia not-be even
dangerous SFP

### 4.5.4 Speech Act Domain: Persuading, Exhorting

Unlike the preverbal *Z-*, the semantic extension of the core meaning of the postverbal *Z-* does not stop at the discourse domain; its semantic features further extend to the speech act domain. The diminutive feature of *Z-* diminishes a directive *D* conveyed by the utterance, in which *D* can be a request or a question. With *D* as a request, *Z-* downplays the difficulty in performing it, implying that the request, such as "taking me (with you)" in (67) and "giving me some candies" in (68), are easy tasks which should be able to be fulfilled by the hearer. With *D* as a question, *Z-* downplays the difficulty of the question, implying that the questions, such as "Have you finished mopping the floor yet?" in (69) and

"What did you need to buy?" in (70), are just simple ones which should be able to be answered promptly by the hearer.

(67) 好喞，帶埋我去喞！ (Persuasion) (Leung, 2005:70)
hou zek, daaimaai ngo heoi zek
good SFP bring-also me go SFP
"Please, take me (with you)!"

(68) 我好恨食糖喞！ (Persuasion) (Cheung, 2007:195)
ngo hou han sik tong zek
I very love eat candy SFP
"I love to eat candy."

(69) 喂，你拖完地未喞？ (Exhortation) (Fung, 2000:43)
wai nei to-jyun dei mei zek
hey you mop-finish floor not-yet SFP
"Hey, have you finished mopping the floor yet?"

(70) 阿康呀，你買乜鬼喞？去到咁晏嘅？ (Exhortation) (Leung, 2005:69)
aa-hong aa, nei maai mat gwai zek? heoi dou gam ngaan ge
aa-hong SFP you buy what ghost SFP go till so late SFP
"Hong, what did you need to buy? (Why did) you go (for a long time) until that late?"

By replacing *zek* in the above examples with other postverbal *Z-*, it can be found that none of the others can be used to make a persuasion or an exhortation.

(71) *好喞，帶埋我去咋/啫/之嘛！
*hou zek, daaimaai ngo heoi zaa/ze/zimaa
good SFP bring-also me go SFP

(72) *我好恨食糖咋/啫/之嘛！
*ngo hou han sik tong zaa/ze/zimaa
I very love eat candy SFP

(73) *喂，你拖完地未咋/啫/之嘛？
*wai nei to-jyun dei mei zaa/ze/zimaa
hey you mop-finish floor not-yet SFP

(74) *阿康呀，你買乜鬼咋/啫/之嘛？去到咁晏嘅？
*aa-hong aa, nei maai mat gwai zaa/ze/zimaa? heoi dou gam ngaan ge
aa-hong you buy what ghost SFP go till so late SFP

As the semantic extension of the core meaning of the preverbal *Z-* stops at the discourse domain without extending further to the speech act domain, the preverbal *Z-* fails to perform the persuading and exhorting functions described above, thus (75) and (78)-(80) are grammatical though, their meanings are different from that of (67) and (68) respectively; and (76)-(77) and (81)-(84) are all ungrammatical. The restrictive/exclusive features of the preverbal *Z-* in (75), (78)-(80) only place restriction on the sentential elements, but not function at the speech act domain.

(75) #好喇，淨係帶埋我去！
#hou zek, zinghai daaimaai ngo heoi
good SFP only bring-also me go
"Please, take only me (and nobody else) (with you)!"

(76) *好喇，帶埋齋/只/淨/淨係/只係我去！
*hou zek, daaimaai zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai ngo heoi
good SFP bring-also only me go

(77) *好喇，帶埋我齋/只/淨/淨係/只係去！
*hou zek, daaimaai ngo zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai heoi
good SFP bring-also me only go

(78) #淨/淨係/只係我好恨食糖。
#zing/zinghai/zihai ngo hou han sik tong
only I very love eat candy
"Only me (and nobody else) love to eat candy."

(79) #我淨係/只係好恨食糖。
# ngo zinghai/zihai hou han sik tong
I only very love eat candy
a. "I only love to eat candy (and love to do nothing else)."
b. "I only love to eat candy (and love to eat nothing else)."

(80) #我好恨齋/只/淨/淨係食糖。
#ngo hou han zaai/zi/zing/zinghai sik tong
I very love only eat candy
a. "I love to eat candy only (and do nothing else)."
b. "I love to eat candy only (and eat nothing else)."

(81) *喂，齋/只/淨/淨係/只係你拖完地未？
*wai, zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai nei to-jyun dei mei
hey only you mop-finish floor not-yet

(82) *喂，你齋/只/淨/淨係/只係拖完地未？
*wai, nei zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai to-jyun dei mei
hey you only mop-finish floor not-yet

(83) *阿康呀，齋/只/淨/淨係/只係你買乜鬼？去到咁晏嘅？
*aa-hong aa, zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai nei maai mat gwai? heoi dou gam ngaan ge
aa-hong SFP only you buy what ghost go till so late SFP

(84) *阿康呀，你齋/只/淨/淨係/只係買乜鬼？去到咁晏嘅？
*aa-hong aa, nei zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai maai mat gwai? heoi dou gam ngaan ge
aa-hong SFP you only buy what ghost go till so late SFP

4.5.5 Epistemic domain: Posing Judgment and Reporting News

In addition to the speech act domain, the diminutive feature of the postverbal *Z*- even extends further to the epistemic domain, diminishing the epistemic level of the propositional knowledge, implying that the proposition should not be difficult to acquire.[6] In the following examples, the speakers present their conclusions based on some obvious fact or straightforward reasoning. The sentence (85) is a conclusion deduced by the speaker from the following context: the hearer is rejected by the storekeeper when he buys a soft drink by using a ruined bank note. However, the speaker, his sister, has no problem in buying a soft drink with the same bank note in the same store. Thus, she concludes that their different treatment from the same storekeeper must be due to the hearer's impolite attitude. The sentence (86) is a judgment made by the speaker towards the pair of shoes that s/he and the hearer see according to the fashion trend.

(85) 你梗係態度唔好啫。 (Fung, 2000:44)
nei ganghai taaidou m-hou ze
you definitely attitude not-good SFP
"It must be that your attitude is bad."

(86) 對鞋幾新款啫。幾襯你呃 (*aak3*)。 (Leung, 2005:69)
deoi haai gei san-fun ze。gei can nei aak
pair shoes quite new-in-style SFP quite match you SFP
"This pair of shoes is pretty new in style; they really match you."

Meanwhile, the diminutive and exclusive feature of the postverbal *Z*- may also apply to the number of people who may have the propositional knowledge, conveying that it is a piece of news which is only known by a limited number of people as illustrated in (87) and (88). The utterances usually involve the

speakers' excitement and pride as they considered themselves as the privileged ones who know the news which is only known by a limited number of people.

(87) 阿妹收到信嘞，後日 "煙" (interview, 面試) 呀(*aa3*)。 (Leung, 2005: 70)
aa-mui sau dou seon zek, haujat jin aa
aa-sister receive able letter SFP the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
"(Our) sister received a letter, (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow."

(88) 我琴晚喺街處見到你嘞！ (Cheung, 2007:194)
ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei zek
I last-night at street place see able you SFP
"I saw you on the street last night."

Apart from *ze*, none of the other postverbal *Z*- is able to carry out the function of posing judgment or comment. Thus, it can be seen that (89)-(90) are ungrammatical. Despite the grammaticality of (91), the *zek* here is used to report a piece of news rather than make a judgment like what *ze* does in (86).

(89) *你梗係態度唔好嘞/咋/之嘛。
*nei ganghai taaidou m-hou zek/zaa/zimaa
you definitely attitude not-good SFP

(90) *對鞋幾新款咋/之嘛。幾襯你呃 (*aak3*)。
*deoi haai gei san-fun zaa/zimaa。gei can nei aak
pair shoes quite new-in-style SFP quite match you SFP

(91) #對鞋幾新款嘞。幾襯你呃 (*aak3*)。
#deoi haai gei san-fun zek。gei can nei aak
pair shoes quite new-in-style SFP quite match you SFP
"(You know what), this pair of shoes is pretty new in style; they really match you."

*Zek* is the only candidate in the *Z-* family that can perform the function of reporting a piece of news. Although the following sentences seem acceptable, they convey different meanings from the ones with *zek*. In (92) and (94), the diminutive feature of *ze* or *zimaa* only applies to the propositional domain, downplaying the significance of the propositional content. In (93) and (95), the diminutive feature of *zaa* does not extend over the whole propositional content, or the epistemic level of the proposition, but is only confined to the sentential level.

(92) #阿妹收到信啫/之嘛，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(aa3)。
#aa-mui sau dou seon ze/zimaa, haujat jin aa
aa-sister receive able letter SFP the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
“(There is nothing bad happened.) (Our) sister received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(93) ?阿妹收到信咋，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(aa3)。
?aa-mui sau dou seon zaa, haujat jin aa
aa-sister receive able letter SFP the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
“Only (our) sister (and nobody else) received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(94) #我琴晚喺街處見到你啫/之嘛！
#ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei ze/zimaa
I last-night at street place see able you SFP
“I saw you on the street last night (; this is not something important).”

(95) #我琴晚喺街處見到你咋！
#ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei zaa
I last-night at street place see able you SFP
“I saw only you (but nobody else) on the street last night.”

As mentioned in the previous section, the semantic extension of the core meaning of the preverbal *Z-* stops at the discourse domain without extending

further to the speech act domain, that is to say, it does not extend to the epistemic domain either. The preverbal *Z-* is unable to pose any judgments or report on any piece of news as what the postverbal *Z-* does above. It can be seen that (96)-(100) below are all ungrammatical. In spite of the grammaticality of (101)-(110), the semantic features of the preverbal *Z-* there only act on the sentential elements or the whole propositional content. They do not share the same meaning as (87) and (88).

(96) *齋/只/淨/淨係/只係你梗係態度唔好。
*zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai nei ganghai taaidou m-hou
only you definitely attitude not-good

(97) *你齋/只/淨/淨係/只係梗係態度唔好。
* nei zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai ganghai taaidou m-hou
you only definitely attitude not-good

(98) *你梗係齋/只/淨/淨係/只係態度唔好。
*nei ganghai zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai taaidou m-hou
you definitely only attitude not-good

(99) *齋/只/淨/淨係/只係對鞋幾新款。幾襯你呃 (*aak3*)。
* zaai/zi/zing/zingha/zihai deoi haai gei san-fun。gei can nei aak
only pair shoes quite new-in-style quite match you SFP

(100) *對鞋齋/只/淨/淨係/只係幾新款。幾襯你呃 (*aak3*)。
* deoi haai zaai/zi/zing/zinghai/zihai gei san-fun。gei can nei aak
pair shoes only quite new-in-style quite match you SFP

(101) 淨/淨係阿妹收到信，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(*aa3*)。
zing/zinghai aa-mui sau dou seon, haujat jin aa
only aa-sister receive able letter the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
“Only (our) sister (and nobody else) received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(102) 只係阿妹收到信，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(*aa3*)。
zinghai aa-mui sau dou seon, haujat jin aa
only aa-sister receive able letter the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
a. “Only (our) sister (and nobody else) received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”
b. “(There is nothing bad happened.) (Our) sister received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(103) 阿妹只/淨係/只係收到信，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(*aa3*)。
aa-mui zi/zinghai/zihai sau dou seon, haujat jin aa
aa-sister only receive able letter the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
a. “(Our) sister received a letter (and nothing else happened); (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”
b. “(Our) sister received a letter (and received nothing else); (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(104) 阿妹只係收到信，後日 “煙” (interview, 面試) 呀(*aa3*)。
aa-mui zihai sau dou seon, haujat jin aa
aa-sister only receive able letter the-day-after-tomorrow interview SFP
“(There is nothing bad happened.) (Our) sister received a letter; (she) will have an interview the day after tomorrow.”

(105) 淨/淨係我琴晚喺街處見到你！
zing/zinghai ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei
only I last-night at street place see able you
“Only I (and nobody else) saw you on the street last night.”

(106) 只係我琴晚喺街處見到你！
zihai ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei
only I last-night at street place see able you
a. “Only I (and nobody else) saw you on the street last night.”
b. “I saw you on the street last night (; this is not something important).”

(107) 我淨係/只係琴晚喺街處見到你！
ngo zinghai/zihai kammaan hai gaai cyu gin dou nei
I only last-night at street place see able you
“I saw you on the street only last night (but not any other nights).”

(108) 我琴晚淨係/只係喺街處見到你！
ngo kammaan zinghai/zihai hai gaai cyu gin dou nei
I last-night only at street place see able you
a. “I saw you on the street (but nowhere else) last night.”
b. “I saw you on the street last night (and nothing else happened).”

(109) 我琴晚只係喺街處見到你！
ngo kammaan zihai hai gaai cyu gin dou nei
I last-night only at street place see able you
“I saw you on the street last night (; this is not something important).”

(110) 我琴晚喺街處只/淨係/只係見到你！
ngo kammaan hai gaai cyu zi/zinghai/zihai gin dou nei
I last-night at street place only see able you
“I saw only you (but nobody else) on the street last night.”

### 4.5.6 Subjectivity of the Postverbal *Z-*

Among the postverbal *Z-*, *ze* and *zek* are the most subjective manifestations as their semantic features extend from the sentential domain to the propositional domain, the discourse domain, and even further to the speech act domain (*zek* only) and/or the epistemic domain. In addition to the restrictive function, they can also diminish the sentential elements, downplay the propositional content, contrast two clauses or utterances, make a persuasion/an exhortation (*zek* only), pose a judgment (*ze* only) and report on a piece of news (*zek* only). When the semantic features of the postverbal *Z-* extend to larger and more abstract linguistic domains, the meanings conveyed will become more speaker-oriented, thus more subjective. The other manifestations of postverbal *Z-*, *zaa* and *zimaa*, are less subjective. They fail to convey the more subjective meanings as their semantic extension stop at the discourse domain, without going further to the speech act and epistemic domains.

When comparing the subjectivity of the postverbal *Z-* with that of the

preverbal *Z*-, it is found that the postverbal *Z*- is more subjective than the preverbal *Z*-. As discussed in section 4.4 and 4.5, the semantic features of the preverbal *Z*- only extend from the sentential domain to the propositional and discourse domains and stop there, whereas that of the postverbal *Z*- further extend to the speech act and epistemic domains, deriving more pragmatic functions, conveying some more subjective meanings. The semantic extension of *Z*- is summarized in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4. 3 The Semantic Extension of the Postverbal *Z-*

| Manifestations | | | *zaa* | *ze* | *zek* | *zimaa* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Core Meaning | Restriction | | + | + | + | + |
| Semantic Features | Exclusive Feature | | + | + | + | + |
| | Delimitative/Diminutive Feature | | + | + | + | + |
| Applied Domain | Sentential Domain: Diminishing the Sentential Elements (Conveying the Diminutive Meaning) | | + | + | + | + |
| | Propositional Domain: Downplaying the Significance of the Propositional Content | →Diminishing the Seriousness of a Situation/Matter | - | + | - | + |
| | | →Showing Contempt | - | - | + | - |
| | | Overall | - | + | + | + |
| | Discourse Domain: Contrasting Two Clauses or Utterances | | + | + | + | + |
| | Speech Act Domain: Downplaying the Difficulty in Performing *D* | →Persuading | - | - | + | - |
| | | →Exhorting | - | - | + | - |
| | | Overall | - | - | + | - |
| | Epistemic Domain: Diminishing the Epistemic Level of the Propositional Knowledge/ Diminishing the Number of People who may Possess the Propositional Knowledge | →Making Judgment | - | + | - | - |
| | | →Reporting a Piece of News | - | - | + | - |
| | | Overall | - | + | + | - |
| Subjectivity (S=Subjective; O=Objective) | | | >S | S | S | >S |

4.6 Co-occurrence of the Preverbal and Postverbal *Z*-

As the preverbal and postverbal *Z*- share the same core meaning of restriction and they both have their semantic features extended from the sentential domain to the propositional and discourse domain, they can co-occur in a single sentence to emphasis the meaning conveyed.

At the sentential level, both the preverbal and postverbal *Z*- can place restriction on various sentential elements. As the postverbal *Z*- always occupies the sentence final position, its restriction scope is always unclear, giving rise to ambiguous sentences with a number of possible interpretations. Reconsidering examples (9) given in section 4.2 above, which is renumbered as (111) here, it may have up to three interpretations. When a preverbal *Z*-, such as *zinghai*, is added to (111) to give (112) and (113), the restriction is double–marked and emphasized. Besides, the restriction scope becomes clearer. Hence, it can be said that, to some extent, the preverbal *Z*- may help us to identify the restriction scope of the postverbal *Z*-.

(111) 佢食咗你啲嘢咋。 [The same as (9)]
keoi sik-zo nei di je zaa
s/he eat-PERF you POSS thing only
a. "Only s/he (and nobody else) has eaten your food." (subject restriction)
b. "S/he has only eaten your food (and done nothing)." (VP restriction)
c. "S/he has eaten only your food (and nothing else)." (object restriction)

(112) 淨係佢食咗你啲嘢咋。
zinghai keoi sik-zo nei di je zaa
only s/he eat-PERF you POSS thing only
"Only s/he (and nobody else) has eaten your food." (subject restriction)

(113) 佢淨係食咗你啲嘢咋。
keoi zinghai sik-zo nei di je zaa
s/he only eat-PERF you POSS thing only
a. “S/he has only eaten your food (and done nothing).” (VP restriction)
b. “S/he has eaten only your food (and nothing else).” (object restriction)

At the sentential level, both the preverbal *Z-* (*zi/zihai*) and postverbal *Z-* may convey a diminutive sense. They can co-occur to emphasize this diminutive meaning as in (114) and (115). Although *zaa*/*zek* and *ze*/*zimma* convey different presuppositions of the speaker, the preverbal *zi*/*zihai* are compatible with anyone of them as the preverbal *zi*/*zihai* do not denote the speaker’s presupposition.

(114) 呢部新電話只/只係賣五百蚊咋/喞。
nei bou san dinwaa zi/zihai maai ngbaak man zaa/zek
this CL new mobile-phone only sell five-hundred dollar only
“This new mobile phone costs five hundred dollars only.”
(The speaker expects a higher price and the price turns out to be lower.)

(115) 呢部新電話只/只係賣五百蚊啫/之嘛。
nei bou san dinwaa zi/zihai maai ngbaak man ze/zimaa
this CL new mobile-phone only sell five-hundred dollar only
“This new mobile phone costs five hundred dollars only.”
(The speaker expects a lower price and the price turns out to be higher.)

At the propositional and discourse level, both the preverbal *zihai* and postverbal *Z-* place restriction over the whole clause/sentence, downplaying the propositional content or contrasting two clauses/utterances. They can co-occur in a single sentence to emphasize the meaning conveyed as in (116)-(118) below.

(116) 最多只係踢出校嗰，怕咩呀？ (Downplaying the propositional content)
zeoido zihai tek ceot haau ze, paa me aa
at-most only kick out school only fear what SFP
"The worst case is just being expelled from school (this is just a slight matter); what is worth to be scared?"

(117) 其實佢生得幾靚，只係唔識打扮嗰。(Contrasting two clauses)
keisat keoi saang dak gei leng, zihai m sik daabaan ze
actually she born ADV quite pretty only not know dressing SFP
"Actually, she is quite pretty; she just doesn't know how to dress herself."

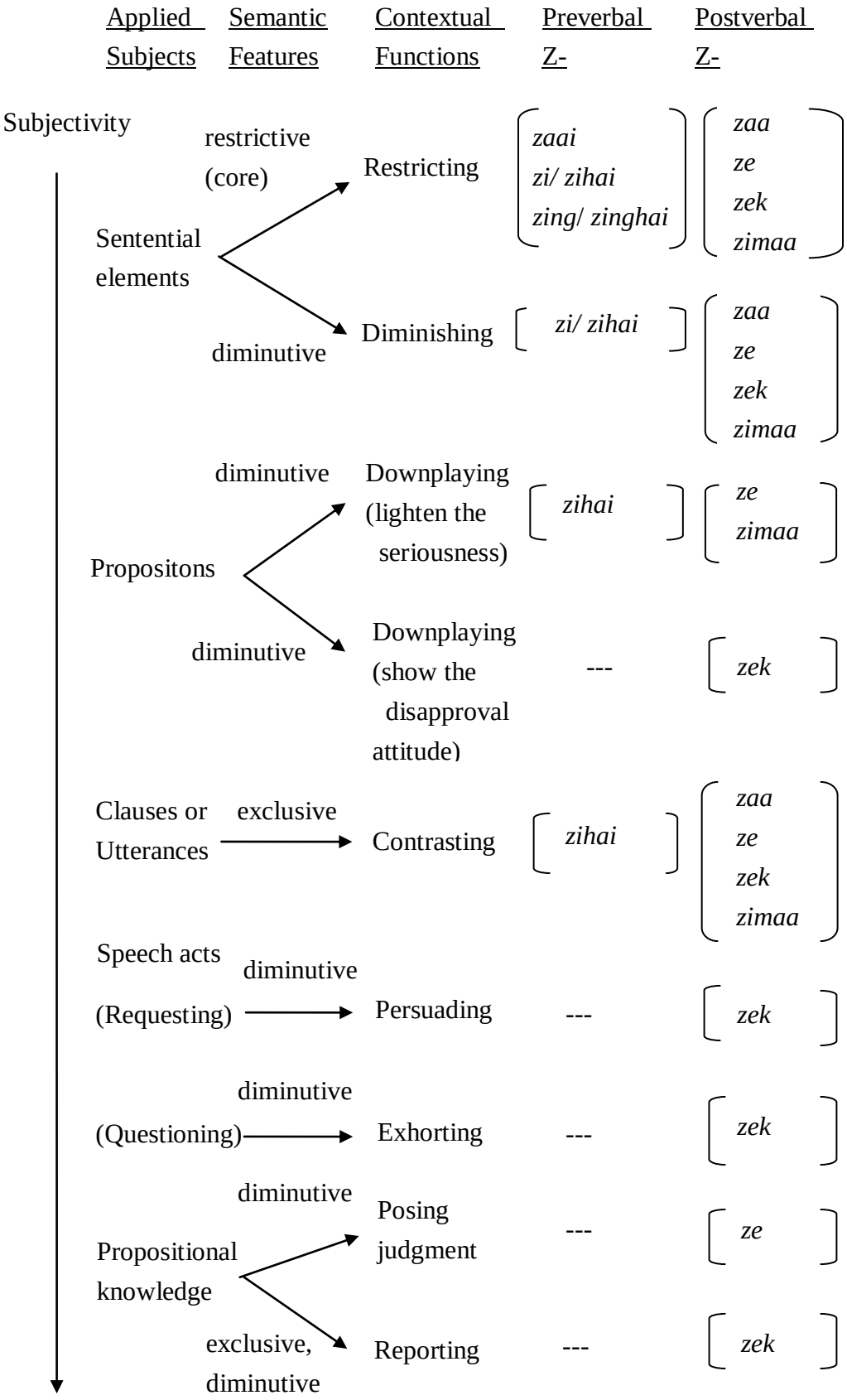
(118) 你估我想架咩？只係識電腦嘅人走晒咋，咁我迫住幫手啦！
(Contrasting two utterances)
nei gu ngo soeng gaa me? zihai sik dinnou ge jan zau saai zaa, gam ngo bik zyu bongsau laa
you guess I want SFP SFP only know computer LP person leave all SFP then I force stopped help SFP
"You think I want (to do it)? It's just (because) all people who have computer knowledge have left. I was forced to offer help."

## 4.7 Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed that "restrictive" is the core semantic feature of *Z*- and described how the delimitative/diminutive and exclusive features were derived from the core restrictive feature. I then outlined how the core semantic meaning of the preverbal *Z*- and its associated features extended from the sentential domain to the propositional and discourse domains. I also compared the functions and subjectivity of the various manifestations of the preverbal *Z*-. After that, I demonstrated how the core semantic meaning of the postverbal *Z*- and its associated features extended from the sentential domain to the propositional, discourse, speech act and epistemic domains. I also compared the functions and subjectivity of the different manifestations of the postverbal *Z*-. I then concluded that the postverbal *Z*- was more subjective than the preverbal *Z*-.

Finally, I examined the co-occurrence of the preverbal and postverbal *Z*- in single sentences and suggested that they can co-occur to emphasize the meanings conveyed; the preverbal *Z*- may also help us to identify the restriction scope of the postverbal *Z*-. The discussion of this chapter is summarized in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4. 4 The Semantic Extension of *Z-*



# Notes

[1] The preverbal *zing6* and *zi2* are frequently found followed by the verb *hai6* 係, forming *zing6hai6* 淨係 and *zi2hai6* 只係 in contemporary spoken Cantonese. *Zing6hai6* is usually treated as one morpheme in the previous studies, such as Li et al., 1995:482; Zhang and Ni, 1999: 56, 75; Cheung, 2007:101, 412; Rao et al., 2009: 111, etc. Similarly, both *zing6hai6* and *zi2hai6* are treated as one morpheme in the present study and involved as members of the preverbal *Z*-. Besides, there are also some other *Z*- particles included in Kwok, 1984; Fung, 2000 and Leung, 2005, such as *zaa5*, *zaak1*, *ze4*. As they are rather uncommon in contemporary spoken Cantonese, they will not be discussed in the present study.

[2] However, the historical use of the postverbal *Z*-, such as *zek*, is actually highly adverbial-like. In the book "Beginning Cantonese" published in 1906, Winser has given the following examples (i)-(iii) to illustrate the use of *zek*.

(i) 我唔食牛油食牛肉嘟。 (Winser, 1906)
ngo m sik ngaujau sik ngaujuk zek
I not eat butter eat beef only
"I don't eat butter but only beef."

(ii) 我哋唔食麵飽要食飯嘟。 (Winser, 1906)
ngodei m sik minbaau jiu sik faan zek
we not eat bread want eat rice only
"We don't eat bread but only rice."

(iii) ……嗰個事頭就擰啲絲法呀，麻布呀，棉布呀出嚟俾我睇，但我唔係做呢幾樣，係想做絨嘅嘟。 (Winser, 1906)
……go go sitau zau ling di sifaat aa, maabou aa, minbou aa ceot lai bei ngo tai, daan ngo m-hai zou nei gei joeng, hai soeng zou jung ge zek
……that CL owner then take CL silk PRT, linen PRT, cotton PRT out come to me see, but I not-be make this few type, be want make velvet LP only
"The owner (of the tailor's) takes out some silk, linen, (and) cotton for me to have a look, but I don't want to make (clothes with) these types (of material), (I would like to) make a velvet one only."

*Zek* restricts what the speakers eat to "beef" and "rice" in (i) and (ii) respectively,

denying “butter” and “bread”; it also restricts the material that the speaker wants to “velvet” in (iii), rejecting all other materials that the owner of the shop has taken out. In all the three cases, the postverbal *zek* means and functions the same as the preverbal adverbial *zinghai* as in (iv), (v) and (vi) respectively. For this reason, I suggest that the postverbal *Z-* are adverbial-like morphemes which are comparable with the preverbal *Z-*.

(iv) 我唔食牛油淨係食牛肉。
ngo m sik ngaujau zinghai sik ngaujuk
I not eat butter only eat beef
“I don’t eat butter but only beef.”

(v) 我哋唔食麵飽淨係要食飯。
ngodei m sik minbaau zinghai jiu sik faan
we not eat bread only want eat rice
“We don’t eat bread but only rice.”

(vi) ……嗰個事頭就擰啲絲法呀，麻布呀，棉布呀出嚟俾我睇，但我唔係做呢幾樣，淨係想做絨嘅。
……go go sitau zau ling di sifaat aa, maabou aa, minbou aa ceot lai bei ngo tai, daan ngo m-hai zou nei gei joeng, zinghai soeng zou jung ge
……that CL owner then take CL silk PRT, linen PRT, cotton PRT out come to me see, but I not-be make this few type, only want make velvet LP
“The owner (of the tailor’s) takes out some silk, linen, (and) cotton for me to have a look, but I don’t want to make (clothes with) these types (of material), (I would like to) make a velvet one only.

[3] Related discussions can be seen in Fung (2000:51-52, 59-60) and Kwok (1984:53).

[4] Although the *ze* and *zimaa* in (46) can be replaced by *zaa* and *zek* to give a grammatical sentence as follows, it conveys a different meaning from that of (46).

(vii) 佢偷嘢啫/之嘛，俾次機會佢啦！ [The same as example (46)]
keoi tauje ze/zimaa, bei ci geiwui keoi laa
s/he stealing only give CL chance him/her SFP
"S/he just stole something (this is just a slight matter); please give him/her a chance."

(viii) 佢偷嘢咋/喞，俾次機會佢啦！
keoi tauje zaa/zek, bei ci geiwui keoi laa
s/he stealing only give CL chance him/her SFP
"S/he just stole something (this is just a slight matter); please give him/her a chance."

In (vii), the speaker did not expect that the subject would steal, so the proposition "s/he has stolen something" is considered as serious and out of expectation. However, the speaker still hopes to help the subject to beg for a chance. Hence, *ze* and *zimaa* are adopted to downplay the significance of the propositional content. In (viii), the speaker is comparing stealing with some other more serious crimes, such as murder or arson. In other words, "stealing" ranks low in the speaker's expectation. The propositional content "s/he has stolen something" is not serious to the speaker, which does not need to be downplayed. Therefore, *zaa* and *zek* in (viii) are not downplaying the seriousness of the proposition as what *ze* and *zimaa* do in (vii).

[5] The example (ix) and (x) below are found in Fung (2000:37). Although she stated that *zek* cannot perform the contrasting function, it seems that it is still grammatical when *zaa* is replaced by *zek* as in (58) and (59). Both of them are able to contrast the first clause with the second one.

(ix) 呢邊啱啱鋪好咋，嗰邊又挖開嚟整水管喎（*wo3*）。 (Fung, 2000:62)
nei bin ngaamngaam pouhou zaa, go bin jau waathoi lai zing seoigun wo
this side just pave-over SFP that side again dug-up come fix water-pipe SFP
"This side has just got paved over, (now) that side is dug up to fix the pipe."

(x) 好彩睇得早咋，唔係變成肺炎唔係重牙煙啦（*laa1*）。 (Fung, 2000:62)
houcoi tai-dak zou zaa, m-hai binsing faijim m-hai zung ngaajin laa
lucky see-PRT early SFP not-be become pneumonia not-be even dangerous SFP
"Good thing (he) saw (the doctor) early, otherwise (it'll be) worse (when it) turns into pneumonia."

[6] Whether the speech act domain or the epistemic domain is the more abstract linguistic domain is still controversial. In the present study, I assume that the epistemic domain is the more abstract one and it is further than the speech act domain along the path of semantic extension. This is because the semantic features of the selected morphemes in the present study, such as *sin* and *Z-*, extended to the speech act domain more readily; only that of *Z-* were able to extend to the epistemic domain. Moreover, the readings of *Z-* are more difficult to be conceived when it is applied to the epistemic domain. Therefore, I consider the epistemic domain as a more abstract and hardly achievable domain than the speech act one.

# Chapter 5

# Conclusion

The present study investigated the interaction of word order and subjectivity in Cantonese revealed by some adverbial-like morphemes which can be either preverbal or postverbal in a sentence. As discussed in the previous chapters (section 1.3.1), Chinese is not a typical SVO language. Although Cantonese exhibits more SVO features than Mandarin by having a rich inventory of postverbal adverbial-like morphemes, there are many other preverbal adverbial modifiers in the dialect. As found in many languages, the preverbal and postverbal positions are asymmetric in Cantonese. I argued that the adverbs in the postverbal position tend to encode stronger subjectivity than their preverbal counterparts. My hypothesis was based on the studies on the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties of three morphemes, *gang*, *sin* and *Z-*.

I began with the adverb of modality, *gang*. The semantic meaning of *gang* is rather simple. It denotes the modality of certainty, expressing speakers' certainty or doubtlessness towards the truth of a proposition. Though this monosemous adverb, I have demonstrated in Chapter 2 that the postverbal *gang* functioned as an adverb and encoded stronger subjectivity than its preverbal counterpart. I then moved on to the adverb of time, *sin* in Chapter 3. Unlike *gang*, *sin* is like a cline involving various senses with different word classes. I have demonstrated how different senses of *sin* were derived from the core meaning of time referencing through semantic extension from the sentential domain, to the propositional domain, discourse domain and speech act domain. It was found that the postverbal *sin* has larger scope of application than its preverbal counterpart. The semantic features of the postverbal *sin* can extend from the sentential domain to

the propositional domain and further to the speech act domain, shifting from an adverb to a sentence final particle. As discussed in section 1.3.5 and 3.2.2, the extent of semantic extension is in proportion to subjectivity. Hence, the postverbal *sin* is more subjective than the preverbal one. Finally in Chapter 4, I discussed the adverb of restriction *Z*-. *Z*- is a cline which is more complicated than *sin* since its members may have different phonological forms but shared the same onset and core meaning. The preverbal *Z*- are mainly adverbs while the postverbal *Z*- are basically sentence-final particles. I have illustrated that the different senses of *Z*- were given rise by semantic extension among various linguistic domains from the core meaning of restriction. However, the semantic extension of the preverbal morphemes was more restricted; their semantic features did not extend beyond the discourse domain. On the contrary, the postverbal *Z*- has larger scope of application. The semantic features of the postverbal *Z*- extended from the sentential domain to the propositional domain, discourse domain and further to the speech act and epistemic domains. Having related the preverbal *Z*- (adverbs) with the postverbal *Z*- (sentence-final particles), the role of subjectification in grammaticalization was revealed.

Based on the three case studies, I concluded that the postverbal or sentence-final position in Cantonese is a place in which morphemes may undergo subjectification more readily, when comparing with the preverbal position. This may be the reason why Cantonese has a large number of sentence-final particles that can denote the speaker's mood. Furthermore, it is found that even if the morpheme studied occurs at both the preverbal and postverbal positions in a single sentence, they do not convey identical meaning, thus no redundancy is caused. Although Cantonese contains a rich inventory of postverbal morphemes/adverbs which can function as adverbial modifiers, they become

polysemous or even develop from adverbs to other word class, such as sentence-final particles, under subjectification, giving rise to ambiguous sentences. This is the motivation for the co-occurrence of the postverbal morphemes with their preverbal counterparts. Their preverbal counterparts help reinforce their original meaning and resolve the ambiguity of the sentences caused by the polysemous postverbal morphemes.

The present study has provided for the first time a rather detailed account on items which can be both preverbal and postverbal in Cantonese. It is hoped that it can serve as a solid foundation for future studies on verbal particles, word order, subjectivity, grammaticalization and typology of Cantonese. For further investigations, experimental studies can be done on the usages of various preverbal and postverbal morphemes sharing similar semantic content in Cantonese from a sociolinguistic approach. Besides, further research can be conducted to see if the interaction between word order and subjectivity concluded in the present study also applies to other languages or dialects, such as Mandarin.

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