Hierarchies of Modal Verbs in Ding'an Dialect of Hainan Southern Min

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Modal verbs in Ding'an Dialect (DAD for short) are rich in number and meaning in comparison with their counterparts in MC. Take □[ve^{55}] for an example.

(1)   伊   □**[ve^{55}]** 来   也   作得。   [Dynamic]
     I^{33} **ve^{55}**   lai^{35} ziak^{13} toh^{55}-ʔdit^{5}.
     3SG   <u>want</u>   come   also   do-get
     'It's also OK if s/he wants to go.'

(2) a.   宿母   天 一   暗   就   □**[ve^{55}]**   阙。   [Deontic]
        Siu^{35}-mai^{325} hi^{3} ziak^{5} am^{31} tsiu^{35} **ve^{55}**   xuai^{5}.
        home mother   sky one   dark   will   <u>tend.to</u>   sleep
        'My mother tends to sleep as soon as it's getting dark.'

    b.   我   □**[ve^{55}]**   去！
        Va^{325} **ve^{55}**   xu^{5}!
        1SG   <u>promise</u>   go
        'I promise I will go this time!'

    c.   多   水   □**[ve^{55}]**   流   去   下   处。
        ʔDuai^{13} ʔdui^{31} **ve^{55}**   lau^{325} xu^{5} e^{3} ʔde^{35}.
        much   water   <u>naturally.will</u>   flow   go   down   place
        'The water in river will naturally flow to the lower place.'

    d.   伊   □**[ve^{55}]**   稠稠   来   这里。
        I^{33} **ve^{55}**   tsiau^{3}.tsiau^{3} lai^{35} tse^{35}.lai^{33}.
        3SG   <u>will</u>   frequently   come   here
        'S/He will come here frequently.'

(3) a.   现旦   □**[ve^{55}]**   落   雨。   [Epistemic]
        Hin^{325}-nua^{3} **ve^{55}**   lo^{55} hou^{3}.
        tomorrow   <u>possibly.will</u>   fall   rain
        'It will rain tomorrow possibly.'

    b.   么   天   □**[ve^{55}]**   落   雨。
        Mo^{5} hi^{3} **ve^{55}**   lo^{55} hou^{3}.
        That   sky   <u>probably.will</u>   fall   rain
        'It will rain probably.'

    c.   么 天 □**[ve^{55}]**   落 雨   (咯)！ 闪   去   宿！
        Mo^{5}hi^{3} **ve^{55}**   lo^{55} hou^{3} (lo^{33})!   øem^{3} xu^{35} siu^{35}!
        that sky <u>definitely.will</u>   fall rain   SFP   flash   go   home
        'It's definitely going to rain soon! Let's go home!'

(4) a.   天气   预报   讲   现旦   □**[ve^{55}]** 落 雨。   [Evidential]
        Hi^{3}-xui^{35}zi^{35}-ʔbo^{325} koŋ^{5} hin^{325}-nua^{3} **ve^{55}**   lo^{55} hou^{3}.
        weather report   say   tomorrow   <u>will</u>   fall rain
        'It is reported that it will rain tomorrow.'

    b.   么 天 □**[ve^{55}]**   落 雨   (咯)！ 闪闪   走！
        Mo^{5}hi^{3} **ve^{55}**   lo^{55} hou^{3} (lo^{33})!   øem^{3}-øem^{3} ʔdau^{325}!
        that sky <u>evidentially.will</u> fall rain   SFP   flash-flash   go
        'Evidentially, it will rain soon! Let's go immediately!'

Examples in (1-4) illustrate that the modal verb □ [ve^{55}] in DAD can express dynamic, deontic, epistemic and evidential modality. Thus, we propose that the hierarchy of modal verbs in DAD is much more fine-grained than that in MC, with DAD modal verbs being richer in semantic interpretations and syntactic distributions than those in MC.

This research provides theoretical and empirical implications in at least two aspects. This research fills the gap in terms of the generativist theorizing, viz. the Syntactic Cartography. In particular, the division of the four-tier hierarchy of modal verbs not only helps facilitate the follow-up descriptive studies of the modal system in dialects like DAD, but also theoretically modifies the existing widely-accepted three-tier hierarchy of modal verbs in the Syntactic Cartography.

Keywords: DAD of Hainan Southern Min; modal verb; syntactic hierarchy; Syntactic Cartography