Preceding Condition Particles at the Syntax-Discourse Interface

Yuan Jian (袁健)

University of Macau, Department of Chinese Language and Literature

yc27722@umac.mo

Facts:

The sentence-final particle *to* (哆) in Chengdu (a dialect of Mandarin) always appears at the end of imperative sentences, causing a preceding condition interpretation (Zhang et al. 2001; Wang & Ma 2015). For example:

Child:	妈，	我	想	看	电视。
	ma	ŋo	ɕiaŋ	kʰan	tiansɿ
	mom	I	want	watch	TV

‘Mom, I want to watch TV.’

Mom:	作业	做完	了	哆！
	tsoṇie	tsu-wan	lo	to
	homework	finish	Inchoative	Pre-Con

‘Finish your homework first（and then you can watch TV）!’

The clauses selected by *to* (哆) must be presented from a perfective viewpoint. The sentence-final particles *tsaiso* (再说) and *to* (哆) share the same usage. Both of them turn a sentence into a preceding condition in discourse, but they have slightly different semantics. When one utters a sentence with *tsaiso* (再说), he only expresses a request or suggestion and nothing else is promised. Furthermore, these preceding condition particles are commonly found in Chinese dialects, although there are significant phonological differences, their syntactic and semantic behaviors are relatively consistent.

Theoretical toolkit:

In this study, we adopt the Split CP Hypothesis by Rizzi (1997) to find the syntactic foundation responsible for the preceding condition interpretation of *to* (哆). We also follow the 'exoskeletal model' by Borer (2005a, 2005b, 2013), which separates formal features from lexical information, thus to explain why preceding condition particles exist in Chinese dialects in a consistent fashion and why *to* (哆) and *tsaiso* (再说) can coexist in the same language (i.e. what they share with each other and what's the distinction between them?).

Results:

We find that *to* (哆) occupies a syntactic position higher than the sentential aspect marker *lo* (了 $_2$) ('Sentential Aspect Phrase' in Pan 2015a), but lower than ForceP. *to* (哆) can only appear in imperative sentences and is associated with the illocutionary force of imperatives. In other words, it is the imperative force phrase that selects a preceding condition phrase (PreConP) with *to* (哆) as its complement. In other words,

the imperative force is responsible for the so-called preceding condition interpretation. The core semantics of *to* (哆) is merely to mark the temporal order between two propositions in the discourse, while the imperative force turns this order into a suggestion or request from the speaker. When *to* (哆) is used in an imperative utterance in response to the proposition by the addressee, the interpretation of preceding condition is generated. Therefore, both *to* (哆) and the imperative force jointly contribute to the interpretation of preceding condition.

We also adopt a weak version of Cartography, which suggests that the CP domains of different languages may differ in what specific functional projections they contain, but there is an universal order that whatever projections the CP domain of a language have, the hierarchical relations of these projections are universal. The preceding condition phrases formed by *to* (哆) and *tsaiso* (再说) can only be selected by the imperative force phrase and cannot appear in yes-no questions or declarative sentences. The domain starting from illocutionary force phrase is the interface where discourse information is syntacticized. Although the overall framework in this domain may be consistent in principle, what complements a head selects can vary due to discourse factors, leading to parameteric differences in the types and quantities of internal projections.

Following Borer's (2005a, 2005b, 2013) "exoskeletal model," we argue that functional constituents in a lexicalist perspective, such as *to* (哆) and *tsaiso* (再说), can be further separated into two parts, formal features and roots. The objects of syntactic operations are merely abstract formal features, and roots carrying specific lexical information are inserted into functional nodes (late insertion) after syntactic operations are completed. Therefore, the reason why there are so many preceding condition particles in different Chinese dialects, despite significant phonological differences, lies in the fact that although illocutionary force phrase is a projection universal in human languages, the types of complements selected by illocutionary force phrase can vary in different languages. The CP domains of these Chinese dialects not only contain imperative force phrases but also host preceding condition phrases, potential complements of imperative force phrase. In other words, within the inventory of formal features in these Chinese dialects, there may exist a language-specific feature PreCon. When the derivation of PreConP headed by PreCon is completed, roots carrying specific phonological and lexical semantic information are inserted into the position of the head PreCon, providing lexical information for PreCon. This is the reason why preceding condition particles in different dialects of Chinese differs radically from each other in their phonological forms, but at the same time are highly consistent in terms of their syntactic function and semantic interpretation.

Additionally, in Chengdu dialect, there are actually two preceding condition particles, *to* (哆) and *tsaiso* (再说). Both of them can be head of PreConP, and their semantic differences arise from different roots inserted into the same head position. From a semantic perspective, *to* (哆) forms a sufficient condition clause, while *tsaiso* (再说) forms a necessary condition clause. When the speaker says "作业做完了**哆**！" ('Finish your homework first (and then you can…)!'), the speaker is not only giving a request but also making a promise that as long as the condition of "finishing your

homework" is met, the original proposal by the addressee in the context is approved. However, when the speaker says "作业做完了<u>再说</u>！" ('Finish your homework first!'), the speaker is making a request that the necessary condition "finishing your homework" must be met if the addressee want any proposal to be approved; otherwise, no proposal will be approved.