

The Multi-Functions and Prosody of *dui bu dui* in Mandarin Conversation -- An Empirical Study of TV Talk Shows

This study explores how tag *dui bu dui* 'correct-not-correct' differs from questions in conversation and how prosody features work in multi-receiver discourse. Earlier work (Li & Thompson, 1981; Chen & He, 2001) on Mandarin tag '*dui bu dui*' sought an account in terms of syntactic form A-not-A or pragmatic analysis, without accounting for the possible role of phrase-level prosody features in conversation. It has been recognized that prosody serves as a cue for mutual agreement, disagreement or negotiation among conversation participants (Swerts and Hirschberg, 1997; Yaeger-Dror 2002). It has also been proposed that prosodic tone is associated with the pragmatic functions of tags (Algeo, 1988). In our present study, we treat prosody as a strategy in various interactive conversations. The social situation of TV talk shows requires specific prosodic strategy, and the specific setting of the discourse both the hosts and the interviewees are engaged in assigns the specific function of the tags.

Based on a total of 180 minutes of digital-tape recording from Mandarin TV talk shows, in which 3 hosts and 20 interviewees were involved, 116 tokens of *dui bu dui* and 36 tokens of Taiwanese tag '*hoNh*' were quantitatively and qualitatively examined. Prosodic features were identified using computerized speech software Macquiner and Praat. The results show that among the tags used in multi-receiver discourse, only 14.66% of the tags got responses. It is clear that *dui bu dui* is more than a tag question and serves as a multi-functional marker in TV talk shows. Moreover, almost all the responses received were positive. The hosts used tags much more frequently than the interviewees, to seek confirmation or information, to express emphatic emotion or exclamation, to arouse the interviewee's interest or maintain the interviewee's attention. In addition, we found that *dui bu dui* was used as negotiation begging marker to trigger the participation of the interviewees. *Dui bu dui* was also used as conversation filler to substitute for pause or silence, to make the conversation smoothly. The Taiwanese tag '*hoNh*' immediately preceding or following *dui bu dui* was used to show the solidarity and the politeness of the hosts, when most of the interviewees or audiences are Mandarin-Taiwanese bilinguals. On the other hand, when *dui bu dui* was used as conversation filler, it has level pitch contour with lower amplitude. Preceding pause also triggers conversation filler *dui bu dui*. Independently formed *dui bu dui* without tagging to the main clauses has longer duration than the tagged ones. Negotiation begging marker *dui bu dui* has higher pitch range than the other ones used in the same section of the discourse for other functions. The duration of the question *dui bu dui* is shorter than the pragmatic marker '*dui bu dui*'. It is quite consistent that *dui bu dui* as a pragmatic marker does not end with a high-pitch rising contour.

We conclude that *dui bu dui* in Mandarin TV talk shows is much more frequently host-oriented than interviewee-oriented and self-centered. Pitch contour is correlated with the position in relation to the turns in the conversation. Emphatic tone is correlated with wider pitch range and longer duration, rather than amplitude. Multi-functions of *dui bu dui* influence prosodic realization in multi-receiver discourse.

References

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