

Utterance-final Particles with Grammaticalized Intonation in Cantonese

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Cantonese is well known for possessing copious utterance-final particles, which predominantly convey pragmatic information such as the speaker's attitude and assumption in making an utterance. Their functions and meanings are one of the focuses in Cantonese Linguistics, e.g. Luke (1990) and Fang (2003). Given their pragmatic nature, these utterance-final particles also play an important role in the intonation of Cantonese. On the other hand, Cantonese is also rich in lexical tones. Suprasegmental interaction on the utterance-final particles thus leads to another intriguing topic for research (e.g. Wu 2008). The present paper combines these two aspects of utterance-final particles and proffers that the lexical tone of some utterance-final particles in Cantonese is grammaticalized from certain intonation patterns which carry specific pragmatic information in discourse.

Study of tone and intonation in Cantonese generally takes a synchronic approach, describing modification of lexical tones under the influence of intonation (see Fox *et al* 2008). While it is widely accepted that Cantonese utterance-final particles (unlike those in Mandarin) bear their own lexical tone (Fang 2003), the source or development of such lexical tones in the particles has never been considered an issue. Instead of presuming the following two sets of utterance-final particles to have inherited near homophone from lexical sources, this paper identifies grammaticalized intonation as a possible source for some of them:

| Particle | Pitch | Main function | Probable source of tone |
|----------|--------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| wo5 | Rising | Marking hear-say information | A lexical tone |
| wo4 | Low | Conveying an unbelievable sense | A low intonation |
| wo3 | Mid | Highlighting the proposition | A non-low intonation |
| aa5 | Rising | Conveying a sense of denigration | Fusion of two particles |
| aa4 | Low | Making a rhetoric question | A low intonation |
| aa3 | Mid | Making assertion | A non-low intonation |

The non-low pitch represents the default intonation with which the speaker expects the interlocutor to participate actively in speech exchange, whereas the low-pitch intonation signals the lack of such expectation. The latter one, but not the former, can be used in anticipation of ending of discourse felicitously. These two patterns are observed also in other utterance-final particles in Cantonese and Mandarin. Consider the following Mandarin cases: *nǐ qù ma^M* 'Are you going?' [An answer is expected.] vs. *nǐ qù ma^L* 'You go.' [As urging.]

References

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