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The syntax of Chinese sentence-final particles: A neo-performative analysis

Mandarin has sentence-final particles (SFPs) that provide information about the speaker's (or hearer's) subjective attitude toward the proposition, as shown in (1).

- (1) Sanshi nian qian hai mei you shubiao **ne!**
thirty year before still NEG have mouse **particle**
"Thirty years ago, there didn't even exist anything like a computer mouse." (*ne* indicates that the speaker strongly believes the proposition is true)

It is widely assumed that SFPs are not relevant for syntax because they do not change the core meaning of the sentence (Biberauer, Holmberg, and Roberts 2007, 2008, 2014). However, Paul and Pan (2017) propose that SFPs are part of the split CP layer, and specifically that they are the heads of a new category, which they call AttitudeP. AttitudeP is located at the top of the CP layer. Paul and Pan's (2017) proposal, however, fails to account for the fact that when there are multiple SFPs they always occur in a fixed order. This is illustrated in (2) with the SFPs *ne*, *ba* and *ha*.

- (2) Sanshi nian qian hai mei you shubiao **ne ba ha**
thirty year before still NEG have mouse **particle particle particle**
"Thirty years ago, there didn't even exist anything like a computer mouse." (*ne*<*ba*<*ha* is the only accepted order)

In this presentation, I provide an alternative analysis that address this shortcomings. I adopt Wiltschko's (2021) interactional spine hypothesis (ISH) which includes three distinct categories Ground_{Speaker}P, Ground_{Addressee}P and ResponseP above CP. These three categories appear in a fixed hierarchical order: [RespP [Ground_{Addressee}P [Ground_{Speaker}P [CP...]]]]. Ground_{Speaker} encodes the attitude of the speaker towards the proposition. Ground_{Addressee} encodes what the speaker believes is the addressee's attitude towards the proposition. Response lets the addressee know what the speaker wants the addressee to do with the sentence.

I analyse *ne* as a Ground_{Speaker} head because it always appear closest to the CP and it has the interpretable content compatible with this category. Specifically, *ne* encodes that the speaker strongly believes the proposition is true. I analyse *ba* as a Ground_{Addressee} particle because it is sandwiched between the other two particles and indicates that the speaker assumes the addressee believes the proposition is true. I analyse *ha* as a Response head because it is always farthest from the CP and indicates that the speaker wants the addressee to respond to the current sentence.

Assuming that SFPs are heads of the different categories of the interactional spine, Wiltschko's ISH predicts that the order among SFPs will be fixed, based on the category of each

SFP. This is the case for Mandarin, as shown in (2). Therefore, I suggest that Mandarin SFPs are part of the syntactic representation, but they are not complementizer heads. Rather, they appear in the interactional layer of the clause.

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