Three Types of Peripheral Adjunct *Wh*-phrases Denoting Negation

Barry C.-Y. Yang (barryyang@nuu.edu.tw)
National United University

It is well known that some peripheral adjunct *wh*-phrases in Chinese can denote a strong negative force as in (1). Relevant studies suggest that they should take up a certain high projection in CP to yield such a speaker force (Cheung 2008, Yang 2014, 2015, Kiss 2015)(the parentheses "()" in the following examples indicate possible positions of the adjunct *wh*-phrases).

(1)   Speaker A: Ta   hao   shuai!
          he   so   handsome
       Speaker B: (Shenme/Nali)   shuai   (shenme)?!   Ni   xiayan   le   ma?
          What/where   handsome   what   you   blind   Pref.   Q
          'He is not handsome at all! Are you blind?'

In this talk, three types of peripheral adjunct *wh*-phrases will be investigated. Evidence will be provided to show that in some cases what is negated is not the linguistic expression per se, but the speaker's attitude. This opens up the possibility of establishing the speaker's projection above CP zone (see, Speas & Tenny 2003, for example).

The first type, the negative WHERE, negates a proposition (Cheung 2008, 2009). When it is employed as in (1), the sentence is interpreted as "It is not the case that he is handsome". On the other hand, the two peripheral WHAT's do not negate any proposition (or action) as can be evidenced in (2) where they are perfectly compatible with a non-event-denoting noun phrase 'cellphone'. It follows that the negative WHERE in (2) is ruled out.

(2)   Speaker A: Wode   shouji!
          my   cellphone
       Speaker B: (Shenme/*Nali)   shouji   (shenme)?!   Mei   shijian   le.
          what/where   cellphone   what   no   time   Prf.
          'Don't mention cellphone? No time!'

The two WHAT's here are used to refute the interlocutors claim, or more specifically, the speaker's attitude or commitment rather than the linguistic expression. This can be easily observed in (2) since the cellphone itself is a noun phrase and there is no other surface linguistic expression left in the sentence to be negated. The interpretation is more likely to be 'Don't mention…!' or 'It is not right for you to mentioned…!' Note that the sentence-final adjunct WHAT is not the aggressively reason-asking WHAT discussed by many linguists since the latter is typically attached to an action verb (see, for example, Chao 1968, Shao & Zhao 1989, Shao 1996, Ochi 2004, Obenauer 2006, Tsai 2011, Pan 2014, Endo 2015, and Wang 2016). On the other hand, although the above mentioned peripheral adjunct *wh*-phrases denote a sense of negation, only the sentence-initial WHAT involves metalinguistic negation. Therefore, in (3) a following contradicting statement does not make the initial WHAT infelicitous ('#' indicates that the occurrence of it is infelicitous).

(3)   (After Speaker A's utterance marveling someone's being handsome in (1))
       Speaker B: (Shenme/#Nali)   shuai   (#shenme)?!   Shi   chaoji   shuai
          what/where   handsome   what   be   super   handsome
          'It is not right for you to say he is handsome! He is super handsome!'

To account for the above distribution, I suggest that these peripheral adjunct *wh*-phrases should involve different structures. That is, while the adjunct WHERE targets CP and takes TP as its complement as in (4) (cf. Cheung 2018, 2019), the two peripheral WHAT's should target an even higher position on the edge of sentential domain above CP (e.g., Speech Act Projections, SAPs, Speas &Tenny 2003, Speas 2004, Tenny 2006, Hill 2007a, 2007b, Haegeman 2014). Specifically, to derive the correct word order, the sentence-final WHAT should directly attract the quoted phrase to the Spec of it as (5) suggests.

(4)   [$_{CP}$ WHERE [$_{IP}$ …]

(5)   [$_{SAP}$ [QUOTE]$_i$ WHAT [$_{CP}$ … [$_{IP}$ … t_i …]]

As for the sentence-initial WHAT, although it should also attract the quoted phrase but it would have the quoted phrase stop at the FocusP in order to derive the metalinguistic negation as (6) (cf. Wible & Chen 2001). One evidence of the focus-involving metalinguistic negation is that when a focus element is inserted before the

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predicate 'handsome' in (7), the negative WHERE turns out to be perfect with the metalinguistic negation whereas it is not so without the focus element in (3).

(6)   [$_{SAP}$ WHAT [$_{ForceP}$ … [$_{FocusP}$ [QUOTE]$_i$ [$_{IP}$… t_i …]]]

(7)   Speaker B: Nali   zhiyou   shuai?!   Genben   shi   chaoji   shuai
                              where   only   handsome   actually   be   super   handsome
                              'He is not only handsome! Actually, he is super handsome!'

By so doing, the three types of peripheral adjunct *wh*-phrases are successfully distinguished. While they all take up the undominated position, they occupy different syntactic layers. The negative WHERE takes up the CP layer, while the two peripheral WHAT's take up a higher layer above CP, a SpeakerP or the SAP. The word order in the latter two WHAT constructions is attributed to the different landing sites of the quoted expression, which also explains why the metalinguistic negation only goes with the sentence-initial WHAT.

Selected References
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