



Preverbal Objects in Taiwan Southern Min: Topic or Focus?

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Abstract

This paper studies preverbal objects in Taiwan Southern Min (TSM), which are defined as NPs that occur after the subject, before the verb, and are subcategorized for by the verb. This paper adopts five syntactic tests taken from Rizzi (1997) to judge the status of preverbal NPs in TSM, topic or focus. First: A topic (but not a focus) may contain a resumptive pronoun in the comment clause. Second: A topic does not result in weak crossover effect, yet the focus does. Third: More than one topic is allowed in one sentence, while the number of the focus is limited to one. Fourth: Bare quantificational elements cannot be topics, yet they can be a focus. Fifth: A *wh*-operator is compatible with a topic, but not with a focus. Three more factors discussed in the literature on preverbal NPs in Mandarin Chinese are also considered. First: In a topic construction, the VP can be questioned, while in a focus construction, it cannot. Second: A focus can be indefinite but a topic cannot. Third: The bare NP in the pre-adverbial position functions as a topic and it has to be specific, while the NP in the post-adverbial, preverbal position serves as a focus and it can be nonspecific. The test results show that preverbal NPs in TSM can function as either topic or focus when appropriate contrasts are provided. Moreover, through tests, this paper further distinguishes focuses from contrastive topics, which carry intonational stress as focuses do but display features of topics.

Keywords

topic, focus, preverbal object, Taiwan Southern Min

台灣閩南語的動前賓語：主題或焦點？

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提要

本文探討台灣閩南語中的動前賓語，動前賓語乃指位於主語後、動詞前，並為動詞所次類劃分之名詞組。本文採納 Rizzi (1997) 所提出五項句法測試來檢驗台灣閩南語中動前名詞組的功能——主題或焦點。首先，只有主題允許複指代名詞出現於評論子句。第二、只有主題接受輕微越位。第三、一個句子允許多個主題，但只能有一個焦點。第四、光桿量化成分不能充當主題，但能當焦點。第五、*wh* 算子只和主題相容。此外，本文也考慮漢語（普通話）文獻中常討論的三個因素。第一、只有在主題句中，動詞組部分可改為問句。第二、只有焦點容許不定指名詞組。第三、位於狀語之前的光桿名詞組為主題，並且為一特定名詞組。而狀語之後、動詞之前的光桿名詞組為焦點，並且可為非特定名詞組。測試結果顯示台灣閩南語中動前賓語依據所提供的對照句可有主題或焦點功能。此外，雖然所謂對比性主題常如焦點為語調重音所在，並具有主題的特徵，台灣閩南語中的焦點仍不被視為（對比性）主題。

關鍵詞

主題、焦點、動前賓語、台灣閩南語