

AN ANALYSIS OF METALINGUISTIC NEGATION IN CANTONESE AND ITS TYPOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the grammatical properties of sentence-internal negation expressing metalinguistic negation, drawing on evidence from Cantonese. From a typological perspective, sentence-internal negation in human languages can be broadly classified into two types. The first type, exemplified by Portuguese, is characterized by sentence-internal negation that is derived through movement. The second type, represented by languages such as Cantonese, forms sentence-internal negation through affixation. English is a language that lacks sentence-internal negation. Instead, it primarily relies on sentence-peripheral negation. This highlights the diverse grammatical strategies to express metalinguistic negation

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across languages.

KEYWORDS

Metalinguistic negation Sentence-internal negation Negator Affixation
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1. INTRODUCTION

Metalinguistic negation is normally discussed in the literature as a semantic and pragmatic phenomenon and is defined as “a means for objecting to a previous utterance on any grounds whatever” (Horn 1985: 134), which is used to “deny or object to any aspect of a previous utterance—from the conventional or conversational implicata that may be associated with it, to its syntactic, morphological, or phonetic form” (Horn 1985: 144).

The negative marker *not* in English is ambiguous. For example, (1) can express ordinary descriptive negation (also known as “internal negation”) that expresses truth-functional denial, taking a proposition *p* into a proposition *not-p*. Alternatively, (1) can express metalinguistic negation (also known as “external negation”), in which a subject description is taken as outside the scope of negation and (1) is true if there is no king of France. The negation is a metalinguistic operator which can be glossed “I object to *u*”, where *u* is crucially “a linguistic utterance rather than an abstract proposition” (Horn 1985: 136).

- (1) The king of France is not bald.

The negative marker *not* in English, also known as a “predicative negation marker” (Martins 2014: 636), may express metalinguistic negation without anything specifically morphological or syntactic, such as (2) (Horn 1985: 132).

- (2) Some men aren't chauvinists – ALL men are chauvinists.

In addition to the predicative negation markers, languages also express metalinguistic negation through sentence-peripheral negation markers and sentence-internal negation markers. The idiomatic expressions

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粤语元语言否定的分析及其类型意义

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摘要

本文主要以表达元语言否定的粤语句中否定为例，探讨句中否定的语法特点。从语言学类型学的角度来看，人类语言的句中否定大致分为两大类型：第一类的特点是通过句法移位产生，以葡萄牙语为代表；第二类通过词缀形成，以粤语为代表。英语是一种缺乏句中否定的语言，主要依赖句边否定。本文的讨论，展示了表达元语言否定的多样语法策略。

关键词

元语言否定 句中否定 否定词 词缀 粤语