

TYOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLES: EVIDENCE, CONTROVERSY AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS


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ABSTRACT

The Intonation-Particles Hypothesis (I-P Hypothesis), proposed by Feng (2015), claims that intonation influences the distribution of tone in sentence-final positions, where Sentence Final Particles (SFPs) generate. Despite the significance of this hypothesis, research on the relationship between tone, intonation, and SFPs requires further discussion and more evidence. To address this gap, this study conducts a comprehensive survey of Chinese dialects, establishing a direct correlation between the complexity of the tonal system and the number of SFPs. The findings reveal how SFPs and intonation patterns interact in sentence-final positions through processes of assimilation, differentiation, and substitution. Additionally, the study further verifies that SFPs are a variant of intonation, supported by evidence from diverse tonal languages worldwide. Building upon the I-P Hypothesis, the research further intensively demonstrates that various languages share a common prosodic property within universal

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grammar, reinforcing the idea that both SFPs and tonogenesis originate from intonemes. The study extends this deduction to ancient Sino-Tibetan and Altaic languages, showing that the asymmetric distribution of monosyllabic tones prevents the projection of intoneme to the word level, particularly in complex contours such as rising and falling tones. The significance of this study lies in that its provision of new typological evidence that supports the I-P Hypothesis. It reveals that intonation and SFPs exhibit a complementary distribution, closely tied to their prosodic expression, contributing to a deeper understanding of how intonation influences the distribution of tones and SFPs across diverse languages.

KEYWORDS

I-P Hypothesis Prosody-syntax interface Intonation SFP Typology

1. INTRODUCTION

Particles often convey meanings such as suggestion or questions, with their usage being more common in recent times compared to ancient time. Previous studies have revealed that non-tonal languages tend to have fewer particles, while tonal languages possess a greater number of them. Sentence final particles (SFPs), a specific type of particle, were initially studied by Chao (1932), who demonstrated that the function of intonation in English is equivalent to that of particles in Chinese. A more detailed examination of tones and SFPs was later conducted by Wakefield (2010), who observed that SFPs in Cantonese function similarly to intonation in English, and proposed that SFPs might have evolved under the influence of intonation within the context of a complex tonal system. However, theories equating these two forms were not thoroughly discussed until the works of Feng (2013, 2015). Since then, the assumption that intonemes and SFPs are equivalent has gained considerable attention, sparking significant controversy and debate (Wakefield 2016; Ye 2018; Wang 2020; Lin 2024).

Building on previous studies, we will present new and compelling evidence supporting the hypothesis that SFPs are variants of intonation in languages, drawing from data across various perspectives. Section 2 discusses the I-P hypothesis and its controversies in detail. Section 3 and Section 4 present logical deductive arguments, with Section 4 providing

句末语气词的类型学视角研究：证据、争议与理论意义

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摘要

冯胜利(2015)提出的 I-P 假说认为, 语调影响句末位置的声调分布, 导致句末语气词在这个位置上的产生。尽管这一假说意义重大, 但有关声调、语调和句末语气词之间关系的研究仍需进一步讨论和更多证据。为了加强这一研究, 本文对汉语方言进行了全面调查, 并建立了声调系统复杂性与句末语气词数量之间的直接关联。研究结果揭示了句末语气词和语调如何通过同化、分化和替代的过程在句末位置相互作用。此外, 研究进一步验证了句末语气词是语调的一种变体, 并通过世界各地的多种声调语言提供了证据。在 I-P 假说基础之上, 研究进一步深入表明了各种语言在普遍语法中共享的共同韵律特性, 强化了句末语气和声调均源自语调的观点。研究还将这一推论扩展到古代汉藏和阿尔泰语言, 表明单音节声调的不对称分布阻止了语调在词汇层面的投射, 特别是在诸如上升调和下降调等复杂声调中。本研究的意义在于提供了新的类型学证据, 进一步支持了 I-P 假说。它揭示了语调和句末语气词表现出互补分布, 紧密关联于它们的韵律表达, 有助于更深入理解语调如何影响不同语言中的声调和句末语气词的分布。

关键词

I-P 假说 韵律-句法界面 语调 句末语气词 类型学