

### The confirmational marker *ha* in Northern Mandarin

This paper focuses on the form and syntactico-pragmatic function of the sentence-final particle *ha* in spoken Northern Mandarin (NM). As a confirmational marker, *ha* only appears at the end of an utterance. It is used for the speaker (S) to request for confirmation from the addressee (A) about the proposition (*p*).

Phonetically, the pitch contour of confirmational *ha* is realized with two distinct types: High-Low type, marked as *ha*<sub>1</sub>, and High-High type, marked as *ha*<sub>2</sub>. In terms of the context of use, *ha*<sub>1</sub> and *ha*<sub>2</sub> differ relative to the following three factors: i) the expertise regarding to the content of *p*; ii) the target to confirm; iii) the sensitivity to sentence types. For expertise, *ha*<sub>1</sub> is used in contexts in which A holds expertise relative to *p* of the host utterance (A-expert context), whereas *ha*<sub>2</sub> is used in contexts where S holds expertise (S-expert context). If there is no established expert, only *ha*<sub>1</sub> is felicitous. We argue that the reason for this sensitivity to expertise has to do with the fact that different confirmational markers are used to confirm different aspects of the utterance. *ha*<sub>1</sub> asks for confirmation of the propositional content of the sentence or S's stance on the propositional content as in (1), while *ha*<sub>2</sub> asks for confirmation of S's assumption that A knows *p* as in (2). As the sensitivity to sentence types is concerned, *ha* is restricted to declaratives (*ha*<sub>1</sub> & *ha*<sub>2</sub>), rhetorical questions (*ha*<sub>1</sub>) and exclamatives (*ha*<sub>1</sub>). Crucially all of these sentence types contain *assertions*. In contrast, neither *ha*<sub>1</sub> nor *ha*<sub>2</sub> can occur in regular questions and imperatives.

(1) *Mary is walking her new dog when she runs into John. John heard that Mary had a new dog. He sees the leash is in Mary's hand. John says to Mary:*

Ni xin yang le tiao gou, *ha*<sub>1</sub> /\**ha*<sub>2</sub>

you new grow ASP CL dog HA/HA (You got a new dog, didn't you?)

(2) *Mary has got a new dog, and she thought John knew it but John doesn't know it at all. When she runs into him when walking her dog on the street, she points at the dog and says to him:*

Wo xin yang le tiao gou, \**ha*<sub>1</sub>/*ha*<sub>2</sub>?

I new grow Asp Cl dog, HA/HA (I got a new dog (and I thought you already knew it), right?)

Based on the above observation, we develop a typological analysis of Mandarin confirmational markers including: *ba* and the A-Not-A tags (*dui bu dui/shi bu shi*). We argue that *ha* modifies the illocutionary act of its host utterance by changing it from simple illocutionary act of *assertion* into a complex one: *assertion + request for confirmation*, in the spirit of Beyssade & Marandin (2006). We further argue that both illocutionary acts are active but vary in salience regarding the selection of confirmational particles, as shown in (3). As a consequence, the competition of the two illocutionary acts is related to pragmatic politeness.

(3)

INPUT	MODIFIED BY	OUTPUT (SALIENCE)
assertion	<i>ha</i>	<b>ASSERTION</b> + request for confirmation
assertion	<i>dui bu dui</i>	assertion+ request for confirmation
assertion	<i>ba</i>	assertion + <b>REQUEST FOR CONFIRMATION</b>

In the spirit of Wiltschko's (2014) Universal Spine Hypothesis and Wiltschko & Heim's (in process) assumption that syntactic layers can be identified by their core functions, we speculate that *ha* in NM falls in the left of the left periphery, which modulates the interface between grammatical form and pragmatic function.

**Reference:**

**Beysade, C., Marandin, J.-M.,** 2006. The speech act assignment problem revisited: Disentangling speaker's commitment from speaker's call on addressee. *Empir. Stud. Syntax Semant.* 6, 37–68.

**Wiltschko, M.,** 2014. *The universal structure of categories: Towards a formal typology.* Cambridge University Press.

**Wiltschko, M., Heim, J.,** in process. *The Syntax of Confirmational: A Neo-performative analysis.*