A diachronic study of epistemic *kongpa* in Mandarin discourse

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Stance

- **Stance-taking** is an essential and pervasive activity in social interactions (Englebretson 2007; Heritage & Raymond 2005; Wu 2004; Hunston & Thompson 2000).

- The term ‘stance’ refers to a speaker’s expression of his/her viewpoint, judgment or evaluation, attitude, or degree of commitment to a proposition/utterance.

- The study of stance can contribute to smooth and effective communication.

- Our current research focuses on the identification of **stance marking strategies**, in particular those strategies that are realized through linguistic means.

- One of our goals is to better understand how these linguistic stance devices help to establish or refute ‘common ground’ between interlocutors.
Stance-taking in Chinese

Like any other language, Chinese is rich in linguistic strategies that encode speakers’ stance.

- **Adverbials**
  他 連 這 道 題 都 不 會?
  tā lián zhè dào tí dōu bù huì
  3SG even DEM CL question even NEG know
  ‘He doesn’t even know how to answer this question?’

- **Negative interrogatives**
  你 (不) 能 讓 我 靜 一 下 嗎?
  nǐ (bù) néng ràng wǒ jìng yī xià mā
  2SG (NEG) able let 1SG quiet one CL Q
  ‘Can’t you just leave me alone?’

- **Sentence final particles**
  再 試 試 吧。
  zài shì shì ba
  again try try SFP
  ‘Have another try (please).’
Epistemic marker *kongpa* in Mandarin Chinese

In this paper, we will examine the development of emotion verb *kongpa* ‘fear’ into an epistemic marker meaning ‘probably’ in Mandarin Chinese and how it is used to mark speakers’ stance in language use.

將來外國人要起罪魁來，
jīānlái wàiguó rén yàoqǐ zuìkuí lái
future foreign people request up chief.criminal come

恐怕一個也跑不掉。
kǒngpà yī gè yě pǎobudiào
fear one CL also run-NEG-RESULT

‘In future, if the foreigners request for the chief criminal, probably nobody can escape.’

*(Wénmíngxiǎoshǐ 文明小史, by Lǐ bóyuán, early 20th century)*
Data

Diachronic

• The Centre for Chinese Linguistics PKU Corpus
• (477 million characters/Old and contemporary Chinese)

Conversations

• CCTV programme xiǎocuīshuōshì 小崔說事 (Talk to Xiao Cui)
• CCTV programme shíhuàshíshuō 實話實說 (Talk the Truth)
Research Questions

- How grammaticalizable are emotion verbs as stance markers? For example, emotions verbs such as Mandarin ‘fear’ verb *kongpa*?
- What are the functions of Mandarin *kongpa*?
- What syntactic positions can it occupy?
- What are the correlations (if any) between its functions and positions? *(Form-function mapping)*
- How did the different functions of *kongpa* develop over time? *(Diachronic development)*
Research Questions--contd.

- What do the diachronic data on *kongpa* show concerning the sequence of development, and relationship (if any), between the emergence of subjectivity and the emergence of epistemic modality?
Functions of *kongpa*

- Lexical verb
- Epistemic marker
- Inferential (evidential) marker
- Pragmatic hedger
Functions of *kongpa* (1)

**Lexical verb**

兩 個 王子 都 恐怕 對方 會 抑制

*liǎng gè wángzǐ dōu kǒngpà dùifāng huì yīzhì*

two CL prince all fear opposite.party FUT restrain

馬 速 或 用 卑鄙 的 手段 致 勝

*mǎ sù huò yòng bēibi de shǒu duàn zhì shèng*

horse speed or use mean ATTR way achieve victory

‘Both of the two princes are in *fear* that the other would restrain his horse speed or win with dirty tricks.’

Functions of *kongpa* (2)

**Epistemic marker 2-1**

我們 當然 最 希望 能夠 直航，
wǒmen dāngrán zuì xīwàng nénggòu zhíháng
1PL of.course most wish able direct.flight

如果 從 廣州 直 飛 台北，
rúguǒ cóng guǎngzhōng zhí fēi táiběi
if from Guangzhou direct fly Taipei

恐怕 一個 多 小時 就 可以 到 了，
kōngpà yī gè duō xiǎoshí jiù kěyǐ dào le
fear one CL many hour just able arrive PERF
Functions of *kongpa* (2) contd.

**Epistemic marker 2-2**

那该有多好。
*nà gāi yǒu duō hǎo*
that should EXST how good

‘Of course we prefer a direct flight best, then *probably* it’ll only take an hour or so from Guangzhou to Taipei; that would be ideal.’ (Lit. ‘if that should be the case, how wonderful it would be.’)

(*Xīnhuázhàixiàn* 新華在線 Xinhua Online News, 09-03-2004)
Functions of *kongpa* (3)

**Inferential marker**

但由於今年比賽競技水平很高，
*dàn yóuyú jīnnián bǐsài jìngjì shuǐpíng hěn gāo*
because this year match competition level very high

大多數業餘選手恐怕很難通過資格選拔賽。
*dàduōshù yèyú xuǎnshǒu kǒngpà hěn nán tōngguò zīgé xuǎnbásài*
majority amateur contestant fear very hard pass qualify trial

‘However, due to the fact that the level of the competition this year is extremely high, the majority of amateur contestants will *probably* not pass the trial.’
*(Rénmínribào 人民日报 People’s Daily, 11-05-2004)*
Functions of *kongpa* (4)

IR: (Why do you always recruit those good-looking candidates?)

IE: 但是 作为 戏剧 学院 ，电影 学院 ，
    dànshì zuòwéi xìjù xuéyuàn diànyīng xuéyuàn
however as drama academy film academy

每年 就 招 五六 十 个 人 ，
měi nián jiù zhāo wǔ liù shí gè rén
every year just recruit five six ten CL people

它 偏偏 好 的 不 招 ，
tā piānpiān hǎo de bù zhāo
3SG just good ATTR NEG recruit

就 招 那些 形象 不 好 的 ，
jiù zhāo nàxiē xíngxiàng bù hǎo de
just recruit those appearance NEG good ATTR
Functions of *kongpa* (4) contd.

**Pragmatic hedger**

這 個 恐 怕 ， 一 般 的 國 家 也 不 允 許 ，
zhè gè kōngpà yībān de guójiā yě bù yunxǔ
this CL fear common ATTR country also NEG allow

群 衆 也 不 同 意 。
quínzhòng yě bù tóngyì
public also NEG agree

‘But a drama academy or film academy only recruits fifty or sixty students a year; (if) it avoids those good-looking candidates, but only recruits those bad-looking ones, I’m afraid most countries would not allow that, nor would the public agree.’

*(Shíhuàshíshuō 實話實說 01-04-2005)*
Syntactic position of *kongpa*

- Clause-initial
- Clause-medial
Syntactic positions of *kongpa*

**Utterance-initial**

恐 怕 飯 店 的 員 工 也 未 必 說 得 清 楚  
*kǒngpà fàndiàn de yuánɡōng yě wèibì shuōdeqīnghǔ*

fear hotel GEN staff also not.necessary say-DEG-clear

“賓 至 如 歸” ，  
*bīnzhírúguī shì shénme*

guest.come.like.return COP what

‘I’m afraid that not even the staff in the hotel (let alone the guests) can clearly explain what *binzhirugui* means.’ (*binzhirugui* is a motto within the hotel industry that emphasizes the importance of making a guest feel at home)  
(*Rènmín Rìbào 人民日報 Peoples’ Daily, January 1994*)
Syntactic positions of *kongpa*--contd.

**Utterance-medial**

抻麪， 你 知道 嗎 ？
*chēnmìàn nǐ zhīdào ma*
hand-pulled.noodle 2SG know Q

這個外地人 恐怕 也不 知道。
*zhè gè wàidì rén kǒngpà yě bù zhīdào*
this CL non-local people fear also NEG know

‘As for the Beijing hand-pulled noodles, you know what, non-locals probably don’t know about it either.’
(Data from *1982 Běijīng Dialectal Survey* 1982 年北京話調查資料)
Syntactic position of *wo kongpa* in Contemporary Chinese
(subjective & intersubjective readings)

**Table 3.** Frequency distribution of the various functions of Modern Mandarin *wo kongpa* in utterance-initial, utterance-medial and utterance-final position based on tokens from the Centre for Chinese Linguistics PKU Corpus (CCLC)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of <em>wo kongpa</em></th>
<th>Syntactic distribution of <em>wo kongpa</em></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total no. of tokens of <em>wo kongpa</em> in the corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utterance- initial</td>
<td>Utterance- medial</td>
<td>Utterance- final (tag)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical verb expressing anxiety (‘I’m afraid’)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic marker ‘probably’</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential marker ‘it seems to be’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of tokens of <em>wo kongpa</em> in the corpus</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Table 3 with tokens of *wo kongpa* is a subset extracted from Table 2 with tokens of *kongpa*
Syntactic position of *kongpa* in Contemporary Chinese

**Table 2.** Frequency distribution of the various functions of Modern Mandarin *kongpa* in utterance-initial, utterance-medial and utterance-final position in the Centre for Chinese Linguistics PKU Corpus (CCLC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of <em>kongpa</em></th>
<th>Utterance-initial</th>
<th>Utterance-medial</th>
<th>Utterance-final (tag)</th>
<th>Total no. of tokens of <em>kongpa</em> sampled in the present study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical verb expressing anxiety (‘I’m afraid’)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic marker ‘probably’</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential marker ‘it seems to be’</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of tokens of <em>kongpa</em> sampled in the present study (out of the total 10,554 tokens in the entire corpus)</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diachronic development of *kongpa*

- Tang
- Clause-medial
### Diachronic findings

**Table 1.** Frequency distribution of the various functions of utterance-initial Mandarin *kongpa* from the 7th to middle 20th century based on tokens from the Centre for Chinese Linguistics PKU Corpus (CCLC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions of <em>kongpa</em></th>
<th>Tang &amp; Five Dynasties (618 – 960)</th>
<th>Song (960 – 1279)</th>
<th>Yuan (1279-1368)</th>
<th>Ming (1368-1644)</th>
<th>Qing (1644-1911)*</th>
<th>Republican Era (1911-1949)*</th>
<th>Total no. of tokens of <em>kongpa</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical verb expressing anxiety (‘I’m afraid’)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>1674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic marker ‘probably’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential marker ‘it seems to be’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of tokens of <em>kongpa</em> sampled in the present study (out of the total 3,495 tokens in the entire corpus)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>2,135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: For the Qing period, we culled every other token of *kongpa* from the total 1,420 tokens, which thus yields 710 tokens for this analysis; for the Republican Era, we culled every other token of *kongpa* from the total 1,300 tokens, which thus yields 650 tokens for this analysis.*
Diachronic: *kongpa* as a **lexical verb**

**Earliest attested token of *kongpa*: Tang dynasty**

昨 來 新 拜 右 丞 相，
*zuó*  *lái*  *xīn*  *bài*  *yòu*  *chéngxiàng*
yesterday come new take.office right prime.minister

恐怕 泥 塗 污 馬 蹄 。
*kǒngpà*  *nǐ*  *tú*  *wū*  *mǎ*  *tí*
fear earth besmear dirty horse hoof

‘The prime minister, who has just assumed office, arrived yesterday.
There was **fear** (< ‘Government officials feared’) that the earth would besmear the horse’s hooves.’

*(Guānniú 官牛 ‘Official Cow’, a poem by Bái Jūyì, 772-846 AD, Tang dynasty)*
Diachronic: *kongpa* as a lexical verb--contd.

婆婆听得，半晌无言，
pópo tīng dé bànshǎng wú yán
mother-in-law listen get a long time NEG word

欲待要骂，恐怕人知笑话，
yù dài yào mà kǒngpà rén zhī xiàohuà
about wait need scope fear people know laugh

只得忍气吞声。
zhǐ dé rěnqìtūnshēng
only able restrain one's temper

‘(Her) mother in law could not produce any word for a long time after hearing that. She restrained her temper when she was about to scold (Cuilian), fearing that the neighbor would laugh at them.’

(*Qīngpínghuángtánghuàběn* 清平山堂話本 960-1279 AD, Song dynasty)
Diachronic: *kongpa as a lexical verb* --contd.

如 此 用 功 夫  
*rú cǐ yòng gōngfu*
like this use time

恐 怕  輕 費 了  時 月  
*kōngpà qīng fèile shíyuè*
worry frivolously waste-PFV hour.month

‘If (we) spend time like this, I worry (we will just) frivolously waste our time.’
*(Thematic Discourses of Master Zhū 朱子語類, 1270 AD, Song dynasty)*

Worry rather than fear
Diachronic: *kongpa* as an epistemic marker

「……若要等火熄滅，
if need wait fire extinguish
恐懼還需一周時間哩。」
*fear still need one week time SFP*

‘I’m afraid / Probably it will take a week’s time to let the fire burn out.’
*（*Qījiànshísānxíá 七劍十三俠, a fiction by Táng Yúnzhōu, 1636-1911 AD, Qing dynasty*)
Diachronic: *kongpa* as an inferential marker

Ms. Zhu walked several steps, put her heart down.

回頭一看，見丈夫手忙腳亂，
back head one look see husband hand busy flurried foot disorder

做張做智，老大疑惑，恐怕有些蹺蹊。
behave.strangely very curious fear have some suspicion

‘Ms. Zhu took several steps, but still worried about it. She turned back. Her husband was disoriented, behaving strangely. She thought it was very odd and felt there probably was something wrong.’

*(Xǐngshìhégéngyán 醒世恒言 Stories to awaken the world, a story collection by Féng Mènglóng, 1574-1646 AD, Ming dynasty)*
1SG+**kongpa**

Earliest attested token of *wo kongpa*: late Yuan/early Ming dynasty

我 恐怕 他 省悟 了 趕將 來 ......

*wǒ kǒngpà tā xǐngwù le gǎnjìang lái*

1SG fear 3SG realize PERF catch.PRT come

‘I fear he may catch up with me if he realized (that I had deceived him) …’

*(Shuǐhǔquánzhuàn 水滸全轉 Water Margin, late Yuan dynasty or early Ming dynasty)*

這個問題 我 恐怕 不能 回答 你 ,

*zhè gè wèntí wǒ kǒngpà bù néng huidá nǐ*

this CL question 1SG fear NEG able answer 2SG

因為 我 自己 也 不 知道 。

*yīnwèi wǒ zìjǐ yě bù zhīdào*

because 1SG self also NEG know

‘I’m afraid I can’t answer this question, because I don’t know either.’

*(Yīnxióngwúlèi 英雄無淚, a fiction by Gǔ Lóng, contemporary)*
Kongpa in conversational interactions

**IR:** 給 您 提 個 意見 啊。
gěi nín tí ge yìjiàn a
give 2SG.HON point.out CL suggestion SFP

‘A suggestion for you.’

**IE:** 好 的。
hǎo de
good ATTR

‘Sure.’

**IR:** 這 個 是 多 好 的 知識 啊。
zhè gè shì duō hǎo de zhīshi a
this CL COP how good ATTR knowledge SFP

幹嘛 不 把 它 做 成 什麼 漫畫 版 啊，
gàn má bù bǎ tā zuò chéng shénme mànhuà bǎn a
why NEG BA 3SG do become what comic version SFP
Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

‘Such wonderful knowledge. Why don’t you create a comic version, an animation or comic version, so that everyone will be attracted to watch and get this knowledge?’

IE: 如果 能够 做 成 動漫 版 ，

這 個 ， 呃 ... 恐怕 ， 呃 ...
Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

‘If we convert this into an animation or comic version, that… well, I’m afraid, well, it would lose its scientific connotations.’

IR: 它 說 不 準 , 是 吧 ?
3SG say NEG exact COP Q

呃 … 用 漫 畫 說 不 準 。
PART use comic say NEG exact

‘It can’t explain well, right? Well, using comics one can’t explain exactly (what one means).’
Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

IE: 呃 ... 我 覺得 我們 這樣 做 已經 夠 濃縮 了，
   e    wǒ  juéde wǒmen zhèyàng zuò yǐjīng gòu nónɡsuō le
PART  1SG feel 1PL this do already enough concise PERF

如果 再 濃縮 成 漫畫 版
rúɡuǒ zài nónɡsuō chéng mànhuà bǎn
if further concise become comic version

恐怕 連 我們 自己 也 看 不 懂 了。
kǒnɡpà lián wǒmen zìjǐ yě kàn bù dǒnɡ le
fear even 1PL self also read NEG understand PERF

‘Well, I think we’ve simplified it a lot, if we further adapt it to comics, I’m afraid even we ourselves might not be able to understand it.’

(Xiǎocuīshuōshi 小崔說事 18-03-2011)
Grammaticalization process of *kongpa*

The sense of ‘fear’ is weakening over time

*Lexical emotion verb*

(wo) *kongpa*

‘(I) fear’

*Epistemic & Inferential marker*

*kongpa*

‘Probably’

Tang dynasty

Contemporary
Lexicality tests

NEGATION TEST
- *(Wo) bu kongpa ...*
- Not attested in pre-modern Chinese texts in our corpus

MODAL TEST
- *(Wo) hui / keneng / yinggai kongpa ...*
- Not attested in pre-modern Chinese texts in our corpus

DEGREE ADVERB TEST
- *(Wo) hen / zhende kongpa ...*
- Not attested in pre-modern Chinese texts in our corpus

Kongpa appears to be rather defective as a lexical verb even in the Tang period.
Some answers to our research questions

- How grammaticalizable are emotion verbs as stance markers? For example, emotions verbs such as Mandarin ‘fear’ verb *kongpa*?

- In general, emotion verbs in Chinese are not frequently grammaticalized into ‘stand-alone’ pragmatic markers.

- The ‘fear’ verbs appear to be more grammaticalizable than other emotion verbs, with equivalents of Mandarin *kongpa* attested in other Sinitic varieties such as Cantonese *taipaa* (< ‘see-fear’).

- Crosslinguistically, Malay has an utterance-final epistemic marker *kot*, which appears to have originated from the ‘fear’ verb *takut*. 
Sentence final Maly *kot*

- Reanalysis of a higher (matrix) clause with emotion verb ‘fear’ reinterpreted as an epistemic marker ‘probably’ in utterance-tag and sentence-final positions:

(1)  

(a) *Aku takut dia nangis nanti.*
    1SG fear 3SG cry FUT(<wait)
    ‘I’m afraid (s)he will cry.’

(b) *Dia nangis nanti, (aku) takut.*
    3SG cry FUT 1SG fear
    ‘(S)he may cry, I’m afraid.’

(c) *Dia nangis nanti *kut.*
    3SG cry FUT maybe
    ‘(S)he may cry, perhaps/maybe.’

Facilitated by elision of subject and complement
Some answers to our research questions

- What are the **functions** of Mandarin *kongpa*?
  - Lexical verb ‘fear’ (no longer productive)
  - Epistemic marker ‘probably’
  - Inferential marker ‘probably’

- What **syntactic positions** can it occupy?
  - Utterance-initial
  - Utterance-medial
  - Utterance-final possible in colloquial speech (but not productive, and not attested in our corpus)
Some answers to our research questions

Correlations between the functions and syntactic positions of Mandarin *kongpa*?

- **Functions of Mandarin *kongpa***
  - Lexical verb ‘fear’ (no longer productive)
  - Epistemic marker ‘probably’
  - Inferential marker ‘probably’

- **Syntactic positions of *kongpa***
  - Utterance-initial
  - Utterance-medial
  - Utterance-final possible in colloquial speech (but not productive, and not attested in our corpus)
How did the different functions of kongpa develop over time? (Diachronic development)

- Lexical verb ‘fear’
- Epistemic marker ‘probably’
- Inferential marker ‘probably’
- Tang period
- Qing period
Syntactic reanalysis and semantic scope expansion

Tang: \[[\text{IP} [\text{VP} kongpa [\text{CP} \text{Complement Clause} ]]]\]

Qing: \[[\text{CP-epistemic} kongpa [\text{IP} \text{Insubordinate Clause} ]]]\]

Qing: \[[\text{IP} \text{NP} [\text{epistemic adverb} kongpa] \text{VP} ]\]

Qing: \[[\text{CP-inferential} kongpa [\text{IP} \text{Insubordinate Clause} ]]]\]

**Right-Dislocation (still) not preferred**

No Comp-to-Spec raising yet?
Research Questions--contd.

- What do the diachronic data on *kongpa* show concerning the sequence of development, and relationship (if any), between the emergence of subjectivity and the emergence of epistemic modality?

- Subjective readings of *kongpa* were available as early as the Tang and Song period.
Some answers to our research questions

- Lexical verb ‘fear’
- Epistemic marker ‘probably’
- Inferential marker ‘probably’

Subjective > Intersubjective
References


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