Whatchamacallit-type expressions in Cantonese: Analyzing *mat, matje, meje, and me*

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The realization of mood and modal assessment in different languages: modal particles

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- **Thai**: Pattama Patpong
- **Japanese**: Ayako Ochi
- **Indonesian**: Susanto Nanda
- **Arabic**: Mohamed Ali Bardi
- **Brazilian Portugese**: Elaine Espindola
- ...
Doctor

Greetings Nego.
Good morning!

What's up?

Have you vomited with blood?

How many days (you) have been like this?

Have (you) ever been like this before?

Do you drink alcohol?

Did you vomit a lot?

Did you vomit a lot?

responding: yes

Hospital before Nego. Nego.

Today (you) probably have to stay in the hospital.

Patient

I vomited with blood.

I had been this morning.

Neg.

NEG. ASP.: pfv.

No, never.

Neg.

Neg.

Neg.

Neg.

Neg.

One container.

It is up to you.
Thai: Modal particle / Negotiator

- **Negotiator:** ➡ interpersonal particle

- There are three types of Negotiator:
  - modal distance
    - politeness Negotiator \([kha^2, khrap^4]\)
  - mood type
    - polar Negotiator \([maj^4, ri:5 pla:w^2]\)
  - modal judgement
    - attitudinal Negotiator \([la^3, na^4]\)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl (Huijin)</th>
<th>Boy (Jinhyeon)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>geunde hal yaegiran ge geugeo ya?</strong> but Future say thing this one Neg</td>
<td><strong>geuman haja</strong> stop let’s-do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But this is what you’re going to say?</td>
<td>Let’s break up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>na bwa // bora gu // gimsamsun ssi ttaemun ni?</strong> me look look Neg Gimsamsun Ms. Because, Neg</td>
<td><strong>eo</strong> yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at me. Look! Because of Gimsamsun?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sarangha ni? eung?</strong> love Neg Continuative (You) love (her)? euh?</td>
<td><strong>jakku saenggang-na.</strong> always think come. (I) always think (of her).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(I’m asking you) do you love (her)?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sarangha nya gu ?</strong> love Quotative Marker Neg</td>
<td><strong>bo go sipeo.</strong> look and want I want to see (her). (=I miss her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I’m asking you) do you love (her)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sarangha nya gu ?</strong> love Quotative Marker Neg</td>
<td><strong>gachi isseumyeon jeulgeowo</strong> together if happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I’m asking you) do you love (her)?</td>
<td>If (we’re) together, (we will be) happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>geurae</strong> yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Speech Level</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>sarangha ni?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>sarangha-e ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>sarangha-na ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Formal</td>
<td>sarangha-o ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>sarangha-eyo ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferential</td>
<td>sarangha-pnik ka?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimpachi (father)</td>
<td>Otome (daughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>onechan, ohayoo.</em></td>
<td><em>a, ohayoo.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister, good morning</td>
<td>Ah, good morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nanka kakusita?</em> Did you hide anything?</td>
<td><em>iya, kakusitenai yo.</em> No, I didn’t hide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>uun, nanka kakusita yo.</em> No, you hid something.</td>
<td><em>uun, a, ne, otoochan, koosaku okositekitekure nai?</em> No, ah hey father koosaku wake-come-give Neg?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kakusita yo.</em> hide-PAST Neg. (You) hid.</td>
<td><em>jugyoo hajimaru mae ni,</em> class start before NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>aitsu datte kodomo ja nai n da karasa,</em> he also kids be negative Neg. Neg. Neg. Neg. He is not a kid anymore, so,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*yoo ga attara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>wakatta tte. ima ittekuru kara sa.</em> understand-PAST Neg. now go-come Neg. Neg OK. Now I’m going, yeh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mood:
- Interrogative
- Explanative
- Employment
- Forceful
- Insistent
- Emphathetic
- Male
- Request

Evidentiality:
- Reason

Mood:
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- Employment
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## Japanese: Modal particle / Negotiator

### Negotiator: interpersonal particle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Written/Spoken</th>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Associated Mood Types</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative?:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I request you to’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic</td>
<td></td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>Conclusive or Optative within Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanative</td>
<td>no(da)</td>
<td>n(da)</td>
<td>Other than Hortative within Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanative:</td>
<td>kara</td>
<td>kara</td>
<td>Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful: Assertive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Declarative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful: Insistent</td>
<td></td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I told you’</td>
<td>tte</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearsay</td>
<td>tte</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indicative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You guys are so greedy.

There is no problem in Hong Kong for sure.
Can't you eat fast enough?

(You) actually go to return the car?
1. As pronouns

* nei soeng sik me dou dak
you want eat me also fine
You can eat whatever you want to.

* gam batjuu jiiu jat gau jat gau godi me laa
so rather have one piece one piece those me PRT
Then let’s rather have those thing that are in pieces.

* interchangeable among me/meje/mat/matje

* jiiu godi me me me me me zau naai laa
have those me me me me me rid milk PRT
Let’s have that without milk.
2. As interrogative pronoun

- *you*  *mat*  *tai*
- *have*  *mat*  *see*
- **What** is there to see?

- interchangeable among *me/meje/mat/matje*
3. *me* as a placeholder for taboo or socially unutterable expression

- *ngo* gammaan jiu heoi *me*
  1SG tonight need go *me*
- soji jiu zoek haksik saam
  so need wear black clothes

I need to go to do something tonight
so I need to wear in black.

- not interchangeable with *mat/matje*
  (taboo VS. interrogative)
4. *me* as a placeholder for verbs, adjectives and adverbs

#### 4.1 verb

```
ngo  me  gan  m  lai  dak  aa
1SG  me  IMPERF  NEG  come  able  PRT
```

I am doing *something* so I can’t come.

#### 4.2 adjective

```
keoi  hai  go  zeoi  me  ge  jan
3SG  BE  CL  most  me  GE  person
```

He is the most *X* person.
4. *me* as a placeholder for verbs, adjectives and adverbs

4.3 adverbs

dimgaai nei sik dak gam *me* gaa

why you eat PRT so *me* PRT

Why you eat in *such a way*?

How about as placeholder for nouns?

? *ngo sik*/take zo *me* aa

1SG eat/“take” PERF *me* PRT

I have had/“taken” *something*.

From referential to non-referential domains
5. *me* as a negotiator (clause-final)

- *nei sik m cit me*
  2SG eat NEG fast-enough NEG
  Can’t you eat fast enough?

- *ngo m leng me*
  1SG NEG pretty *me*
  Don’t I look pretty?

- polar negotiator

- attitudinal negotiator: counter-expectancy
6. *mat* as an attitudinal negotiator (clause-initial)

- *mat* nei gam laan gaa
- *mat* you so lazy PRT
- Why are you so lazy?

- not interchangeable with *matje/me/meje*

- only in polar question

- *mat* as an attitudinal negotiator when at clause-initial: counter-expectancy
7. *me* as an attitudinal negotiator

- *godi me lunghaa me saanghou*
- those *me* lobster *me* oyster
- *ngo dou jatzou sik jim laa*
- 1SG also early eat bore PRT
- I’m fed up with those lobsters and oysters for a long time.

- *singjat waa gogo me Si Sir hai me bouzaap tinwong*
- always say that *me* Si Sir is *me* tutoring king
- [People] always say that Si Sir is a king of tutoring.

- Prefixing nouns/nominal group only
- Derogatory attitude
8. *me* as a gap filler

- jau di *me me* jauguk *me* baakzaunin aa have PL *me me* post office *me* centenary PRT
  It is the centenary of the post office.

- interchangeable with *mat*

- not interchangeable with *meje/matje*

- showing uncertainty (?)
<table>
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<td>1. <em>me/meje/mat/matje</em> as pronouns</td>
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<td>2. <em>me/meje/mat/matje</em> as interrogative pronoun</td>
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<td>5. <em>me</em> as a polar and attitudinal negotiator (clause-final)</td>
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<td>6. <em>mat</em> as an attitudinal negotiator (clause-initial)</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. <em>me</em> as an attitudinal negotiator</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <em>me</em> as a gap filler</td>
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interactional — Cantonese — Japanese — Korean — Thai — politeness / honorification