Right Dislocation in Cantonese: An Emotion-intensifying Device

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Abstract

This paper explores the emotive function of Cantonese right dislocation based on language samples in a large spoken Cantonese database. Right dislocation is found to be highly associated with emotion expressions. In particular, explicit emotion words always appear in the first part of right dislocation. We argue that right dislocation is used as a focus marking device for highlighting emotion information and intensifying emotions. Therefore, right dislocation can serve as one of the linguistic cues for identifying implicit emotions.

1 Introduction

This paper investigates the emotive function of right dislocation (RD), a non-canonical word order, in Cantonese spoken discourse. We argue that RD is frequently used as a linguistic device by speakers to highlight emotion information.

RD refers to a sentence construction in which some syntactic components are dislocated from the sentence beginning or internal position to the end of the sentence. Cantonese is known for its flexibility in terms of the syntactic categories of dislocated elements, which may include nouns, verbs, adverbs, connectives, modals and adverbial clauses (Cheung, 1997, 2009; Guo, 1999; Luke, 2012). An example of Cantonese RD is given below:

(1) 好失望呀，我覺得
    'I am very disappointed'

Conversational utterances are often found in which some elements are dislocated to the utterance final position after the sentence final particle (SFP). This phenomenon has been studied by a number of researchers from different perspectives, i.e. syntactic and grammatical constraints (Cheung, 1997, 2009; Law, 2003); pragmatic functions (Zhang & Fang, 1996); information structure (Liang, 2002; Lai, 2015) and conversation analysis (Luke, 2012). Research to date has generally lent support to the claim that RD is a focus marking device motivated by limited time pressure in conversation. The emotive function of RD has been observed and mentioned briefly in the literature (Guo, 1999; Lai, 2015); However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no work focusing on the emotive function of RD yet. This paper aims to address the following questions:

(1) How frequently is RD associated with emotion expression in Cantonese?
(2) What types of emotion are more commonly expressed through RD?
(3) How is RD used to express emotions?

Section 2 gives an overview of the previous studies in relation to emotion expression and RD in different languages. Section 3 describes the methodology of the present work including the database where the speech sample is drawn. Section 4 presents the analysis and results. Section 5 discusses how RD is used to intensify emotions with examples. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2 Related Work

Right dislocation was initially proposed by Chao (1968) as "afterthought", referring to the unplanned content that was added to a completed sentence. Packard (1986) has argued that it is actually a left dislocation in which the focus information in the sentence has undergone a left dislocation movement to the sentence initial position. Other terms for this construction include "transposition" (Lu, 1980), "dislocation" (Liang, 2002), "focus-fronting" (Zhang & Fang, 1996; Luke & Zhang, 2007), and "incremental sentences" (Luke, 2004; 2012). Liang (2002),

Zhang and Fang (1996) suggested that RD mainly occurred in conversation. Due to the lack of planning time in conversational communication, speakers tend to place the most important information in the initial position of a sentence, and then fill in the less important information at the end. A conversation analytic account was adopted in Luke (2012). Luke observed that RD performs a variety of discourse functions, such as intensification, emphasis, clarification etc. RD in monologues was investigated by Lai (2015). The study suggested that the use of RD is influenced by genre type, information pressure and speakers' assumption of shared knowledge. It was also observed in the study that RD is often used by Cantonese speakers to express emotions.

The affective function of RD in Mandarin Chinese was first discussed in Guo (1999). Based on children's speech data, the study examined RD utterances with dislocated noun phrases. Three main types of RD were classified: (i) zero anaphoric, (ii) elaborations, and (iii) reduplications. The zero anaphoric and elaborative types of RD were found to be mainly used for statement purposes, while reduplications mainly served the functions of questioning, ridiculing and reprimanding. It was proposed that Mandarin RD is a grammaticalized device to serve affective function, in particular, commonly being used to express the speaker's negative feelings.

Similar observations were made in Japanese by Ono (2006). Despite the rigidity of SOV constituent order in Japanese, RD with non-predicate final is commonly found in conversational discourse. Ono and Suzuki (1992) argued that RD is a "planned" production rather than a repair device since there is no prosodic break between the main clause and the dislocated elements in most RDs. An inspection on the RDs revealed that adjectives and nouns most frequently appear in the main clause of RDs, and they often directly express emotion. Similar to Mandarin Chinese, the results suggest that Japanese RD is grammaticalized to express the speaker's emotion. Emotion is a driving force in the creation of RD in Japanese.

The affective function of Cantonese RDs was statistically examined in Lai et al. (2017). The study investigated the use of RDs in different genres in relation to emotion expression. Although the association between the two was not statistically significant, the result showed that RD is used more frequently when a speaker talks about an emotional topic (i.e. personal recount) than an emotion-neutral topic (i.e. procedural description). It is also worth noting that the "emotion expression" in the study only refers to explicit emotion whereas emotion words, such as "happy", "sad", were explicitly used. However, emotion may be conveyed implicitly without saying emotion words. This paper aims to investigate both explicit and implicit emotions expressed in Cantonese RDs.

3 Methodology
3.1 Corpus Data

The data of this study were drawn from a spoken Cantonese database recently made available in the public domain, i.e. Cantonese AphasiaBank (Kong et al., 2010-2014). Cantonese AphasiaBank contains speech samples elicited from various narrative tasks of native speakers of Cantonese including 144 neurologically unimpaired male and female native Cantonese speakers of varied ages and education levels. Participants were asked to (1) narrate an important event in their life, (2) tell two highly familiar stories— "The Hare and the Tortoise" and "The Boy who Cried Wolf"—with picture cues; (3) describe three pictures and a photo; and (4) describe the procedure of making a ham and egg sandwich. There was no bias on the emotion types of the topics. However, the contents in task (1) and (2) were believed to be more emotional compared to task (3) and (4). The language samples were orthographically transcribed with part-of-speech (POS) annotation. The transcriptions are formatted using the Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT) (MacWhinney, 2000). The database contains about 155,500 words in all the transcripts, with 38 different word types (POS).

3.2 Identification of Right Dislocation

Instances of RD were identified from the database manually. The present study follows criteria for identifying RD mentioned in Cheung (1997) and Liang (2002). Structurally, RD takes the form of [α (SFP), β], where α and β refer to components of a clause. We will refer to α as the host; and β as the tail in this paper. If there was a sentence final particle (SFP), it must appear between the host and tail. SFP is not obligatory although it is commonly found in RD (Liang, 2002). Semantically, the tail should be able to form a complete clause with the host

when the clause is in a canonical word order. Phonetically, there is no noticeable pause between the main clause and the dislocated element, and the dislocated element is always said in a fast tempo (Liang, 2002).

3.3 Emotion Annotation

The unit for emotion analysis includes five clauses: the two clauses preceding the RD, the RD clause, and the two clauses following the RD. For each RD unit, with reference to the Chinese emotion taxonomy proposed by Lee (2010), we analyse if there is emotion. Following Lee (2010), five basic emotions are annotated, namely *happiness, sadness, fear, anger*, and *surprise*. If there is a presence of emotion, we annotate whether it is explicit or implicit emotion. Explicit emotion refers to the presence of emotion-related information denoted by emotion keywords. Implicit emotion refers to the emotion-related information that requires inference or connotation instead of being conveyed by emotion keywords (Lee, 2015). Emotion keywords include three types: emotion words, emotion related words and emotion-laden words. Following Pavlenko (2008), emotion words are the words that directly refer to particular affective states ('happy', 'angry') or process ('to worry', 'to rage'), and function to either describe ('she is sad') or express them ('I feel sad'). Emotion-related words ("tears", "tantrum", "to scream") are words that describe behaviours related to particular emotions without naming the actual emotions. Emotion-laden words are words that do not refer to emotions directly but instead express ("jerk", "loser") or elicit emotions from the speakers ("cancer", "malignancy"). The position of emotion keywords is also examined.

4   Data Analysis

A total of 204 instances of RD were identified from the database. Among all the RDs, 132 tokens (64.7%) were found to convey emotions. The total number of emotions identified is 142, given some RDs involved more than one emotion. 90 emotions are expressed explicitly, which means there are emotion words, emotion related or emotion-laden words; while 52 emotions were expressed implicitly. In terms of emotion types, *sadness* occurred most frequently, followed by *happiness, anger,* and *sur-*

prise, the least frequently occurring is *fear*. Table 1 shows the distribution of explicit and implicit emotions.

Emotions	Frequency		Total no. of emotion
	Explicit	Implicit	
Sadness	37	19	56 (39%)
Happiness	23	9	32 (23%)
Anger	17	9	26 (18%)
Surprise	4	12	16 (11%)
Fear	9	3	12 (8%)
Total	90 (63%)	52 (37%)	142

Table 1. Distribution of Explicit and Implicit Emotions

We also examined the position where the emotions are shown. For explicit emotions, the majority of emotion keywords (79%) are found inside the RD utterance. The remaining are shown evenly before and after RD. In a RD, over 93% (66 instances) of emotion keywords appeared in the first part of RD (host) as in (2).

(2) 係 最 感動 最 開心 嘅 ,, 我 覺得
'I feel it is the most touching and happiest (event).'

The distribution of implicit emotions is more spread out. Although RD still contains the highest frequency (33%) of implicit emotions, the utterances before and after RD also involved a considerable amount of emotion expression. Interestingly, the data show that speakers generally use more utterances to convey implicit emotion than explicit emotion. 23% of implicit emotions took more than one utterance to express, as in example (3), which conveyed *sadness* throughout the clauses by describing a series of thoughts. In (4), the speaker expressed *surprise* and *happiness* implicitly by recalling a surprising birthday celebration event.

(3) 唔想出聲, 唔想出街
好劫 ,, 成日都會
咩都無動力嘅
'Do not want to make a sound or go out, (I am) always feeling tired, do not want to speak, no intention to (do) anything.'

(4) 突然拎個蛋糕出嚟, 同我慶祝 ,
即係係估唔到嘅,, 完全
仲同我一齊切蛋糕
'Suddenly (he) took out a cake to celebrate with me. I didn't expect that at all. He even cut the cake with me.'

Positions	Frequency	
	Explicit	Implicit
Pre-RD	7 (8%)	14 (27%)
Post-RD	6 (7%)	9 (17%)
RD [Host] [Tail]	71 (79%) [66] [5]	17 (33%) [13] [4]
More than one utterance	6 (7%)	12 (23%)
Total	90	52

Table 2. Distribution of Emotions in Positions

Regarding the linguistic structure of RD, we identified some verbs and adjectives that often appeared in the host; and they are closely connected with emotions, as shown in Table 3.

Emotions	Words appeared in RD Host
Happiness	開心, 喜悅, 好運, 笑, 舒服, 好彩, 驕傲, 感動, 感激, 感恩, 興奮, 激動
Sadness	心痛, 後悔, 慘, 無助, 難過, 喊, 傷心, 失望, 尷尬, 狼狽 , 沮喪
Anger	抵死, 麻煩, 反感, 憤怒, 嬲, 搞錯, 深深不忿, 後悔, 激氣
Fear	弊, 死 , 慘 , 驚, 虛脫, 冷汗, 震
Surprise	點知/點不知 , 嘩/哇, 咦, 吖, 原來, 特別, 好彩, 估唔到, 意料之外, 驚喜

Table 3. Words with emotion in RD Host

For the tail, the slot is mostly occupied by pronoun, demonstrative, connective, or adverb elements.

	Words appeared in RD Tail
Pronoun	我, 佢
Demonstrative	嗰日, 哩次
Connective	所以, 但係, 不過
Adverb	梗係, 真係, 已經

Table 4. Words in RD Tail

5 Discussion

The quantitative results in this study have shown that RD is frequently used together with emotion keywords. These emotion keywords usually appear in the host, which is an assumed position for placing the focus or important information (Lai, 2015; Liang, 2002). We propose that RD is a linguistic device to highlight and intensify emotion information. This feature of RD is even more prominent when explicit emotion is conveyed. In canonical word order, emotion words usually appear in the post-verbal position like in (5).

From the information structure perspective, this type of clause is categorized as 'sentence-focused' or 'predicate-focused' (Lambrecht, 1996). Sentence-focused refers to a construction where both subject and predicate are in focus; predicate-focused usually refers to a topic-comment construction in which the predicate is in focus. If the speaker only wants to focus on a certain emotion, in addition to vocally stressing on the element, he/she can re-order the constituent to achieve this purpose. By pre-posing the emotion words into the utterance initial position as in (6), the clause is a marked focus construction in which the host receives focus and the emotion information is thus highlighted. (6) gives an impression that the emotion is intense and the speaker is eager to express it out. Comparing to (5), The emotion in (6) is being intensified when it occupied the focus position. The pattern of (6) as "degree adverb + emotion word + (SFP), subject + verb" is commonly observed in the data. This might suggest that RD has been conventionalized as an emotion intensification device. It may also explain the high frequency of co-occurrence of RD and emotion words.

(5) 我覺得好開心呀
' I feel very happy'

(6) 好開心呀,, 我覺得
'I feel very happy'

The emotion-highlighting function of RD is less relevant to implicit emotion which is shown in two aspects: 1) a relatively small proportion of implicit emotion (37%) was detected in RDs; 2) it is scattered in several clauses instead of solely showing in RD. The first phenomena may be due to the lack of research on this topic which has restricted an accurate detection of implicit emotions (Lee, 2015). However, RD still has a role in expressing implicit emotions. For instance, it is observed that the speaker may highlight the event that causes emotion in RD as in (7), which describes a traffic incident in which *fear* is implicitly noted.

(7) 嗰啲燈啱啱又轉埋
　　趴喺度 ,, 我起唔切身
　　架巴士會撞死我㗎嘞 ,, 已經諗住
　　應該無辦法喇
　　'The (traffic) light has just turned, I was still lying on my stomach and couldn't get up. I thought the bus would run over me. There is no way out.'

Two RD clauses are used in (7): 趴喺度 'I was still lying on my stomach' describes a dangerous situation; 架巴士會撞死我㗎嘞 'the bus will run over me' is the cause of *fear*. By highlighting this information in the RD, the implicit *fear* emotion is being intensified. Implicit emotion has always been difficult to detect since there is no explicit cue. With the findings of the present work that right dislocation is highly collocated with emotion, right dislocation can serve as one of the linguistic cues for identifying implicit emotions.

6 Conclusion

The affective function of RD has been observed in the literature. This study is the first to examine how emotions are expressed in naturally-occurring speech samples. As a focus marking device, we propose that RD is used to highlight and intensify emotion information. The host is the favourite position of Cantonese speakers to express explicit emotions. The occurrence of RD can also serve as one of the linguistic cues for implicit emotion identification. The findings in this study enhance the current understanding of linguistic representation of emotion expressions, with a focus on word order in particular.

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