

**THE SUBJECTIVITY OF ADJECTIVES IN SPOKEN  
MANDARIN**

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## **Abstract**

The syntactic and semantic features of adjectives in the Chinese language have been extensively studied, whereas their pragmatic features are underexplored in linguistics. This thesis takes the category of adjectives primarily as subjectivity markers, investigating how the speakers' attitudes or evaluations are conveyed in spoken Mandarin. The adjectives in Mandarin can be used to fulfil five basic pragmatic functions, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. Among them, the evaluation function predominates in spoken discourse. The adjectival evaluations in Mandarin are essentially reference-point constructions. That is, people implicitly or explicitly compare with certain standards or values when evaluating the quality or property of entities/events. The nature of the referenced standards or norms determines the subjectivity or objectivity of the adjectival evaluations. As a special type of qualitative adjectives, the affective adjectives in use can be absolutely subjective or relatively subjective. In addition, the typical adjectival constructions in Mandarin such as adjectival negation, intensification and reduplication all demonstrate the speakers' subjectivity in that the speakers' construal to the normal property values of entities/events or the speakers' expectations will be accessed in the evaluation process. In general, the category of adjectives is typically used to register the speakers' attitudes or emotions in spoken Mandarin. The analysis in this study reveals that the linguistic expressions are not autonomous, but are often motivated or constrained by a wide range of pragmatic and cognitive principles.

## Abbreviations

BA	marker of the BA construction
BEI	passive marker <i>bei</i>
CL	classifier
DE	pre-nominal modification marker, postverbal resultative marker, or sentence-final particle <i>de</i>
EM	exclamation markers such as <i>a</i> , <i>wa</i> , and <i>la</i>
GUO	experiential aspect marker <i>guo</i>
LE	perfective marker or sentence-final particle <i>le</i>
lit.	literally means
PL	plural
QM	question marker
ZHE	durative aspect marker <i>zhe</i>
1s	first person singular pronoun
1p	first person plural pronoun
2s	second person singular pronoun
2s(h)	second person singular pronoun in honorific form
2p	second person plural pronoun
3s	third person singular pronoun
3p	third person plural pronoun

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Mandarin Adjectives: Preliminaries

Adjectives, like nouns and verbs, constitute one of the basic lexical categories in human language systems. The research of cross-linguistic typology shows that the category of adjectives finds its existence in almost every human language (cf. Bhat, 1994; Dixon, 2004). However, the membership of the adjective category in these languages varies enormously. The number of adjectives can be as large as over one thousand in some languages such as English and Mandarin, or as small as less than ten in some other languages like Lgbo and Supyire (Dixon, 2004). The prevalence of adjectives in human languages demonstrates their paramount role in people's conceptualization of the world. One may realize that numerous concepts concerning properties such as length, size, height, quality, performance and emotion, are normally represented via adjectives in our daily speech. For instance, we often assess the price of commodities as *cheap* or *expensive*, the work performance of a person as *good* or *bad*, the temperature of a place as *hot* or *cold*, and so forth. Without resorting to the adjective category, the designation of the same conceptions would be a periphrastic and complicated task for language users. Therefore, the significance of adjectives in a language system as well as in communication cannot be exaggerated.

Despite its ubiquity in human languages, fewer academic endeavours have been made to the category of adjectives than nouns and verbs (Bhat, 1994). The reason is still unclear, yet the ill-defined nature of adjectives partially contributes to the situation. In

the literature, adjectives are typically defined as a category “denoting qualities or properties of things” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Bhat, 1994; Tucker, 1998). The broad notion of ‘things’, as it is, encapsulates a long list of concepts such as objects, situations, human beings, processes and propositions. The notions of ‘qualities’ and ‘properties’, on the other hand, are so vague that they barely provide reliable criteria for the distinction of adjectives from other lexical categories. Given the inadequacy of the semantic definition, one may have to resort to the typical syntactic behaviours of adjectives (e.g., often modifiable by adverbs like *very*, functioning as noun premodifiers, occurring in comparative constructions) to determine whether a lexical item is an adjective or not (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1985).

A similar dilemma exists for the definition of adjectives in the Chinese language, where the identity of this large open-class category is hard to be adequately captured. Despite this definitional inadequacy, the grammatical features and functions of the adjectives in Mandarin have been extensively explored in Chinese linguistics (cf. Zhu, 1956/1980, 1982; Shen, 1999; Liu, *et al.*, 2001; Shi, 2001, 2003; Wang, 2003; Paul, 2005; Zhang, 2006). In this thesis, the pragmatic and interpersonal aspects of the adjective category in Mandarin will be closely examined in order to deepen our understanding of the uses of adjectives in communication.

### **1.1.1 Positioning the Adjectives in Mandarin**

Since this study is targeted at the adjectives in spoken Mandarin, the fundamental issue that needs to be clarified at the outset is the positioning of the adjective category in the Chinese language. Here the notion MANDARIN, also known as *putonghua* ‘standard

language' in Mainland China, *guoyu* 'national language' in Taiwan, or *huayu* 'Mandarin' in Singapore, is often "nontechnically regarded as an equivalent to Chinese" (Gu, 2008:215). As the modern standard Chinese language, Mandarin Chinese is characterized by "embodying the pronunciation of Beijing Dialect, the grammar of northern Mandarin, and the vocabulary of modern vernacular literature" (Li and Thompson, 1981:1). Despite the numerous 'dialects' or 'idiolects' in various speech communities of Mandarin, this thesis takes MANDARIN as a convenient shorthand for modern Chinese, namely the lingua franca for Chinese speakers. Now the question is, is there a lexical category called adjectives in Mandarin?

The positioning of adjectives in Chinese grammar has long been a hotly debated topic in linguistic studies. Since there is no clear-cut demarcation between adjectives and other categories such as nouns, verbs and adverbs, the adjective category has evoked tremendous controversy in Chinese linguistics. Their arguments centre on at least two issues: does the Chinese language have the category of adjectives? If yes, to what extent does it differ from or overlap with other lexical categories? With regard to the first question, most Chinese scholars respond positively since they realize that the quality/property words may fulfil some special grammatical functions obviously distinct from other lexical categories. Therefore, the adjectives in Chinese constitute a basic lexical category parallel with nouns and verbs. Mandarin adjectives, according to them, form an open-class lexical category, comprising an "unrestricted, indeterminately large, membership" (Lyons, 1968:436). For instance, Zheng and Meng (2003) have analyzed the usages of altogether 1,067 adjectives in Chinese, whereas Fu (2007) has collected

over 4,000 adjectives, though a number of them are arguably descriptive expressions rather than adjectives. Most scholars seem to agree that the adjective category in Mandarin is a prototypical conception, with the marginal adjectives bordering on other categories.

However, under the influence of the traditional Indo-European linguistics, some earlier Chinese linguists conceived of the adjectives in Chinese as verbs or a subcategory of verbs owing to the facts that the syntactic behaviours of the category resemble the verbs in the language (cf. Chao, 1968; Li and Thompson, 1981; Zhu, 1982; McCawley, 1992). Among them, Li and Thompson (1981) suggest that Mandarin adjectives behave like verbs in three ways:

First, in Chinese, words denoting qualities and properties do not occur with a copula as they do in Indo-European languages. ...Second, quality and property words in Chinese are negated by the same particle *bù* as are verbs...Thirdly, when an 'adjective' modifies a noun, it occurs with the same nominalizing particle *de* as verb phrases do. (Li and Thompson, 1981: 826-827)

Given these facts, they argue that it is sensible to regard the quality and property words in Chinese as adjectival verbs, namely a subclass of verbs. Even today, this view is still advocated by many western scholars. Similarly, McCawley (1992) claimed that the Chinese language does not have a category of adjectives at all; all of the so-called *adjectives* are essentially verbs.

It is true that in Chinese there are few recognizable morphological forms based on which different parts of speech are identified. When one refers to the semantic criteria and even the syntactic functions of adjectives in Mandarin, he/she will immediately realize that the boundary of the adjective category is too vague and considerable

overlaps occur between adjectives and other categories. Thus the second issue has baffled numerous linguists engaging in Chinese grammar studies, making them doubt the identity of adjectives in Mandarin.

In this thesis, I contend that adjectives constitute a basic lexical category in Mandarin. I take this position based on two reasons.

Firstly, the unclear boundaries between adjectives and other lexical categories are also seen in other languages. Dixon's (1982, 2004) typological study indicates that there are many languages where adjectives are not distinct from nouns or verbs as in English. For instance, most languages of Europe, North Africa, North Asia and Australia tend to treat adjectives in a similar way to nouns, whereas in a large number of languages found over most of North America, East and Southeast Asia and also the Pacific, adjectives are morphologically indistinguishable from verbs. That is, adjectives may syntactically function as sentential subjects or objects, making the adjective category border the noun category; adjectives may also appear as sentence predicates, a function primarily realized by verbs. In spite of this, scholars acknowledge that adjectives constitute a basic lexical category in these languages. If the adjective category is acknowledged in these languages, the lack of morphological distinction from other lexical categories should not be a factor for denying the existence of the adjective category in Mandarin.

Secondly, the Mandarin adjectives are essentially parallel to the adjectives in other languages in terms of semantic meanings and grammatical functions. It has been shown that the adjectives in Mandarin denote the quality or property of things. Syntactically, the prototypical members can be modified by degree modifiers like *hen* 'very', function

as noun modifiers and occur in comparative constructions (see 1.1.3 for a detailed discussion of the syntactic and semantic functions of adjectives in Mandarin). These grammatical features are shared by the adjectives in other languages like English. Given such an array of similarities, it would be inconsistent to recognize the adjective category in other languages while rejecting the category of adjectives in Mandarin. These scholars put an undue focus on the similarities between adjectives and verbs while ignoring the distinctive grammatical functions of adjectives in Chinese.

In brief, the adjectives in Mandarin form a basic lexical category, which is prototypical in nature, with the peripheral members bordering other lexical categories like verbs, nouns and adverbs.

### **1.1.2 Scope of Adjectives in this Thesis**

I have shown in the previous section that due to the lack of reliable morphological distinctions between adjectives and other lexical categories, the boundaries of the adjective category in Chinese are rather vague. However, it is a necessary first step to define the scope of adjectives before the investigation of their functions in use. In this section, the general principles for differentiating adjectives from other categories will be illustrated.

#### **(I) Adjectives or Verbs?**

Unlike transitive verbs, adjectives do not take objects. Therefore, those adjective-like words taking objects with them will not be considered in this thesis. For instance, in the expression *hong le lian* ‘face became red’, *lian* ‘face’ functions as the object of *hong* ‘red’. The lexical item *hong* here is considered as a verb rather than an



adjective. In addition, adjectives prototypically denote atemporal properties, in contrast to the temporal relations conceptualized by verbs (Langacker, 1991; Cruse, 2004). That is, the properties designated by adjectives do not inherently involve the passage of time. Projected onto syntax, this conceptual difference is as follows: verbs often take aspect markers (i.e., ZHE, LE, GUO), while adjectives rarely take such markers. Therefore, those adjective-like lexical items predicated with aspect markers will not be deemed as adjectives in this thesis. For instance,

- (1) a. *tian hei le.* ‘It is dark now.’  
b. *fan hao le.* ‘The food is ready.’  
c. *wo yijing lao le.* ‘I’m old now.’  
d. *yifu zang le.* ‘The clothes become dirty.’

Many Chinese scholars regard the underlined words in the examples above as adjectives, claiming that they are ‘change-related adjectives’ since the properties involve the passage of time (Wang, 2003; Zhang, 2006). However, the remarkable characteristics of these lexical items are that they can only be used as predicative, accompanied by perfective aspect marker LE, temporal elements like *yijing* ‘already’ and so forth. The temporal feature makes this so-called ‘change-related adjectives’ more akin to verbs than adjectives. In this thesis, such time-sensitive lexical items will be excluded from the investigation.

It should be noted that the verbal construction “*you NP*” sometimes can be modified by the degree modifier *hen* ‘very’, expressing meanings similar to some adjectives (Ding, 1961; Chao, 1968; He, 1996). The NP in the construction is abstract nouns rather than concrete nouns. Such expressions as individual units usually appear as

predicates, though it is not rare for them to occur attributively. Some of the phrases have already been lexicalized and are used as adjectives in Mandarin. For instance, few would analyze the expressions *you yisi* ‘meaningful, interesting’ (lit. ‘have meaning’), *youqu* ‘interesting’ (lit. ‘have interest’) and *youming* ‘famous’ (lit. ‘have fame’) as verbal phrases. Instead, they are often taken as adjectives. In this thesis, such “*you NP*” constructions will be included and considered as adjectives.

## (II) Adjectives or Nouns?

Compared with the referential-indexing function of nouns and pronouns, adjectives usually do not designate any entities or events in the real or imagined world. When adjectives bear referential meanings, they are nominalized and function as nouns. In this thesis, the nominalized adjectives (namely, the adjectives used for subject or object) will not be explored. For instance,

- (2) *tade* *kuai**le* *xiaoshi* *le*.  
his happiness disappear LE  
‘His pleasure disappeared.’
- (3) *tamen xin zhong you shuobuchu de* *nanguo*.  
3p heart inside have unspeakable DE sorrow  
‘The sorrow in their heart was beyond words.’

The two sentences are extracted from the CCL corpus<sup>①</sup>. The underlined words *kuai* and *nanguo* are often used as adjectives. In the two examples, however, they are used as nouns, and syntactically function as sentential subject and object respectively. The adjectives in such usage will be excluded in this research.

## (III) Adjectives or Adverbs?

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<sup>①</sup> The information relating to the corpus can be found in Chapter 3.

The adjectives in Mandarin are often used to modify verbs, making the category akin to the category of adverbs in function. The equivalents of such words in English are normally adverbs. However, a close examination shows that the meanings of such verb modifiers in Mandarin are of little difference from their typical adjectival usage. More importantly, they can usually be converted to predicative or complement adjectives without changing their semantic meanings. For instance,

- (4) *Xiaodong miantian de xiao le.*  
 Xiaodong shy DE smile LE  
 ‘Xiaodong gave a shy smile.’
- (5) *ta hen kuai de kan le yibian*  
 3s very quick DE look LE once  
 ‘He looked it through quickly.’

The two examples are extracted from the CCL corpus. The lexical forms *miantian* ‘shy’ in (4) and *kuai* ‘fast’ in (5), both functioning as adverbials, are not radically different from their adjectival usages in meaning. That is, they can be converted to predicative or complement positions without significantly changing the semantic meanings of the sentences, as in (4a) and (5a).

- (4a) *Xiaodong xiao de hen miantian.*  
 Xiaodong smile DE very shy  
 ‘Xiaodong smiled shyly.’
- (5a) *ta kan le yibian, kan de hen kuai.*  
 3p look LE once look DE very quick  
 ‘He looked it through quickly.’

In this thesis, such pre-verb modifiers will be treated as adjectives insofar as their concrete meanings are inherently identical with their typical adjectival usage, and they can be converted to predicative or complement adjectives.

The discussion above demonstrates some basic principles adopted in this thesis for differentiating adjectives from other parts of speech in Mandarin. Briefly speaking, the Mandarin adjectives explored in this thesis do not take objects or aspect markers, nor do they function as subject or object in a sentence. Finally, it should be mentioned that when it is hard to determine the part of speech of a certain lexical item, the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (the fifth edition, 2005) will sometimes be consulted. In this Dictionary, the parts of speech of lexical items are provided, which shows the maximal consensus of Chinese lexical experts. Therefore, a reference to the Dictionary might be helpful to determine the part of speech of certain lexical items.

### 1.1.3 Syntactic and Semantic Features of Mandarin Adjectives

The syntactic and semantic features of the adjectives in Mandarin can be generalized as follows.

1) Mandarin adjectives may occur in different syntactic positions in a sentence, fulfilling one of the four syntactic functions: attributive, predicative, adverbial and complement functions. Let's take the adjective *kuai*le 'happy' for example.

(6) *kuai*le shenghuo

happy life

'happy life'

(7) *tamen meitian dou hen kuai*le.

3p every day all very happy

'They are very happy every day.'

(8) *haizi men shenghuo de hen kuai*le

children PL live DE very happy

'Children live happily (there).'

(9) (ta) *kuai*le de shenghuo zhe.

(3s) happy DE live ZHE

'She was living happily.'

In these instances, the adjective *kuai*le ‘happy’ occurs as a noun modifier, verb modifier and the predicate of a sentence, fulfilling attributive, predicative, complement and adverbial functions respectively<sup>②</sup>.

Among the four syntactic functions, the attributive and predicative functions are the typical grammatical functions realized by Mandarin adjectives. The majority of adjectives in Mandarin can occur at both attributive and predicative positions, though some of them may only be used attributively or predicatively. The adjectives that do not function predicatively are often referred to as *qubieci* ‘differentiating words’ or *feiwei xingrongci* ‘non-predicative adjectives’ in various studies (Lü and Rao, 1981; Zhu, 1982).

2) Based on their syntactic behaviours, the adjectives in Mandarin can be divided into central/prototypical adjectives and marginal/peripheral adjectives. One striking feature of the central adjectives is that they can be modified by degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’, *feichang* ‘very’, *tebie* ‘particularly’ and *jiqu* ‘extremely’. Since the quality or property designated by the central adjectives can be graded into various degrees, they are often called *gradable adjectives*. The relatively marginal adjectives usually cannot be modified by any degree adverbs, thus they are non-gradable. The intensification of adjectives with various degree adverbs will be explored in Chapter 8.

3) Many adjectives can be used in comparative constructions, allowing modification by adverbs denoting comparative meanings such as *geng* ‘more’ and *bijiao*

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<sup>②</sup> For these syntactic functions of adjectives, the particle *de* ‘DE’ may or may not be used when the adjectives modify nouns or verbs. Many scholars have examined the usage and the conditions for the adjectival expressions with or without *de* (Zhu, 1980; Shen, 1999; Huang, 2006; Paul, 2005). In this thesis, the functions of *de* will not be considered in depth.

‘relatively’, or by adverbs indicating superlative degrees such as *zui* ‘most’. Comparability is actually a subfeature of gradability, showing that the items are “susceptible to being laid out on a scale” (Bolinger, 1967:4). The compared items may be explicitly given or remain implicit. For instance,

- (10) *Zhangsan bi Lisi gao.*  
Zhangsan than Lisi tall  
‘Zhangsan is taller than Lisi.’
- (11) *Zhangsan jiao gao.*  
Zhangsan comparatively tall  
‘Zhangsan is comparatively tall.’
- (12) *Zhangsan zui gao.*  
Zhangsan most tall  
‘Zhangsan is the tallest (among them).’

It can be seen that the adjective *gao* ‘tall’ occurs in various comparative constructions: in (10) the compared entity is overtly given, while in (11) and (12) the compared entities remain implicit, though trackable in context.

4) The central adjectives in Mandarin generally can be negated with the negative marker *bu* ‘not’, while marginal adjectives usually do not have negative forms. For instance, the negated forms for gradable adjectives *da* ‘big’, *piaoliang* ‘pretty’ and *mingxian* ‘obvious’ are *bu da*, *bu piaoliang*, *bu mingxian* respectively. In contrast, adjectives like *xuebai* ‘snow-white’, *heihuhu* ‘blackish’ do not have corresponding negative forms. However, the marginal adjectives are not totally incompatible with negation. We notice that the non-predicative adjectives sometimes can be negated by *fei* ‘non-’. For instance, the negative form of *pizhi* ‘leather-made’ is *fei pizhi* ‘non-leather made’ rather than *\*bu pizhi*, e.g., *fei pizhi shafa* ‘non-leather sofa’. The meanings and functions of adjectival negation in Mandarin will be closely examined in Chapter 7.

5) Many adjectives have reduplicative forms. The pattern of full reduplication is AA for monosyllabic adjectives and AABB for disyllabic adjectives. For example, *chang* ‘long’ and *pang* ‘fat’ can be reduplicated as *changchang* (*de*) and *pangpang* (*de*), whereas *laoshi* ‘honest’ and *zixi* ‘careful’ can be reduplicated as *laolaoshishi* and *zizixixi*. Some adjectives in Mandarin cannot be intensified by degree modifiers or occur in comparative constructions, yet their designated properties can be adjusted by a reduplication process. For instance, the adjectives *qihei* ‘pitch-dark’ and *xuebai* ‘snow-white’, indicating a certain extent of darkness and whiteness respectively, cannot normally be modified by degree adverbs or comparative markers. However, their reduplicated forms *qiheiqihei* and *xuebaixuebai* are often used to denote a higher degree of darkness and whiteness respectively. Such adjectives are often termed *state adjectives* in Mandarin, which is in contrast to *qualitative adjectives*. The grammatical meanings and communicative functions of reduplicative adjectives will be explored in Chapter 9.

6) Most adjectives in Mandarin have symmetrical, contrary antonyms. For some antonymous pairs, particularly those indicating measurement meanings, one term is unmarked and can be neutrally inquired with the question marker *duo* ‘how’, while the other is marked and the inquiry with *duo* ‘how’ is biased. For instance, in the antonymous pairs such as *da* ‘big’: *xiao* ‘small’, *cu* ‘thick’ : *xi* ‘thin’, *chang* ‘long’ : *duan* ‘short’, the left adjectives are unmarked vis-à-vis the right ones and can be unbiasedly questioned with *duo* ‘how’. That is, in the question *ta you duo chang* ‘how long is it’, the length of the subject is not assumed, namely the object may be long or short in length. In contrast, in the question *ta you duo duan* ‘how short is it’, it is

presupposed that the object is short in length. In addition, the unmarked form *chang* ‘long’ can combine with numerical nouns to indicate the concrete length value, e.g., *san mi chang* ‘three-metre long’, *yi chi lai chang* ‘about one foot long’, whereas its antonym *duan* cannot occur in such constructions. That is, the expressions like *san mi duan* ‘three-metre short’ or *yi chi lai duan* ‘about one foot short’ are normally unacceptable in Mandarin. Therefore, for the antonym pair *chang:duan*, the unmarked form *chang* ‘long’ is syntactically more active than the marked form *duan* ‘short’.

However, for those non-measure adjectives, both terms in the antonym pair may be marked. For example, in either of the interrogatives *duo nan* ‘how difficult is it’ and *duo rongyi* ‘how easy is it’, the difficulty of the object is presupposed. That is, the object is assumed to be difficult in the former, and easy in the latter.

7) The demarcation between gradable adjectives and non-gradable adjectives is not always clear-cut; gradable adjectives may have non-gradable usage and vice versa (cf. Kato, 1986; Pander Maat, 2006). In many expressions, the originally gradable adjectives are no longer gradable in that they resist degree modification. For instance, *leng* ‘cold’ and *hong* ‘red’ are typically gradable adjectives. However, in the lexicalized expressions like *leng yin* ‘cold beverages’ and *hong jiu* ‘red wine’, the adjectives *leng* ‘cold’ and *hong* ‘red’ are not gradable any more, and no degree modifiers can be added before them (e.g., *\*feichang leng yin* ‘very cold beverages’; *\*hen hong jiu* ‘very red wine’). In contrast, the normally non-gradable adjective *yingshi* ‘British style’ can sometimes be modified by *hen* (e.g., *hen yingshi de fayin* ‘very British pronunciation’), showing that it is used as a gradable adjective in this case. In spoken discourse, the



adverb *hen* is often used to modify nouns, making them behave like adjectives. As Xing (1997) and Li (2000) have observed, the “*hen NP*” construction is now serving as a template to generate new adjectives from nouns. For instance, the word *xinjiapo* ‘Singapore’ is normally categorized as a proper noun, referring to a tropical island country in Southeast Asia. In the following example, however, it plays a role similar to gradable adjectives:

(13) *chi yi dun hen 'xinjiapo' de shengdan can* (Zaobao.com, 28/12/1998)  
 eat one CL very Singapore DE Christmas meal  
 ‘Have a typical Singaporean Christmas meal.’

The attributive form *hen xinjiapo* ‘very Singapore’ suggests that the Singapore style is a matter of degree. Therefore, the gradability of particular adjectives needs to be scrutinized in actual context.

8) Semantically, the adjectives in the “*A+N*” construction may have an intersective or subsective reading depending on the nouns (cf. Vendler, 1967; Siegel, 1980; Taylor, 1992; Alexiadou, *et al.*, 2007). To be specific, the adjective is intersective insofar as it modifies the extension or denotation of the noun. For instance, *hong fangzi* ‘a red house’ means that ‘it is a house and it is red’. Therefore, the adjective *hong* ‘red’ here is intersective. In contrast, the adjective is subsective (non-intersective) when it modifies the intension or sense of the noun. For example, *lao pengyou* ‘an old friend’ does not mean that ‘someone is a friend and he/she is old’. Rather, the expression means that the friendship is long-lasting. Hence, the adjective *lao* ‘old’ here is subsective.

9) Adjectives can be divided into different categories based on their meanings or functions. For instance, Sinclair *et al.* (1990) identify five subclasses of adjectives based

on the investigation of a large English corpus: qualitative, classifying, colour, emphasizing, and postdeterminers. Of them, the qualitative and classifying adjectives form two large groups, while the other three groups are relatively small. It can be seen that Sinclair *et al.*'s (1990) classification is based on a mixture of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic criteria, thus the five categories seem to be arbitrary and rough. Quirk *et al.* (1985) and Taylor (2002) distinguish between inherent adjectives and non-inherent adjectives, a distinction similar to intersective and subsective adjectives. That is, the inherent adjectives directly characterize the referent of the noun, while non-inherent adjectives describe the noun in a more indirect way. Due to their indirectness, the non-inherent adjectives require more processing effort in the comprehension of their meanings. Moreover, Bache (2000) makes a distinction between restrictive adjectives and non-restrictive adjectives. Their contrast also pertains to the reference of the modified noun. For instance,

- (14) *na zhi xiao laoshu*  
that CL small mouse  
'that small mouse'

The adjective *xiao* 'small' is restrictive if it defines a mouse in terms of its size, thus contributing to the identification of a particular mouse from its group. On the other hand, the adjective is non-restrictive if it does not define a particular mouse.

In Chinese linguistics, scholars tend to divide the adjective category into qualitative adjectives (*xingzhi xingrongci*) and state adjectives (*zhuangtai xingrongci*) (cf. Zhu, 1956/1980, 1982). The qualitative adjectives semantically characterize the quality or attribute of things. They can be modified by degree adverbs such as *jiqi*

‘extremely’, *hen* ‘very’, and *youdian* ‘a little’, take comparative markers such as *bi* ‘compare’, *geng* ‘more’ and *zui* ‘most’, and be negated by the negative marker *bu*. The bold adjectives in the following examples are all typical qualitative adjectives.

- (15) *hen keai* ‘very lovely’  
*jiqi yeman* ‘extremely brutal’  
*youdianer ying* ‘a bit too hard’  
*bu nianqing* ‘not young’  
*zui qinmi de pengyou* ‘the closest friend’

State adjectives, on the other hand, describe the temporary state of entities or events. Syntactically, they are normally not modified by degree adverbs or comparative markers. When they function attributively or predicatively, the particle *de* is often required in order to make the modification or predicate complete and acceptable. In addition, they cannot be negated. Therefore, their syntactic functions are more confined vis-à-vis qualitative adjectives. For instance,

- (16) *juda de tiaozhan* ‘a tremendous challenge’  
\**hen juda de tiaozhan* ‘a very tremendous challenge’  
*liuyouyou de zhuangjia* ‘green crops’  
\**tebie liuyouyou de zhuangjia* ‘very green crops’

Based on their syntactic behaviours, the qualitative adjectives in Mandarin tend to be considered as central or prototypical adjectives, whereas the state adjectives are less prototypical.

To sum up, the Mandarin adjectives can syntactically fulfil attributive, predicative, adverbial or complement functions. The prototypical adjectives are gradable adjectives, which can be modified by various degree adverbs, have reduplication forms, occur in comparative constructions and be negated by *bu*. According to their semantic meanings,

adjectives can be divided into many categories, among which the distinction of qualitative adjectives and state adjectives prevails in Chinese linguistics.

#### **1.1.4 A Review of Mandarin Adjective Studies**

In linguistic studies, the syntactic and semantic functions of Mandarin adjectives have been extensively explored (Zhu, 1956/1980, 1982; Chao, 1968; Li and Thompson, 1981; Thompson, 1989; Shen, 1999; Guo, 2001; Shi, 2001, 2003; Zhu, 2003; Wang, 2003; Huang, 2006; Zhang, 2006; Thompson and Tao, 2010; among many others). According to Shen (1999:288), the grammatical studies of adjectives in Chinese concentrate on two principal issues: one is the status and scope of adjectives; the other is the syntactic functions of adjectives. In 1.1.1 I have presented the controversies concerning the status of adjectives in Chinese grammar system. In this section I will look at other disputes in the study of Chinese adjectives. An overview of the literature reveals that a profusion of disagreements exist as to the most fundamental syntactic functions and the quantificational features of adjectives in Chinese. The review presented here will focus on these two controversial aspects in Chinese adjective studies.

##### **(I) Fundamental Syntactic Functions of Mandarin Adjectives**

It has been generally acknowledged that the attributive and predicative functions are the primary syntactic functions of Chinese adjectives vis-à-vis their adverbial and complement functions. However, disagreements arise regarding the most fundamental syntactic function of the adjective category in Mandarin. For instance, the statistics in Mo and Shan (1985), Hu (1995), He (1996), Shen (1999) and Guo (2001) has shown

that the attributive adjectives are slightly more than the predicative adjectives in quantity. This seems to imply that the attributive function is the basic function for Chinese adjectives, a generalization similar to the adjectives in English (Bolinger, 1967; Warren, 1984; Radden and Dirven, 2007). However, when the mode of discourse is taken into consideration, their findings vary significantly. Shen (1999) demonstrates that the ratio of attributive adjectives to predicative adjectives in spoken discourse is 53% : 47%, while the ratio in written discourse is 56% : 44%. The implication of this study is that the attributive function is more fundamental than the predicative function for Chinese adjectives in both spoken and written discourses. In contrast, Guo (2001) shows that in written discourse the attributive adjectives are much more than predicative adjectives (72% : 28%), whereas in spoken discourse predicative adjectives are more frequently used than attributive adjectives (64% : 36%). Thompson (1989) and Thompson and Tao (2010)'s studies on conversational Mandarin also show that the predicative function is favoured over attributive adjectives. These results echo the corresponding statistics in Hu (1995) and He (1996), suggesting that the most fundamental function of the adjectives in Mandarin has a bearing on the genre or mode of the discourse.

The controversies concerning the fundamental syntactic functions of Mandarin adjectives in different modes of discourse can be ascribed partly to the data used for analysis, and partly to the different treatments of the modified qualitative adjectives. For instance, Shen (1999) takes the adjectives modified by *hen* 'very' as state adjectives, whereas Guo (2001) regards the same adjectives as qualitative adjectives. Moreover,

Thompson (1989) does not solely rely on the syntactic positions in her calculation of the attributive-predicative functions of adjectives, assuming that attributive adjectives are functioning predicatively when the head noun is non-informative. To complicate matters further, the spoken and written genres have a bordering area, and sometimes it is hard to determine the adjective use as one genre or the other. Nevertheless, Hu's (1993) explanation for the distributional distinction of adjectives in spoken and written discourses is plausible. According to him, people tend to use brief and concise assertive clauses in spoken language for the convenience and effectiveness of the communication, whereas in written discourse people use more modification elements and longer sentences for the purpose of embellishment or polemics. In Chapter 4 I will investigate this issue in an indirect way, looking at the primary pragmatic functions fulfilled by adjectives in spoken Mandarin, which may shed light on their fundamental syntactic functions.

## **(II) Quantification of Mandarin Adjectives**

Another conspicuous area intimately related to the semantic functions of adjectives is the quantification of adjectives in Mandarin. According to Shi (2001), a distinction can be made between discrete adjectives and continuous adjectives in Chinese. The continuous adjectives, or unbounded adjectives in Paradis' (2001) term, are claimed to be the adjectives subjected to unrestricted modification by various degree adverbs. The reason for their continuity is, according to Shi (2001), that they can be freely modified by degree adverbs. This seems to form a circular reasoning for the boundedness of adjectives, since the quantifiable nature of adjectives is taken as a cause

as well as a result of their boundedness.

Moreover, Zhang (2006) makes a distinction between objective and subjective quantification of qualitative adjectives. The objectively quantified adjectives are those modifiable by degree adverbs designating objective quantity such as *shaowei* ‘slightly’, *bijiao* ‘comparatively’, *geng* ‘more’ and *zui* ‘most’, whereas the subjectively quantified adjectives are those modifiable by degree adverbs designating subjective quantity such as *youdian* ‘a bit’, *hen* ‘very’, *tai* ‘too’ and *jiqui* ‘extremely’, or those adjectives in reduplicated forms such as *gaogao* ‘very tall’ and *ganganjingjing* ‘very clean’. The state adjectives, according to Zhang (2006), are quantified in their lexicon, thus they do not allow any degree modifiers. Zhang’s (2006) arguments are plausible and enlightening. However, he did not provide any explanations for the objective or subjective quantifications of adjectives. In other words, his study fails to elaborate why the adjectives modified by certain adverbs are objective while those modified by other adverbs are subjective. In addition, the state adjectives per se in Mandarin are said to encapsulate quantification, leading to their resistance to further modification. This is not true in the actual uses of state adjectives. Many scholars have noted that even the quantified adjectives (i.e., state adjectives) can be modified by degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’ in colloquial Chinese (Li, 2007; Zhang, 2010: 3-43). Therefore, the quantificational features of adjectives in Mandarin need to be investigated further in order to account for the adjectival modification in actual use.

Finally, it can be seen that though many significant findings were reported in the previous studies, the pragmatic functions fulfilled by adjectives have drawn little

attention. The previous research has ignored a crucial aspect of adjectives in use: their role as an indicator of the speakers/writers' inner voices. This aspect might impose significant constraints on the syntactic behaviours of adjectives. In this thesis the focus of exploration will be on the subjectivity of the adjective category in spoken Mandarin, namely how the adjectives are used by Mandarin speakers to present their attitudes, beliefs or feelings. These pragmatic features may provide an alternative perspective for the linguistic phenomena related to Mandarin adjectives. In the next section, the subjectivity in language and linguistics will be briefly introduced.

## **1.2 Subjectivity in Language and Linguistics**

Language is one of the most basic instruments for human existence in social life. In their daily encounters with the world, people exchange a profusion of information with others via language. As advocated by practitioners of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL for short), human language is not an assemblage of arbitrary signs for designating things and processes, but rather a system of 'meaning potentials' whereby all possible meanings can be made through language users' selections (Halliday, 1978, 1994). Language enables people to fulfil three metafunctions, namely representing ideas about the world (the *ideational* function), establishing and maintaining solidarity with others (the *interpersonal* function), and organizing utterances and texts into cohesive and coherent units (the *textual* function) (cf. Martin, 1992; Halliday, 1994). Of these metafunctions, the interpersonal function is intimately correlated to the subject matter in this thesis.



It is evident that human languages are not only a vehicle for loading propositional information (i.e., the relatively objective contents), but also a medium for rendering subjective meanings such as the interlocutor's perspectives, feelings, attitudes and judgements. In their daily interactions, people usually do not convey information in a neutral or objective manner; on the contrary, their attitudes or evaluations towards the information are manifested in their speech. As illustrated by Bolinger (1977:4), language can be used to express, overtly or subtly, subjective meanings which include "what [...] our attitudes are towards the person we are speaking to, how we feel about the reliability of our message, how we situate ourselves in the events we report, and many other things that make our messages not merely a recital of facts but a complex of facts and comments". The subjective meanings associated with utterances or texts are often referred to as SUBJECTIVITY.

The expression of subjectivity is a ubiquitous phenomenon in linguistic expressions. Some scholars argue that all utterances express subjective attitudes to some extent (Stubbs, 1996:197; Martin and White, 2005:92). In many cases, even though people intend to talk or write in a neutral manner, subjective elements can still be readily identified in their speech or writing. For instance, the most explicit marker of speaker/writer's presence in English is the use of first-person singular pronoun *I* (cf. Benveniste, 1971; Lyons, 1982), which indicates the speaker's involvement or perspective in the conception or utterance. However, in many cases, subjective meaning is conveyed when the speaker remains implicit in the utterance or text. Mushin (2001:3) uses the following example to illustrate the subjectivity in spoken language.

(17) (Two colleagues meet in a hallway)

A: (a) Guess what! I heard he got it! Isn't that great?

(b) Eric got a job.

Intuitively speaking, the utterance in (a) seems more likely to occur in natural conversation than (b). It can be seen that the two utterances convey the same propositional contents, i.e., Eric has found employment. However, (a) encompasses more subjective information than (b). The subjectivity in (a) can be identified in at least five aspects (Mushin, 2001:3-5). Firstly, in (a) the speaker's emotion is conveyed by the exclamation *guess what!*, which shows that he/she is excited at the information. The exclamation also suggests that the speaker assumes the hearer's expectation to the news about Eric. There is no clue about the speaker's emotion in (b). Secondly, the information source in (a) is given (*I heard*). Although it is probably not Eric who told the speaker the information, the hearer can still infer from the speaker's excitement that this second-hand information is reliable. Information source in (b) is absent. Thirdly, the anaphoric forms in (a) (i.e., *he, it*) with no overt antecedents provided in the discourse suggest that a significant amount of mutual knowledge is assumed between the speech participants. There is no such assumption in (b). Fourthly, the rhetorical question in (a) invites the hearer to respond to the news and to share in the excitement. There is no indication of expectations in (b). Finally, the overall utterance of (a) implies that the speaker assumes that the hearer is the appropriate person to share his/her excitement. There is no implication of the relationship between speaker and hearer in (b). Thus, it can be seen that these points contribute to the higher degree of subjectivity in (a) than in (b). This example manifests the diversity of subjective aspects in spoken discourse,

suggesting that the overall picture of subjectivity in spoken discourse is a complicated issue for exploration.

The subjectivity is readily identified in written discourse as well. It can be seen that even the apparently neutral reports or arguments are permeated by subjective elements such as the authors' positive or negative attitudes, empathy perspectives, and the deliberate focus of attention. For instance, the following example is the opening sentence of a news report extracted from one of Singapore's local newspapers:

(18) Surabaya: The Islamist-leaning National Awakening Party (PKB), traditionally the party with the most support in East Java province, has lost its top position for the first time in ten years. (*The Straits Times*, Apr 11, 2009).

The sentence seems to be an objective report of the poll result in Indonesia's political election. However, a close examination shows that the journalist was definitely taking a non-neutral stance towards the reported state of affairs. Firstly, the reporter assumed that the readers might be more familiar with PKB than other parties since it has been holding political power there for a decade. Therefore, selecting this party as departing point shows that the author took into account the audience's knowledge background. Secondly, rather than directly reporting the leading position of the Democratic Party in East Java province, the author focused on the PKB's failure to secure its political position, suggesting that the failure profiled more prominently in the author's mind than the winning of other parties. After all, the sudden decay of a dominant party has somewhat dramatic effects that can easily capture the audience's interests. Thirdly, the contrast between the attributive modifiers *most* and *top* on the one hand, and the numeral terms *first* and *ten* on the other, highlights the unexpectedness of the result and its shocking

effect on the author. Therefore, the seemingly neutral report here is heavily loaded with the writer's subjectivity.

The forgoing discussion has demonstrated the prevalence of subjectivity in language and linguistics. In the next section it will show that the speaker's subjectivity is often manifested in the use of adjectives.

### **1.3 The Subjectivity of Mandarin Adjectives**

It has been shown that the syntax and semantics of adjectives have been explored extensively in Chinese linguistics. However, the subjective nature of Mandarin adjectives has attracted little attention. In fact, most gradable adjectives used in utterances or texts demonstrate some degree of subjectivity, showing the speakers' perspective of or attitude towards the entities/events in concern. Some adjectives in use explicitly indicate the speakers/writers' feelings or attitudes, while many others convey the speakers/writers' subjectivity in an implicit manner. In particular, the value adjectives such as *hao* 'good', *congming* 'clever' and *xingyun* 'lucky' are often used by speakers to evaluate the quality or status of the entities/events. For example, the adjective *hao* 'good' in *hao shu* 'a good book' implies the speaker's evaluation to the contents of the book. In the utterance *zhe haizi hen congming* 'the child is very clever', the speaker shows clearly his/her assessment to the child's intelligence via the adjective *congming* 'clever'. In addition, affective adjectives (e.g., *shiwang* 'disappointed', *nanguo* 'sad') are typically used to indicate people's emotional attitudes, which are usually subjective.

The subjectivity of an adjective might vary in salience when it occurs in different syntactic positions. For instance, when the speaker refers to a 900-page book as *da zidian* ‘the big dictionary’, the adjective *da* ‘big’ contains his/her evaluation to the tome: the dictionary is a thick and probably large one in the speaker’s viewpoint. Since the adjective *da* ‘big’ is used as a modifier of the head noun *zidian* ‘dictionary’, its evaluative function is not prominently marked. However, when the adjective *hou* ‘thick’ is predicatively used, as in (19), the speaker’s evaluation is more straightforward and evident.

- (19) *na ben zidian hen hou.*  
that CL dictionary rather thick  
‘The dictionary is rather fat.’

Here the speaker uses the adjective *hou* ‘thick, fat’ to predicate the noun, manifesting the speaker’s evaluation of the tome of the book.

Moreover, the pragmatic effects of the evaluation triggered by the adjectives might be varied in different communicative contexts. Suppose the speaker has just browsed through a book which is 300 pages long, the utterance in (19) may suggest that the speaker feels difficult to read it through, or the speaker feels proud of his/her finishing reading it. On the other hand, if the speaker merely states the length of the book, as in (20), the utterance would be more objective, and no such pragmatic effects can be recognized.

- (20) *nei ben shu you sanbai duo ye.*  
that CL book have three-hundred over page  
‘That book has over 300 pages.’

In this case, the speaker does not give any clear evaluation, and it leaves for the readers to evaluate the thickness of the book. However, the speaker's linguistic choice (i.e., the numeral given) is intended to lead the readers to make a certain evaluation (namely the book is thick).

The subjective features of certain adjectives have been recognized by a number of scholars. Verhagen (1995, 2005) and Scheibman (2002), for instance, observe that even the most common adjectives like *expensive*, *big*, or *easy* are not solely informative in actual utterances; but rather, they involve the speaker's viewpoint or judgement vis-à-vis the entity or situation in question. Biber and Finegan (1989:118) also realize that "attributive adjectives sometimes seem to mark stance in addition to marking descriptive elaboration or referential identification". Pander Maat (2006) argues that the crucial property of gradable adjectives is their combination with subjective construal. Thompson and Tao (2010) indicate that the predicate adjectives in conversations are used to assess the world around, thus reflecting the speakers' subjectivity. Therefore, the subjectivity of adjectives deserves profound academic exploration.

In addition, the ordering of consecutively used attributive adjectives is partly motivated by the adjectives' degree of subjectivity. As indicated by Quirk *et al.* (1972), the sequence of the modifiers is related to their degree of subjectivity:

Modifiers relating to properties which are (relatively) inherent in the head of the noun phrase, visually observable, objectively recognizable or assessable, will tend to be placed nearer to the head and be preceded by modifiers concerned with what is a matter of opinion, imposed on the head by the observer, not visually observed and only subjectively assessable (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 924-925).

This idea is echoed by typologists such as Seiler (1978), and functionalists such as

McGregor (1997), Bache (2000), Adamson (2000) and Wulff (2003). These scholars identify a link between subjectivity and syntactic position in the noun phrase: the subjective adjectives tend to be put to the left of those that are less subjective. For instance,

- (21) *keai de xiao bai ya*  
lovely DE small white duck  
'a lovely small white duck'

The three adjectives *keai*, *xiao* and *bai* vary in the degree of subjectivity: *keai* 'lovely' is most subjective since it totally reflects the speaker's own evaluation to the duck, whereas the colour adjective *bai* 'white' is more objective since it is an inherent feature of the duck. The adjective *xiao* 'small' is a case in between: it might be subjective, showing the speaker's evaluation to the size of the duck, or relatively objective in that the evaluation partially reflects the reality (e.g., the duck is small in comparison to other ducks).

The simple examples above show that varying degrees of subjectivity may be involved in the use of adjectives. In fact, Scheibman (2002), Martin and White (2005) and many other studies demonstrate that the adjective category constitutes a rich subjective meaning-making resource for language users to express attitudes and evaluations, and adjectives used in the utterances are usually the major indicator of the speaker's subjective meanings.

In Chinese linguistics, the Mandarin adjectives functioning as subjective meaning-making potentials remain underexplored. Most of the research on Mandarin adjectives goes no further than pointing out the positive or negative polarity of

adjectives. For example, Zhu (1956/1980) suggests that the reduplicated forms of the adjectives in the following expressions imply the speaker's positive feelings to the child's appearance:

- (22) *changchang de mei* 'long eyebrows'  
*dada de yanjing* 'big eyes'  
*gaogao de bizi* 'a high nose'  
*xiaoxiao de zui* 'a small mouth'

However, the analysis is far from presenting a full picture of the subjectivity of Mandarin adjectives. Therefore, more indepth exploration is required regarding the subjective nature of adjectives.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

It has been demonstrated in 1.1.4 that conflicting views exist with respect to the fundamental syntactic function of adjectives in Chinese, and the adjectival quantification in Mandarin discourse needs to be further investigated. Moreover, extensive explorations have been made on the syntactic and semantic features of the adjective category in Chinese, yet the pragmatic or communicative features of Mandarin adjectives have been ignored. Many functional-based approaches to language studies have convincingly shown that the syntactic behaviours of language are largely determined by the pragmatic and communicative functions intended by the language users (cf. Morgan, 1977; Gazdar, 1980; Kuno, 1987; Givón, 1993, 2001; Shen, 1999; Scheibman, 2002; Hovy, 2003). Therefore, an investigation of the subjectivity of Mandarin adjectives, namely how adjectives are used to manifest the speakers' emotions



or attitudes, should shed light on the motivations for the syntactic behaviours of adjectives in Chinese.

Since adjectives are the canonical grammatical realization of numerous types of attitudes (Martin and White, 2005:58), it is crucial to investigate the usage of adjectival category as subjectivity markers. In order to present a full picture of the adjectival subjectivity in Mandarin, the following issues will be investigated in detail in this thesis:

- 1) the basic pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives;
- 2) the cognitive motivations for adjectival evaluations;
- 3) the subjectivity and objectivity of adjectival evaluations;
- 4) the subjectivity of affective adjectives;
- 5) the meanings and functions of adjectival negation;
- 6) the intensifications of Mandarin adjectives and their functions;
- 7) the meanings and functions of adjectival reduplication.

### **1.5 Purpose and Objectives**

This thesis sets out to systematically explore the pragmatic functions of adjectives in Mandarin and reveal how the subjectivity of language users is conveyed via the adjective category. The basic assumption is that the adjective category is a linguistic resource available for speakers to articulate their attitudes or evaluations. In other words, the quality/property designated by a particular adjective is usually not an objective description of the world, but indicative of the speaker/writer's subjective attitudes.

Specifically, this thesis aims to investigate the ways the adjectives in Mandarin grammar and discourse index the language users' attitudes or evaluations, the correlation between the use of Mandarin adjectives and the speaker's cognitive processes underlying the evaluation vis-à-vis the entities/events at issue, and the effects Chinese language users attempt to achieve via the choice of adjectival forms and constructions.

The adjective category is the canonical device for the representation of emotions and attitudes (Martin and White, 2005), and the principles or constraints for emotional or attitudinal expressions may in turn exert an influence on the adjectival usages. Based on such a stance, the objectives of this research are to identify the major pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives and reveal the cognitive basis and motivations underlying various adjectival evaluations. Efforts will also be made to distinguish the subjective and objective evaluations expressed by Mandarin adjectives and examine their correspondence with and influence on the syntax of adjectives. In addition, the meanings and interpersonal functions of some special adjectival constructions will be explored, such as adjectival negation, intensification and reduplication.

The subjectivity study of Mandarin adjectives is significant in that it may enrich the grammatical studies of Mandarin adjectives, and deepen our understanding of the evaluative expressions in Chinese language. In addition, the findings in this study may bring to light some of the ideology and social values for attitudinal expressions underlying the Chinese language and culture. Wierzbicka (1979:313) emphasizes that "every language embodies in its very structure a certain world-view, a certain philosophy". Therefore, subjectivity constitutes an important aspect of grammar studies.

Stubbs (1986) and Thomson and Hunston (2000) also point out that it is essential to view grammar from the subjective perspective and to build up a coherent overall picture from that angle to complement the ‘propositional’ or ‘content’ perspective that has traditionally dominated grammatical approaches. Such a picture can presumably establish connections between apparently unrelated phenomena and push forward the linguistic science.

### **1.6 Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the subjectivity studies. Chapter 3 describes the data used for analysis. Chapter 4 examines the fundamental pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 zoom in on and investigate the evaluation as well as the subjectivity underlying qualitative adjectives and affective adjectives respectively. Chapters 7-9 deal with the meanings and functions of three typical adjectival constructions in Mandarin, namely the adjectival negation, intensification and reduplication. Chapter 10 concludes the analysis.

## Chapter 2

### An Overview of Subjectivity Studies

The topic of subjectivity seems to be gaining impetus in recent years and keeps recurring under various labels such as *commitment* (Stubbs, 1986, 1996), *point of view* (Wiebe, 1994; Scheibmann, 2002), *stance* (Kärkkäinen, 2003; Englebretson, 2007), *perspective* (Graumann and Kallmeyer, 2002) and so forth. In this chapter, the general backgrounds of subjectivity studies and the major approaches to linguistic subjectivity are reviewed. Since the definitions of subjectivity and the approaches to it vary so widely in linguistic studies, the aspect of subjectivity to be explored in this thesis is carefully delimited.

#### 2.1 The Notion of 'Linguistic Subjectivity'

In linguistics, many scholars have attempted to define the term SUBJECTIVITY. Lyons (1982:102), for instance, characterizes subjectivity as “the way in which natural languages, in their structure and their normal manner of operation, provide for the locutionary agent’s expression of himself and his own attitudes and beliefs”. Similarly, Finegan (1995:1) observes that subjectivity study “concerns expression of self and the representation of a speaker’s (or more generally, a locutionary agent’s) perspective or point of view in discourse”. Wiebe (1994) employs the concept of ‘private state’ as a general term for people’s opinions, evaluations, emotions and speculations. Thus, subjectivity can also be interpreted as the expression of the speaker/writer’s private states in a conversation or text. In this thesis, the term SUBJECTIVITY is a technical notion

referring to the speakers/writers' attitudes, beliefs and emotions represented in spoken or written discourse.

However, the linguistic concept of *subjectivity* should not be confused with the conceptions of 'subjective' and 'subjectivity' in our daily life, which are frequently used refer to the "utterances or world views that are biased in one way or another" (Sanders and Spooren, 1997:91). In other words, subjectivity tends to be associated with some "pejorative connotations" (Lyons, 1982) in folk views, indicating something biased, unreliable or unverifiable. Pit (2006) spells out general people's impressions to the notions of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity':

In its trivial use, subjectivity is often equated with partiality, unfairness, and narrow mindedness. Hence, a newspaper article is called subjective if a topic is addressed from only one angle and other angles are ignored. A person is called subjective if he or she only ventilates his or her own opinion without taking into account others, or, even worse, if he or she neglects the facts. Objectivity, however, is often more positively connotated. That is, someone is called objective if he or she is impartial and capable of keeping distance from the topic, thus able to look at things from different angles and to take into account the actual facts. (Pit, 2006:151-152)

Due to the negative connotations of 'subjectivity', the neutral or objective reports are preferred when people say or write something. The linguistic subjectivity explored in this thesis is totally different from such 'illusory' tinge of linguistic meanings.

Moreover, the subjectivity of a statement does not equal, though it is closely related to the speaking subject. It is obvious that every linguistic utterance in principle can be attributed to the point of view of some "subject", or 'subject of consciousness' in Sanders and Spooren's (1997) term, be it the speaker or other characters in the discourse. The determination of the speaking subject, however, is merely the first step in

subjectivity studies. Furthermore, since all utterances and texts may be seen as the expression of some subjects' minds, subjectivity tends to be interpreted as an all-encompassing notion. Human language constitutes an abundant resource of meaning making potentials whereby language users are entitled to encode multiple meanings (Halliday, 1994), thus the actual utterances or texts are the manifestations of the speakers/writers' selections from the meaning-making repertoire. For instance, an event can be reported by using the active or passive voice, empathizing with any of the participants, foregrounding some information while backgrounding others, etc. Given the fact that every actual utterance or text involves the individual's choice, subjectivity is always reflected to some degree. However, the all-is-subjective view is too broad to be managed in subjectivity studies.

The pervasiveness of subjective elements in language has some bearings on the language users' cognitive process of the perceived entities/events. Since every human being is part of the world they perceive, their own relation to the world is inevitably involved in their conceptualization, which, at least partly, leads to the subjectivity in language (Radden and Dirven, 2007:25). As Wierzbicka (2003:16-17) observes, "in natural language, meaning consists in human interpretation of the world. It is subjective, it is anthropocentric, it reflects predominant cultural concerns and culture-specific modes of social interaction as much as any objective features of the world 'as such' ". Therefore, the subjective meanings deserve more exploring efforts.

## 2.2 A Brief History of Linguistic Subjectivity Studies

In traditional linguistics, though the subjective aspects of human language were occasionally mentioned by linguists, due weight had not been placed on subjectivity studies until recent years. The notion of *subjectivity* was frequently seen in literary analysis, where it pertains to the expression of subjective feelings and emotions, and to the relationship of the author and the subject of the passage (Banfield, 1982; Besnier, 1989). In linguistics, however, subjectivity was an unwelcome and marginal issue, which was mainly caused by the linguistic philosophy in western scholarship.

The twentieth century saw the alleged ‘mainstream’ linguistic explorations adhere to the ‘objectivist’ view of meaning, i.e., meaning is defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Labelling such an orientation as ‘objectivist semantics’, Lakoff (1987:167-168) indicates that its fundamental assumption is that “linguistic expressions get their meaning only via their capacity to correspond, or failure to correspond, to the real world or some possible world; that is, they are capable of referring correctly or of being true or false”. Specifically, the scholars’ primary concern resided in checking whether the designated proposition was true or false, as well as under what conditions the proposition would be true. Armed with such a truth-conditional semantics, the Anglo-American tradition of linguistics, logic and philosophy of language tacitly treated linguistic symbols as “independent meaning packages separate in function and structure from context and speakers”, and assumed that those symbols are “used by participants to provide faithful descriptions of events and actors in the world” (Scheibman, 2002:2). The consequence of such a linguistic ideology is that those linguists developed and were

preoccupied with an ‘intellectual prejudice’ that language is essentially an instrument for the expression of propositional thought, and the subjective components of languages deserve no exploring efforts (Lyons, 1982:103-104). In other words, what they were concerned with is how language was used to describe the objective reality; the self expression in grammar and discourse was excluded from the orthodox study of languages. Under such an objectivism-predominant context, it is natural that few linguists showed interest in the subjective aspects of the language, and subjective meaning in languages falls out of the scope of a ‘scientific’ exploration of linguistics.

Although subjectivity was an unpopular topic in traditional linguistics, the scholars who were concerned with the expressive meanings of human languages kept reminding others that a purely propositional or truth-conditional approach to natural language cannot adequately characterize the functions of language usages, and subjectivity should be included in linguistic studies. Contrary to Chomsky’s (1965) approach of regarding language users as ‘idealized’ men whose language mechanism are not affected by contextual factors, many linguists attended to the role of the speakers and hearers in the communicative situations. The pragmatists and functionalists, in particular, realized that the expressive or interpersonal function of natural human languages should be equally treated as its informative function. That is, the speaker-intended or speaker-oriented meanings should be seriously dealt with in linguistic studies. Bréal (1964[1900]), for instance, highlighted the subjective elements in languages, stating that in all languages, those elements play an essential role in directing people’s understanding.

Bréal’s illustration drew much attention to the subjectivity of human languages.



Some other linguists and philosophers also used specific examples to illustrate the subjective meanings in language. For instance, Hayakawa (1974[1939]) identified three modes of information exchange: report, inference and judgements. As he (1974:266) illustrated, a report (e.g., *I am a service-station attendant*) moves into the judgement level (e.g., *I am only a service-station attendant*), because the addition of the adverb *only* triggers a number of inferences (e.g., *I ought to be something different; it is disgraceful that I am what I am*). Russell (1992[1948]) noted that the meaning of deixis ('egocentric particulars' in his terms) such as *I, this, here, now*, varies with the speaker and his position in time and space. Since deictic terms make a spatial or temporal reference to the speaker, deixis can be seen as a tool for signalling subjectivity. Jakobson (1980[1956]) compared several pairs of linguistic expressions, finding that linguistic choice can demonstrate the observer's perspective and attitude. For example, people may use the adjectives *half-full* and *half-empty* to refer to the same amount of water in the bottle. However, the former expression, with the full bottle as reference point, tends to be chosen by the optimists, while the latter, with the empty bottle as reference point, tends to be used by the pessimists. This example is nowadays frequently cited by cognitive linguists to characterize the conceptualizers' various construal to the same event or situation (see Taylor, 2002; Evans and Green, 2006).

However, subjectivity in the English language as well as in other western languages did not receive sufficient attention until the 1970s. Benveniste (1971) might be the first to scrutinize subjectivity in the English language (cf. Finegan, 1995). Instead of seeing subjectivity as an epiphenomenon of syntactic expressions or propositional

contents, he claimed that subjectivity was fundamentally and pervasively reflected in language use and should be justifiably included in language studies. He associated subjectivity with the linguistic status of “person” and characterized subjectivity as the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as “subject” (Benveniste, 1971:223-230). In many cases, the expressive functions of languages can be ascribed to personal pronouns. In particular, the first person singular pronoun *I* can be the most explicit subjectivity indicator, characterizing the speaker’s attitude (e.g. doubt, presumption, inference, certainly) or involvement with respect to the event or process in question. For instance, such expressions like *I suppose* and *I presume* do not describe the speaker’s actions or operations, but express the speaker’s evidentiality (i.e., certainty) to the subsequent statement. However, such subjectivity does not hold when the pronoun is replaced by second or third person pronoun. That is, the expressions *you suppose* and *you presume* are typically used as a ‘repeat’ of what the addressee just said, while *he supposes* and *she presumes* are a simple objective statement about the subject’s behaviour. Benveniste’s (1971) study suggests that the grammatical subject of a sentence tends to determine the extent of subjectivity of the whole utterance.

John Lyons is another seminal figure for the pilot studies of subjectivity. He argues that the majority of the linguistic works adopting or influenced by the objectivist view were “theoretically and empirically flawed” due to their failure to recognize the subjective meaning involved in the proposition (Lyons, 1977, 1982). In this connection, Lyons (1977) distinguished three components of linguistic meaning: descriptive meaning, social meaning and expressive meaning. Among them, the expressive meaning,

which represents the speaker/writer's feelings, moods, disposition, and attitudes toward the content of the proposition, is unduly circumvented in traditional linguistic studies.

By and large, these precursory studies on subjectivity went no further than pointing out the deficiency of mainstream linguistics and enumerating some specific examples to highlight the significance of subjectivity in linguistic exploration. Most of these studies focused on some concrete subjectivity realizing devices such as deixis, modals, and certain expressions, while no detailed explanations to linguistic subjectivity were presented. In addition, no explicit theoretical frameworks were proposed for systematic explorations of subjectivity in human languages. However, by highlighting the potential value of subjectivity phenomena in linguistic studies, these pilot studies challenged the traditional linguistic 'prejudice' towards subjective aspects of language, showing that the subjective meanings cannot be separated from the propositional meanings of the discourse, and the subjective perspective can be at least a supplement to the propositional meaning of an utterance. Inspired by the precursory studies, a large host of scholars, especially functional and cognitive linguists as well as pragmatists, have begun to engage in subjectivity studies (e.g., Langacker, 1985, 1991b, 1999; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989; Traugott, 1989; Iwasaki, 1993; Thompson and Hunston, 2000; Smith, 2002, 2003; Martin and White, 2005). Approaches to subjectivity vary widely in terms of theoretical frameworks and complexity, yet the findings are so insightful that considerable amount of unanswered linguistic problems in traditional linguistics have been, and will continue to be resolved.

### 2.3 Subjectivity Realization Devices

The pervasiveness of subjectivity in utterances or texts has been observed by many scholars who are concerned with the subjective expressions in human languages. For instance, Benveniste (1971:225) radically points out that “language is marked so deeply by the expression of subjectivity that one might ask if it could still function and be called language if it were constructed otherwise”. This viewpoint seems to generalize objectivity as a relative matter, while subjectivity as an absolute nature in language. In a similar vein, Vološinov (1973:105) argues that every living utterance is evaluation-oriented, thereby subjective in nature. Mushin (2001) insists that any complete model of discourse production and comprehension should take subjectivity as a necessary component in that “regardless of genre, interlocutors, language and context, utterances always reflect the subjective relationship of the speaker towards the information and towards the speech situation”, and hearers “interpret the speaker’s subjective attitudes as part of their overall comprehension process” (Mushin, 2001:5) by capturing the subjectivity expressions. Thompson and Hopper (2001) indicate that people usually do not talk about events per se in conversations, but rather about their subjective perspectives about the events. Scheibman (2002) argues that human languages are fundamentally used by speakers/writers to express their perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and opinions. Therefore, subjectivity is almost always expressed in one way or another; absolutely objective utterances are rarely seen in actual interactions. Given this, Stubbs calls for a long-term research agenda, in which “the description of such point of view and their meanings should therefore be a central topic for linguistics”

(Stubbs, 1986:1). In other words, linguistic subjectivity should never be cast aside in language studies in order to fully perceive the nature of the linguistic expressions.

The foregoing discussion has involved some linguistic devices for subjectivity, such as adverbs, adjectives, first person pronoun and modal expressions. In fact, subjectivity can also be realized by a wide variety of other linguistic devices. Many scholars have attempted to generalize the types of subjectivity realization devices. Finegan (1995), for instance, postulates that subjectivity can be realized by expressions related to 1) emotions, 2) perspective, and 3) epistemic modality. Mushin (2001) suggests that in casual conversations, subjectivity can be triggered by at least five factors:

- a) speaker's emotion;
- b) evidentiality (i.e. information source);
- c) deixis;
- d) speech act patterns;
- e) the overall syntactic construction.

Scheibman (2002:166-167) examines the relationship between grammatical forms and speaker's point of view, finding that in American English conversations, the structural and functional elements contributing to the subjectivity encompass:

- a) first person singular pronoun *I*;
- b) present tense;
- c) modal elements (especially with material verbs);
- d) verbs of cognition;
- e) referentially non-specific, or nonentity, subjects;
- f) lexical adjectives in predicate adjective clauses;
- g) in predicate nominal clauses, the identifying relation between NPs which is based on the speaker's conception of similarity;
- h) intensifiers and modal adverbs.

In addition, Smith (2002, 2003) argues that subjectivity arises primarily at discourse context, and is expressed by grammatical forms at sentence level. The linguistic forms that contribute to the expression of subjectivity may include at least the following categories (Smith, 2002:157; 2003:176):

- a) Communication and psychological/conscious verbs (e.g. say, ask, request, think, believe, worry);
- b) Conjunctions (e.g. yet, anyway, still, after all, but);
- c) Deictic adverbials indicating place or time (e.g. here, now, tomorrow);
- d) Direction and location expressions (e.g. east, up, below);
- e) Epithets; (e.g. that fool, beloved cat);
- f) Evaluative verbs; (e.g. appear, seem, suggest)
- g) Adjectives and adverbs (e.g. big, high, surprisingly, fortunately);
- h) Evidential adverbials (e.g. clearly, seemingly, probably, obviously) ;
- i) Mood (imperative, subjunctive);
- j) Pronoun, reflexives and possessives (e.g. I, our, myself)

These studies demonstrate the multiplicity of subjectivity expressions. Nevertheless, none of the generalizations can be claimed to be extensive enough to exhaust the means of subjectivity in languages. As an “intangible, seemingly nebulous concept” (Langacker, 1985:147), subjectivity permeates every aspects of the interaction. Consequently, it is hard to formulate the inventory of subjectivity realizing devices. In this regard, it makes sense to focus on one or a few particular devices. In this thesis, the adjectives in Mandarin will be explored as a particular type of subjectivity realization device.

#### **2.4 Speaker Subjectivity and Perspectival Subjectivity**

Two types of subjectivity are frequently suggested or implied in the literature, namely *speaker subjectivity* and *perspectival subjectivity* (cf. Lyons, 1982; Iwasaki,

1993; Sanders and Spooren, 1997; Smith, 2003; Pit, 2006). Many linguistic theorists have attempted to characterize the difference of such conceptions (see Sanders and Spooren, 1997:92 for a contrastive list of the related terms in literature). Roughly speaking, speaker subjectivity deals with the private states of the current speaker, while perspectival subjectivity is concerned with the private states of others, that is, characters other than the current speaker. Therefore, the subjectivity of the utterance arises either due to the speaker's attitude, or due to the attitude of the characters other than the speaker. In what follows, the two types of subjectivity are reviewed separately.

Given the fact that people usually talk about events in which they themselves were participants, the subjectivity is usually concerned with the speaker (Chafe, 1994:132). In such case, the speaker's own values, beliefs and judgements become part of the overall meaning of the utterance, thus actualizing speaker subjectivity. For instance,

- (3) I hate him.
- (4) I believe that he will quit the course.
- (5) John must be a linguistic major student.

Examples (3) and (4) are subjective since the private states designated by the verbs *hate* and *believe* are explicitly attributed to the speakers of the utterances. The example (5) is subjective as well in the sense that the modal *must* binds the evaluation of John's identity to the current speaker of the utterance.

With regard to perspectival subjectivity, the articulated viewpoint is attributed to other characters rather than the current speaker. When a situation or process is perceived or experienced by other people, their emotions, beliefs or attitudes can be reported in the utterance. For example:

(6) John believes that Jack is at home.

(7) Jack likes my sister's hairstyle.

In (6) the subject *John's* belief is presented. That is, the event 'Jack is at home' is embedded in John's belief. Here John is the experiencer of the cognitive process of 'believing'. In (7) the subject *Jack* is the experiencer of the psychological process of 'liking'. In both examples, however, the current speaker is merely a reporter of what he/she talks about the subject, having no part in the cognitive or psychological states involved in the sentences.

Sanders and Spooren (1997:85) argue that both types of subjectivity essentially require the consciousness of the subject: "it only makes sense to call a report subjective if it is bound to a speaking or thinking subject of consciousness". The speaker's consciousness can be identified via various linguistic means such as modality, subjective I-embedding, predications, conditionals and evaluative reflections, while other characters' consciousness is established by world-creating predicates such as verbs of utterance and cognition. For instance, the utterances in (8), except for (a), are all subjective, though their nature of subjectivity differs from each other.

(8) a. Jan is in Paris.

b. Marie believes Jan is in Paris.

c. I believe Jan is in Paris.

d. Jan likes Paris.

e. Surely, Jan is in Paris.

(Sanders and Spooren, 1997)

The utterance (a) is not subjective, though it can be attributed to some speaking subject.

The utterances (b) and (c) are subjective because the information "Jan is in Paris" is



explicitly bound to Marie/the speaker. In utterance (d), subjectivity is implicitly created by attributing the mental state to the subject *Jan*. By contrast, the utterance (e) is subjective since the speaker displays an attitude of certainty to the predicated information.

A close examination of the two types of subjectivity shows that the perspectival subjectivity, though widely acknowledged, has somewhat extended Lyons's (1982) and Finegan's (1995) definitions of *subjectivity* in that it has little to do with the speaker's 'self-expression' or 'speaker-imprint'. The speaker subjectivity definitely belongs to the scope of linguistic subjectivity, whereas perspectival subjectivity is not subjectivity in its narrow sense since it is not evidently related to the expression of SELF. To repeat the example (6) as (9),

(9) John believes that Jack is at home.

In this utterance, the speaker merely reports John's belief, while nothing is said about the speaker's opinion or attitude to the reported event. That is, the attitude involved in the utterance is not attributed to the speaker him/herself. Using Lyons' (1982) terms, the speaker is not a "subjective experiencing self", but rather an "objective observing self". Since the speaker imprint can not be identified in related utterances, perspectival subjectivity is significantly distinct from the narrow sense of subjectivity. It can only be seen as a type of subjectivity in a broad sense. However, it is noteworthy that other characters' emotions expressed by affective adjectives (e.g. *happy, sad, angry*) do involve the speaker's evaluation or attitude in some way. For instance,

- (10) *wo ma hen gaoxing.*  
1s mother very happy  
'My mother was very happy.'

The adjective *gaoxing* 'happy' in the utterance indicates the speaker's evaluation of his mother's emotional state. In Chapter 6 the subjectivity of affective adjectives in Mandarin will be examined.

In brief, linguistic subjectivity can be divided into speaker subjectivity and perspectival subjectivity. The former reflects the speaker/writer's commitment to the attitude and evaluation in or underlying the utterances, while the latter is concerned with other people's opinions or attitudes. In linguistic literature, some scholars do not count perspectival subjectivity as a form of subjectivity (e.g., Biber and Finegan, 1989; Nuyts, 2001), yet many others acknowledge their status as a type of subjectivity (e.g., Scheibman, 2002; Smith, 2003; Martin and White, 2005; Bednarek, 2006).

## 2.5 Linguistic Approaches to Subjectivity

Subjectivity has now become a burgeoning topic in linguistic studies, encapsulating manifold views with respect to the subjective aspects of language. An overview of the huge amount of scholarly literature shows that the subjectivity studies are centring on three major arenas: **perspective**, **affect**, and **evaluation**. However, under each of the three notions, many overlapping and interwoven concepts and competing approaches have been adopted in the literature. The review here is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive, though the major analyzing models to subjective meanings are examined.

### 2.5.1 Perspective Studies

Subjectivity can be represented by the participant's (the speaker in particular) *perspective* in the report of the event or situation. The notion of PERSPECTIVE refers to "a position from which a person or a group view something (things, persons or events) and communicate their views" (Graumann and Kallmeyer, 2002:1). Such a viewing position is usually referred to as the *vantage point* or *reference point* (Langacker, 1991b), and the process of taking positions is sometimes termed PERSPECTIVISING (Ensink and Sauer, 2003). Smith (2002, 2003) insists that subjectivity, as a general term, is almost interchangeable with 'perspective' or 'point of view'. Perspectives can be manifested by linguistic expressions in an explicit or implicit manner. For instance, Chinese speakers may project their perspectives by the explicit expressions like *wo juede* 'I think' and *wo kan* 'in my opinion'. On the other hand, speakers may implicitly adopt perspectives by passive constructions, direct or indirect represented speeches and so forth.

It is natural that any human being encountering the world stands at a certain vantage point from which the happenings are viewed and perceived. It is worth reiterating that the viewer's perspective is not a sufficient condition for the subjectivity of the statements. Apart from the speaker perspective and other character's perspective, corresponding to speaker subjectivity and perspectival subjectivity respectively (see section 2.4), Iwasaki (1993) proposed a third perspective --- 'zero perspective', which represents the case when no sentient being's experience is involved in the situation. For instance, in the sentence *the vicinity became light*, zero perspective is represented. Various linguistic means can be used to construct perspectives. For instance, verbs of

speaking (*tell, say*) and cognition (*think, believe*) usually attribute speech, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions to a subject in the discourse, thus establishing a perspective (Sanders and Spooren, 1997:89). Moreover, an utterance can have several vantage points instantiated at different positions. For instance, the utterance in (11) is an indirect speech:

(11) Jan said that at that moment a bear was coming towards his kitchen.  
(Sanders and Spooren, 1997: 89)

In this utterance, the deictic verb *coming* suggests that the vantage point is with Jan's position, whereas the deictic expression 'at that moment', and the past tense shows that the vantage point is with the current time.

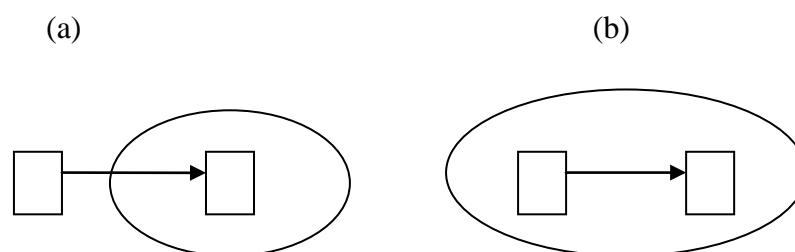
There are two typical approaches to speaker perspectives: Langacker's study focuses on the speaker or observer's viewing arrangements; Kuno's exploration is chiefly concerned with the relationship between the grammatical subject and the speaker's perspective. It should be noted that though both of the approaches can be categorized as subjectivity studies, they are not fully compatible with speaker subjectivity in that they do not involve much about the speaker's values or beliefs. However, the speaker's viewing perspectives in the situations are evident.

### **2.5.1.1 Langacker's Construal Approach**

Langacker (1985:147) describes subjectivity as an "intangible, seemingly nebulous concept", and attempts to address it within the framework of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991a). In this framework, subjectivity designates one of the construal operations in the process of conceptualizing a scene. According to Langacker

(1985, 1991b), a fundamental asymmetry is pervasively reflected in human languages between the conceptualizers (i.e., speaker or observer) and the objects of conception, and the qualifications such as subjective and objective are to be conceived of in terms of viewing arrangements. A theatre metaphor is used to characterize this viewing situation, where the objective scene is the ‘on-stage’ region, and the conceptualizer is the observer sitting ‘off-stage’ and watching the happenings on the stage. Thus, an entity is objectively construed when it is put onstage as an explicit, focused target of conception, or subjectively construed when the entity remains offstage. The viewing relations between ‘observer’ and ‘object’ are shown in Figure 2.1 (cf. Langacker, 1985:121). Here S represents Self (i.e., the observer), and O represents Others (i.e., the objects).

**Fig. 2.1 “Optimal” and “egocentric” viewing arrangements**



In (a), the observer is seated offstage and views the entity in the scene as detached from him/herself. Thus the observer’s construal is maximally subjective in that he/she is completely engrossed in the performance, losing awareness of his/her ‘self’, while the object’s construal is maximally objective in that it is explicitly on stage. In this case, the ‘optimal viewing arrangement’ is achieved. Since the observer is offstage in the construal, no linguistic forms are used to encode the observer in the sentence. In (b), on the other hand, the ‘egocentric viewing arrangement’ is established in that the observer

is fully aware of his/her involvement in the construal of the scene. In this case, the observer is “no longer simply an observer, but also to some degree an object of observation” (Langacker, 1985:122). Hence, both the object’s and the observer’s construal is objective, and information about the observer will manifest itself in the sentence. For example,

- (12) a. Vanessa jumped across the table.  
b. Vanessa is sitting across the table from Veronica.  
c. Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.  
d. Vanessa is sitting across the table.

(Langacker, 1991b: 326-328)

The construal of the scene in (a) is maximally objective in that the conceptualizer views the movement of the participant Vanessa as maximally detached from the SELF: she is merely part of the conceptual scene presented on the observed stage. The construal of the observer or speaker, in contrast, is maximally subjective in that he/she is offstage. The construal of the scene in (b) and (c), on the other hand, is more subjective in that the preposition *across* profiles the conceptualizer’s mental path of Vanessa’s fictive motion rather than a concrete motion. Here in (c) the speaker, by bringing the reference-point relation onstage, takes a detached look at him/herself in the conception. Thus the speaker is more objectively construed. Finally, the speaker is construed with maximal subjectivity in (d), where the speaker, by implicitly taking him/herself as the reference-point, is totally unconscious of his/her presence as part of the viewed scene.

Crucially, it should be noted that Langacker does not assess the entire sentence or utterance as being subjective or objective. Instead, he argues for whether particular elements in a sentence and the participants in the situation are subjectively or

objectively construed. According to him, some aspect of the here-and-now of the speech event can be construed with lesser or greater degree of subjectivity: the lower the level of awareness is, the more subjective the construal is. When the speaker/observer conceptualizes a situation without being aware of his/her involvement in the process, the speaker/observer is subjectively construed, while the profile of a sentence—what the sentence specifically designates or refers to—is objectively construed. Thus the objective or subjective construal of referents or processes in an utterance depends on the observer's awareness of his/her presence in the scene. In addition, the subjectivity or objectivity is related to the 'offstage' or 'onstage' viewing arrangement. That is, the more overtly or explicitly an entity is present in the conception, the more objectively construed the entity is. Conversely, implicit presence of the entity in an utterance indicates that its construal is relatively subjective.

One should not confuse Langacker's concept of 'subjectivity' with apparently similar concepts like 'subjectification' or 'subjectivization', which are concerned with how subjectivity is encoded in the process of language evolution (cf. Traugott, 1989, 1995; Langacker, 1990, 1999; Stein and Wright, 1995; Athanasiadou, Canakis and Cornillie, 2006). According to Traugott (1989:35), subjectification refers to a pragmatic-semantic process whereby "meanings become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition". In other words, it represents a process in which a form or construction that originally serves an objective function gradually comes to encode more speaker-based, discourse functions. Since the process of semantic evolution is far away from the focus of this study, the details of

subjectification approaches will not be explored. However, it is obvious that subjectivity holds sway in grammaticalization studies, functioning as one of the motivations for semantic changes.

In brief, in Langacker's approach, objectivity and subjectivity are related to the viewing arrangement of a scene and its entities, including the awareness of the involvement of the speaker/observer's self. This approach is extremely enlightening, yet it concentrates on the perspectives of the viewing, without considering the attitudes or beliefs of the speakers/observers.

#### **2.5.1.2 Kuno's Empathy Perspective**

Natural language provides language users with a variety of means to express vantage points. The choice of a particular vantage point can be seen as the speaker's 'empathy' (Kuno, 1987) with one person/thing rather than with other people/things, and this empathy approach represents a special type of speaker subjectivity. The notion of EMPATHY established by Kuno and colleagues refers to "the speaker's identification, which may vary in degree, with a person/thing that participates in the event or state that he describes in a sentence" (Kuno, 1987:206). This concept is similar to the concept of 'point of view/pivot', which indicates the person/thing from whose point of view a report is made. Kuno and Kaburaki (1977) and Kuno (1987) state that in describing an event, the speaker may speak from the point of one participant, and a theory of empathy can be developed to explain the difference in speaker's perspective in the reported event or situation. This is exemplified by the utterance *John is coming*, in which the speaker's empathy is positioned to the speaking 'here', that is, the destination of John's movement.



In addition, speaker's empathy is particularly manifested in anaphoric expressions. For instance, in a scene where a person named John hit his brother Bill, the speaker may report the event as (13a) or (13b):

- (13) a. Then John hit his brother.  
b. Then Bill was hit by his brother. (Kuno, 1987:203)

Though identical in propositional contents, in (a) the speaker empathizes more with John than with Bill, while the reverse is true in (b). This is because, by describing Bill as John's brother in (a) or describing John as Bill's brother in (b), the speaker has positioned him/herself closer to John in (a) and Bill in (b) respectively. Kuno (1987:203-205) analogizes this perspective-taking as 'camera angles' in filming a scene where a camera is placed at one person/thing's position while monitoring the other people/things. In (a), the camera is placed closer to John, thus the scene is presented to the viewer (or the speaker) mainly from John's perspective. In (b), however, the camera is closer to Bill and the scene is presented from Bill's perspective.

Kuno (1987) proposes a number of empathy principles and hierarchies to show the empathy effects in languages. For example, with respect to *a*, the general empathy principle goes as follows:

Descriptor Empathy Hierarchy: Given descriptor *x* and another descriptor *f(x)* that is dependent upon *x*, the speaker's empathy with *x* is greater than with *f(x)*. This hierarchy can be represented as  $E(x) > E(f(x))$ . (Kuno, 1987:207)

Hence, in (13a), the empathy hierarchy is  $E(\text{John}) > E(\text{his brother})$ . For another empathy principle:

Speech Act Empathy Hierarchy: The speaker cannot empathize with someone else more than with himself. E (Speaker) > E (others) (Kuno, 1987:212)

This can be used to account for the oddity in (14b):

- (14) a. I met John at the party last night.
- b. ?John met me at the party last night.

The sentence in (14b) is odd simply because it violates the speech act empathy hierarchy: the speaker empathizes with John more than with him/herself.

These examples seem to suggest that Kuno's empathy theory is concerned with the relationship between the grammatical subject and the speaker's viewing perspective in grammar. It can be seen that the grammatical subject is the unmarked anchoring point for speaker empathy, and subjectivity is realized, in a sense, by "subjecthood" (Yaguello, 1994). However, subjectivity is surely more than the choice of sentential subject. Therefore, though Kuno's empathy theory is crucial in linguistic study, it only generalizes a partial picture of the speaker's subjectivity.

In addition to Langacker and Kuno's studies of speaker perspective, the category of deixis is extensively investigated with respect to its subjective properties (Lyons, 1977; Anderson and Keenan, 1985; Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt, 1995). It is noteworthy that the spatial-temporal vantage points are chosen all the time in an utterance. For sentences reflecting speaker subjectivity, the speaker usually assumes the central position in the communication setting, and his/her own position is the reference point for deictic movement and transactions as well as spatial-temporal relations, such as *now*, *here*, *come*, etc. These linguistic choices also reflect the perspectives adopted in the conceptualization.

## 2.5.2 Affect Studies

Apart from manifesting the locutionary agent's viewing perspectives, languages can be used to express speaker/writer's emotions towards the articulated proposition. Expressing emotions is one of the fundamental functions of human languages, and even children can adeptly express their emotions with linguistic or nonlinguistic devices. Developmental psychologists' research shows that children display the competence of expressing feelings and moods at the earliest stages of language development (e.g., Clancy, 1986). Therefore, expressing affect is one of the basic needs for human existence. In linguistic studies, Lyons (1977) uses the notion of CONNOTATION to refer to the emotive or affective component of a word meaning. However, a more widely used term is AFFECT, which is defined as "the expressed emotions, feelings, moods and general dispositions" (Ochs, 1989:1). Linguistic usage is pervasive of various types of affect markers, which correspond to Jakobson's (1960) expressive function of language. As Ochs and Schieffelin (1989) note,

Languages are responsive to the fundamental need of speakers to convey and assess feelings, moods, dispositions and attitudes. This need is as critical and as human as that of describing events. Interlocutors need to know not only what predication a speaker is making; they need to know as well the affective orientation the speaker is presenting with regard to that particular predication. (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989:9)

In fact, a broad range of linguistic devices can be used to express the speakers' emotional reactions (cf. Jakobson, 1960; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1989; Leech and Svartvik, 2002). Affects are typically expressed by phonological features such as high or low pitch, lexical items such as *happy*, *sad*, *anger*, *worry*, syntactical structures such as exclamatory constructions (e.g., *what a day!*), and so on. The interaction of affect with

different linguistic means and various discourse genres has been widely investigated (see Ochs and Schieffelin (1989) for a review). Though those studies focus on different aspects of language and affect interactions, they unanimously indicate that affect exerts tremendous influence on the communication between the interlocutors.

Though many psychologists (and some linguists) tend to use AFFECT or EMOTION as a broad cover term for attitudes and feelings, most linguists tend to differentiate affect from other attitudes. As Bednarek (2006a) argues, the attitudes or evaluations expressed by speakers/writers are not necessarily related to their real emotional reactions about what they are talking about. In other words, the attitudinal aspect of language is by no means limited to the expression of emotions. White (2004) proposes a distinction between emotion and opinion, arguing that the former denotes attitudinal assessments related to emotional reactions or states of human subjects, while the latter indicates positive or negative assessments “under which a positive or negative quality is said to be an inherent property of the phenomenon being evaluated” (White 2004:232).

In my interpretation, the affect denoted by adjectives is encompassed as a realization of subjective evaluation, which will be reviewed in the next subsection.

### **2.5.3 Evaluation Studies**

Apart from taking perspectives and releasing affect, the speaker or writer leaves ‘self-imprint’ by the expressions of assessment, judgement or attitude, which constitute the evaluative function in human languages. Evaluation is a slippery notion. In the arena concerning evaluative expressions, a wide range of umbrella terms have been proposed, such as APPRAISAL (Martin, 2000; Martin and Rose, 2003; Martin and White, 2005),

ASSESSMENT (Pomaranz, 1984; Goodwin and Goodwin 1992), ATTITUDE (Halliday, 1994; Tench, 1996), EVALUATION (Labov, 1972; Thompson and Hunston, 2000; Bednarek, 2006), STANCE (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Biber *et al.*, 1999), COMMITMENT (Stubbs, 1986) and POINT OF VIEW (Scheibman, 2002). To a large extent, the linguistic phenomena covered by these terms overlap with each other. In this thesis, the notion of EVALUATION is adopted as a cover term referring to “the expressions of the speaker’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoints on, or feelings about the entities or propositions he/she is talking about” (Thompson and Hunston, 2000:5). As indicated by Englebretson (2007:16), evaluation deals with the speaker’s self-expression about the entities or propositions, thus “can be roughly summed up as subjectivity with a focus”. That is, subjectivity arises in that the speakers’ personal attitudes, explicit or implicit, are indicative of their ‘self’. It can be realized by a wide range of means on phonological, lexical, syntactical and discourse levels (cf. Labov, 1972; Peterson and McCabe, 1983; Biber and Finegan, 1989; Cortazzi and Jin, 2000; Thompson and Hunston, 2000).

### **2.5.3.1 Criteria for Evaluative Language**

In the linguistic studies of evaluation, one fundamental issue should be addressed at the outset: how can one determine whether the language used is evaluative or not? It is by no means easy or straightforward to answer this question. However, its resolution constitutes the prerequisite for the investigation of adjectival subjectivity in Mandarin spoken discourse.

It is clear that not all adjectives in Mandarin discourse are used for evaluation purpose. For instance,

- (15) *jin pai* ‘gold medal’  
*bai qunzi* ‘a white skirt’  
*putong ren* ‘normal people’
- (16) *ta shouli na zhe ge hezi, kong de.*  
 he in-hand carry ZHE CL box empty DE  
 ‘In his hand is a box, which is empty.’

In (15) the attributive adjectives *jin* ‘golden’, *bai* ‘white’, and *putong* ‘normal’ in the nominal phrases respectively designate the material, colour, and normality properties of the entities. Such properties serve as the basis for categorization of the entities. Since these adjectives indicate nothing about the speaker’s personal construal to the properties, they are not evaluative in function. Similarly in (16), the adjective *kong* ‘empty’ specifies the degree of fullness of the box. This specification spells out little about the speaker’s personal attitude, thus it is not evaluative in function. In SFL terms, these adjectives encode ‘ideational’ rather than ‘interpersonal’ meaning. Therefore, they are not evaluative adjectives.

An overview of the evaluation studies in the literature shows that no explicit criteria have been postulated for the identification of evaluative languages. This might be because the establishment of effectively operative criteria is a hard undertaking in linguistic studies. On the other hand, the speaker’s subjectivity is often expressed in an implicit manner, which makes the determination of evaluative meanings more inferential in nature. Given these factors, it is a common practice that linguists resort to intuition in order to determine the evaluative status of certain lexical items. However, the heavy reliance on the researchers’ intuitions renders evaluation studies less appealing or convincing. In this connection, the lack of criteria for evaluative language

has constituted one of the major drawbacks in current evaluation studies.

Some scholars have attempted to approach the evaluative language via corpora. Channell (2000), for instance, argues that the evaluative orientations, particularly the positive or negative polarity of individual lexical items, can be determined by concordance examples occurring in corpora, rather than by intuitions. Her assumption is that the lexical items with identical polarity tend to be clustered together to achieve certain purposes. That is, if a lexical item is frequently embedded in a positive context, it tends to be read positively; conversely, if the lexical item frequently occurs in a negative context, it tends to carry a negative meaning. For example, the concordance of the English adjective *fat* in the CCED (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary) corpus shows that it usually collocates with words with negative meanings, such as *old*, *bald*, *slob*, *crafty*, and *pompous*. Thus we can draw a conclusion that the adjective *fat* marks negative evaluation (Channell, 2000: 41-43). In addition, she points out that the polarity of a lexical item is not always consistent and may alter when the modified referents are different. For instance, in the expression *a fat doggie*, the adjective *fat* is highly likely to indicate a positive evaluation of the cuteness of the canine. In brief, in the light of the contexts as well as concordances in corpus, the tendency of lexical polarity can be identified.

The corpus-based approach proposed by Channell (2000) is definitely useful and reliable for the identification of the polarity of adjectives. However, the evaluativity of an adjective in actual use is not the same as its polarity. This is because the tendency shown in corpus concordances is not necessarily consistent with specific instances. For

example, the qualitative adjective *pang* ‘fat’ in Mandarin tends to carry a negative and occasionally positive orientation. However, in (17) the adjectives *pang* ‘fat’ and *shou* ‘thin’ are not used for evaluation.

(17) *pang ren changshou haishi shou ren changshou ?*  
fat people long-lived or thin people long-lived  
‘Who are longer-lived, the fat or the thin?’

Here the adjectives *pang* ‘fat’ and *shou* ‘thin’ are mainly used for the purpose of classification for people. That is, the shape feature designated by the adjective *pang* ‘fat’ serves as a defining property for a group of people. As such, the adjective *pang* is not evaluative in this context, despite its potential as a negative expression.

Therefore, further research is needed to distinguish adjectives for evaluation from adjectives with other pragmatic functions.

### **2.5.3.2 Linguistic Approaches to Evaluation**

Three major approaches to evaluation have captured considerable academic attention: stancetaking models, appraisal theory, and parameter-based approaches. All of these approaches intend to generalize and interpret the evaluative resources found in various discourses. In addition, research concerning modality and evidentiality can also be seen as evaluation studies, dealing with the speaker/writer’s assessment of the probability of the situation and the credibility of information sources. In the ensuing discussions, these approaches are reviewed.

#### **2.5.3.2.1 Stancetaking Models**

Biber *et al.* (1999:966) define stance as the lexical and grammatical expressions of “personal feelings, attitudes, value judgements, or assessments”. The categories



proposed in the definition can be covered under the concept of *evaluation*. The general assumption for this approach is that people take stances whenever and whatever they say. Englebretson (2007) offers a thorough overview of the recent trends in stance studies, and proposes five general principles about stancetaking in human interactions: 1) stancetaking can occur in physical level, personal belief/attitude level and social morality level; 2) stance is a public act subject to interpretation by others; 3) stance is interactional in nature; 4) stance is indexical to broader sociocultural frameworks or physical context in which they occur; 5) stancetaking is consequential for the persons or institutions. When a particular stance is taken, the stance can perform four functions (Du Bois, 2007). Firstly, it can assign value to the objects of interest; secondly, evaluation serves to position social actors with respect to those objects; thirdly, it can calibrate alignment between stancetakers; and fourthly, it can invoke presupposed systems of sociocultural value.

On the basis of the usage of adverbials as stance markers in different registers, Biber *et al.* (1999) and Conrad and Biber (2000) identify three types of stance: epistemic stance, attitudinal stance and style stance. Epistemic stance indicates the speaker/writer's certainty about or the sources of the information (e.g., *probably, according to him*). Such a stance enables the speaker/writer to indicate the degree of certainty or doubt concerning the proposition, comment on the reality, actuality or precision of the proposition, identify the source of information, and mark the limitation of the information. Attitudinal stance indicates the speaker/writer's attitudes, feelings, expectations or value judgment about the information (e.g., *surprisingly, unfortunately*).

Style stance indicates the speaker/writer's comments on the manner the information is conveyed (e.g., *honestly, briefly*). This type of stance not only provides comment on the way of communication, but also creates 'evaluative coherence' (Thompson and Zhou, 2000) to the text.

It is noteworthy that stance analysts resort extensively to large scale corpus for the identification and description of stance meaning of specific lexical items. Apart from Biber and colleagues' studies, Charles (2003) investigates how nouns can contribute to the construction of stance in academic writings. Kärkkäinen (2003, 2007) examines two English constructions *I think* and *I guess* with a view to finding out their functions of marking epistemic stance. Despite the fruitful findings, the limitation of these studies might be that the stance types and explanations are offered on the basis of finite grammatical constructions. Therefore, their generalizations of stance patterns may merely reflect part of linguistic reality rather than the whole picture of stance expressions.

#### **2.5.3.2.2 Parameter-based Approaches**

Given the fact that people can evaluate aspects of the world along different dimensions, many parameter-based models on evaluation have been established. In fact, within the frameworks of stancetaking models and appraisal theory, evaluations are operated on the basis of evaluation parameters, though the notion of 'parameter' is not employed in the relevant studies. For instance, Biber and Finegan (1988) show that English adverbial stance primarily relates to six categories: manner of speaking, approximation, conviction/certainty, actuality/emphasis, possibility/likelihood, and

attitude. In appraisal theory, attitude is divided into three systems: affect, judgement and appreciation, and each system consists of several appraisal parameters, such as positive/negative, self-oriented/ other-oriented, etc.

Thompson and Hunston (2000) identify four parameters in evaluation analysis:

- (i) Good-bad/positive-negative;
- (ii) Certainty;
- (iii) Expectedness/obviousness; and
- (iv) Relevance/importance

Among these parameters, the good/bad parameter is the most basic one, and the other three parameters can be reducible to it. This is because that evaluating something as certain, expected or important usually equals to asserting its ‘goodness’ (Thompson and Hunston, 2000:25). It is noteworthy that ascribing the good/bad parameter to a quality is not always an automatic matter. For instance, *importance* is generally related to positive evaluation and can be seen as a good thing. However, *an important omission* in a book review is usually regarded as bad (Bednarek, 2006:43). In addition, the polarity can be speaker-sensitive. For instance, *a reasonable price* for the seller is expected to be a high price, while for the buyer, a *reasonable price* is usually a low price.

Lemke (1998) identifies seven ‘dimensions’ (or parameters) for the analysis of attitudinal meaning of a text. These dimensions are

- (1) desirability/inclination;
- (2) warrantability/probability;
- (3) normativity/appropriateness;
- (4) usuality /expectability;
- (5) importance/significance;
- (6) comprehensibility/obviousness; and
- (7) humorousness/seriousness

Based on these dimensions, Bednarek establishes a combining parameter-based framework which aims to “capture all aspects of the complex phenomenon that is evaluation” (Bednarek, 2006:37), and uses it to analyze the evaluation in media discourse. In her model, people’s evaluations are along nine distinctive parameters, including six core parameters (i.e., comprehensibility, emotivity, expectedness, importance, possibility/necessity, and reliability) and three peripheral parameters (i.e., evidentiality, mental state, and style). These evaluative parameters apply to lexical categories like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, particles as well as bigger constructions (e.g., *it emerged that, I heard that*). For certain lexical categories (such as verbs), evaluative parameters can be combined in discourse.

It is evident that though the parameters are derived from various genres of data and their level of typicality differs from each other, a considerable amount of overlap exists between these classifications. However, none of these approaches have exhaustively encompassed the evaluative elements existent in any single language. In other words, aspects of evaluation exceptional to those parameters are readily found. For instance, the adjectives *clean* and *big* in the utterances *his room is clean* and *his room is big* cannot be justifiably ascribed to any of the parameters mentioned above. In fact, any dimension of entities/events may be evaluated so long as the dimension is sufficiently prominent in the eyes of the evaluators. In this sense, the parameters for evaluation are limitless. Since most of the scholars identify relevant parameters based on their own data and research purposes, the parameters presented are usually limited to certain genres, rather than an exhaustive inventory of all of the possible parameters in any

situations.

### **2.5.3.2.3 Appraisal Theory**

Appraisal Theory is proposed by J. Martin and colleagues within the framework of Halliday's (1994) SFL for the analysis of the interpersonal meaning potentials available to language users (Martin, 1992; Iedema *et al.*, 2004; White, 1998, 2001; Martin, 2000; Martin and Rose, 2003; Martin and White, 2005; etc.). It is a burgeoning framework for evaluative languages featuring in both spoken and written discourses such as educational discourse (Iedema *et al.*, 1994), media discourse (White, 1998; Bednarek, 2006), historical discourse (Coffin, 2006) and so forth. The notion of APPRAISAL, similar to other terms like ATTITUDE and EVALUATION, refers to the attitudinal colouring of talk along a range of dimensions such as certainty, emotional response, social evaluation and intensity (Eggins and Slade, 1997:124), which constitute a system of interpersonal meanings. Appraisal can be operated in three systems: attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude is concerned with the ways speakers pass judgements and associate emotional responses with participants or processes. The attitude system is composed of three subsystems: affect, judgement and appreciation, each of which has positive and negative dimensions and their typical realizations are adjectival. Among them, the affect system is concerned with the resources deployed for emotional responses and dispositions. As Poynton (1989), Martin (1992) and Martin and White (2005) indicate, apart from a distinction of positive (e.g., satisfaction, security, fulfilment) or negative affects (e.g., discord, insecurity, frustration), there is a distinction between 'permanent' and 'transient' affects, with the latter being a surge of permanent disposition. For

instance, *cry* is a surge of the predisposition *sad*. In addition, emotions can be directed at or reacting to external agency, or undirected at any entities. Therefore, the affect system involves altogether three dimensions: positive/negative, surge/disposition and self/other. The judgement system is concerned with the resources for evaluating human behaviours and characters. It can be divided into two types: judgement of social esteem (including normality, capacity and tenacity) and judgement of social sanction (including veracity and propriety). While social esteem involves admiration and criticism, typically without legal implications, social sanction involves praise and condemnation, often with legal implications. The appreciation system pertains to the resources for valuing entities and processes (e.g., splendid, significant, friendly). It includes three variables: reaction (impact or quality), composition (balance or complexity) and valuation.

Apart from attitude, language also provides resources for showing the sources and the intensity of evaluations, termed *engagement* and *graduation* respectively. Engagement is the resource for positioning the voice with respect to the proposals and propositions: whether the attitudes featured in the text are attributed to the speaker/author (monogloss) or to some other sources (heterogloss). Graduation is the resources associated with grading the evaluation by locating them on a scale either from low to high intensity (force), or from core or marginal membership of a category (focus). That is, attitudes are gradable in the sense that people can turn up (raise) or turn down (lower) the volume of the feelings towards the evaluated entity, or they can sharpen or soften the categories of people and things.

Since the appraisal theory provides “the only systematic, detailed and elaborate

framework of evaluative language” (Bednarek, 2006:32), it holds a particularly significant position in evaluation studies. It should be noted that Martin and colleagues insistently emphasize that appraisal system is an ongoing project and further efforts are required in order to make the appraisal model full-fledged. One of the potential drawbacks in this theory might be that the theory is established based on English written texts, thus the classifications and analyses may not fully applicable to spoken discourse. However, the overall approach to evaluative languages is remarkably convincing.

Apart from the approaches reviewed above, modality and evidentiality are two areas that have received considerable academic attentions (cf. Palmer, 1979, 1986; Perkins, 1983; Chafe and Nichols, 1986; Halliday, 1994; Givón, 1994; Bybee and Fleischman, 1995; Nuyts, 2001, 2006; Radden and Dirven, 2007). Modality is related to “the grammaticalization of speakers (subjective) attitudes and opinions” (Bybee *et al.*, 1994:176), whereas evidentiality refers to the linguistic means indicating how the speaker obtained the information on which he/she bases an assertion (Willett, 1988). They can be seen as special types of evaluation studies: the evaluation of probability and usuality of the event (modality) and the credibility of information sources (evidentiality). Since the two areas are a bit far from the subject matter of this thesis (i.e., the subjectivity of adjectives), the heterogeneous approaches to modality and evidentiality studies will not be reviewed here.

In general, the pervasiveness of subjective expressions in human languages and the heterogeneity of approaches render linguistic subjectivity a complicated issue in language studies. The review above shows that subjectivity can be expressed by a wide

range of linguistic devices, and the approaches to it vary widely from each other.

## **2.6 What 'Subjectivity' Means in this Thesis**

It has been shown that the subjectivity study covers heterogeneous topics and approaches. However, in order to make the study manageable and well targeted, the linguistic subjectivity in this thesis is a relatively narrow concept, which concerns the way the speakers use language to express their personal affects, attitudes or evaluations. That is, an expression demonstrates subjectivity when the speaker's personal emotions or judgement to the entities/events are manifested. As far as the uses of adjectives are concerned, they will be considered as subjectivity markers when they are used to mark off the speaker's emotions, attitudes or evaluations to the quality or property of entities/events at issue. Otherwise, the adjectives in use will be neutral or objective in the utterances. The aspects like the viewing arrangement (cf. Langacker, 1985) and empathy (cf. Kuno, 1987) in subjectivity studies will be excluded from this study.

However, the exploration of the adjectival subjectivity in this thesis does not mean that the subjectivity of the sentence is totally attributed to the adjectives. In fact, the subjectivity of an utterance is usually manifested by the whole utterance rather than any particular word class. As illustrated by Scheibman (2002:60), subjectivity "is not tied to one particular expression or category". However, it is safe to claim that certain lexical items demonstrate the speaker's subjectivity since the choice of such expressions shows the speaker's attitudes or judgements. In this regard, when the adjectives in the utterances reflect the speaker's personal attitudes or evaluations, they will be seen as subjectivity markers.



Finally, it should be reiterated that this thesis attempts to explore how the adjectives in Mandarin are used to demonstrate the speaker's subjective attitudes or evaluations. In this regard, none of the approaches reviewed above are adequate for explaining such usage. Therefore, I will not adopt any of the models as a theoretical framework in this thesis. Instead, the criteria and cognitive motivations for the subjectivity of adjectives will be explored in Chapter 5 in detail.

## Chapter 3

### The Data

This research focuses on the adjectives used in spoken Mandarin. The subjectivity of Mandarin adjectives in written discourse will not be considered in this study. The restriction to spoken discourse is partly because much academic endeavour in functional linguistic studies has been devoted to the linguistic phenomena in written discourse, while the linguistic features in spoken discourse have received much less attention. Moreover, it can be recognized that in daily conversations, the category of adjectives is the most conspicuous and crucial linguistic device for people to articulate their attitudes or feelings. Therefore, an investigation of the instantaneous and spontaneous expression of evaluations via adjectives may maximally avoid the interference of other factors, thus uncovering the mechanism for attitudinal expression in a more unbiased manner.

In order to characterize the subjectivity of adjectives in spoken Mandarin, data featuring spontaneous natural Mandarin conversations are collected and analyzed in this thesis. In this chapter, the sources of data will be illustrated.

Given the limitation of time as well as the financial constraints, the examples used for analysis are mainly extracted from a free online Chinese corpus—CCL corpus. The CCL corpus, shorthand for *Centre for Chinese Linguistics* corpus, is developed and maintained by Peking University, P. R. China since 2003. It is a large-scale monolingual raw corpus without segmentation or tagging, and can be accessed online via the link: [http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl\\_corpus/](http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl_corpus/). The corpus comprises approximately 307 million tokens in its Modern Chinese part. The main categories of the texts compiled in

this corpus include newspapers, magazines, practical writings, daily conversations, literary works, TV programmes and films, transcriptions, and so forth. An input of keywords in the search engine of this corpus retrieves the actual usage in spoken and written Chinese discourse. For the purpose of this study, those instances sourced in oral languages or in the conversations of literary works will be extracted and analyzed. Those adjectives used in formal or written discourses will generally be out of the scope of this research.

Moreover, in the analysis sections some constructed examples are employed. Sometimes such instances are presented for contrast and comparison purposes. In order to check the acceptability of such sentences, I have consulted with some Chinese native speakers in NUS, Singapore and asked them to judge the sentences by intuitions. In this way, the grammaticality of such sentences or expressions has been verified by Chinese native speakers. The asterisks (sometimes question marks) marked before some sentences or expressions indicate that they are hardly acceptable in normal situations. The unacceptability may be resulted from syntactic, semantic or discourse organizational constraints, though sometimes it is hard to identify the exact constraining factors.

Finally, in order to enhance my conclusions and calculate the percentage of adjectives fulfilling various pragmatic functions, the conversations from some Chinese talk show programmes are recorded and transcribed. The preference for such face-to-face interview programmes is threefold. First, the talks between the host and the guests are basically (semi-)spontaneous casual conversations, thus the evaluations

articulated are the most natural expressions of the speakers' opinions or attitudes. Second, with the hosts' monitoring of the talk, the discussion would presumably not stray too far. The speakers, therefore, could be directed to address their attitudes vis-à-vis the centred topics. Last but not least, many of such broadcasting programmes are appended with broad transcriptions, which can be utilized for analysis, thus saving much time and energy for data transcription. However, the videos are always used to check for the possible mistakes in the transcribed versions.

A range of TV and online talk show programmes available on the internet are searched and transcribed. The transcription of the interactions is not a faithful and detailed record of all the elements in the actual dialogue, but omits the unnecessary components like pauses, hesitations, laughter, overlaps, repetitions, time-gaining hedges, slips of the tongue, prosodic information (e.g., falling or rising tones, speed of the speech, heavy stress, etc.). Though such elements may contribute to the speakers' expression of attitudes, this thesis focuses on the category of adjectives, viz. their canonical communicative functions fulfilled with minimal colouring from non-linguistic devices. Therefore, a broad transcription should be sufficient to achieve the analytic objectives in this thesis.

Nearly 130 sessions of interviews in over ten programmes broadcasted from 2005 to 2009 have been recorded and transcribed, amounting to altogether over 1.2 million Chinese tokens. A general description of their distribution is given in Table 3.1. In these face-to-face talk sessions, the participants were from all walks of life, including celebrities and less well-known personalities. Their professions range from government

officers, experts, directors, playwrights, artists, to singers, actors or actresses, athletes and students. The topics of the conversations pertain to issues of general relevance or public concerns. The hosts there create a cosy environment for the guests to be comfortable and talk in a frank manner. Therefore, the evaluations articulated by the speakers are a natural manifestation of their inner minds.

**Table 3.1 Distribution of spoken data**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Broadcasting Channels</b>	<b>Broadcasting Dates</b>	<b>Sessions</b>	<b>Tokens count</b>
<i>Luyu youyue</i> (A Date with <i>Luyu</i> )	Phoenix TV	10 Oct, 2005 - 23 Oct, 2008	61	379,170
<i>Fenghuangwang feichangdao</i> (An Interview by Phoenix web)	www.ifeng.com	26Jan, 2008 - 18 May, 2009	17	355,588
<i>Xinlang huiketing</i> (An interview by sina.com)	www.sina.com	21 Jun, 2008 - 17 Sep, 2008	18	199,940
<i>Zhongguowang fangtan</i> (An interview by China.com)	www.china.com.cn	07 Mar, 2008 - 24 Sep, 2008	11	96,500
<i>Tianxia nüren</i> (Women Under the Heaven)	Hunan Satellite TV	23 Sep, 2006 - 30 Jun, 2007	8	92,620
<i>Mingren mianduimian</i> (Face-to-face with Celebrities)	Phoenix TV	12 Feb, 2006 - 01 Aug, 2008	9	59,448
<i>Wangyi fangtan</i> (An interview by 163.com)	www.163.com	14 Aug, 2008	1	12,449
<i>MSN fangtan</i> (An Interview by msn.com)	cn.msn.com	26 Jul, 2007	1	8,763
<i>Huaren shijie</i> (Chinese in the World)	CCTV	05 Nov, 2008	1	6,694
<i>Pinwei</i> (Casual Talk)	Hebei Satellite TV	18 Nov, 2008	1	3,866
Total:			128	1,215,038

Some of the TV programmes in the data are fairly familiar to Chinese audience. A

*Date with Luyu*, for instance, was originally featured by Phoenix TV, a Hong Kong-based Mandarin Chinese television broadcaster. It presents five sessions every week, each lasting for approximately 45 minutes. Meanwhile, many broadcasters in mainland China rebroadcast the programme for the sake of those viewers who may not be able to access Phoenix TV. In this programme, the host, Luyu Chen, carries out face-to-face interviews with people who have had amazing experiences or noteworthy achievements. The guests share with the audience their experiences and outlooks of life through casual talks with the host. The choices of adjectives in their talks will be focused in my analysis.

In summary, the data used in this thesis mainly include sentences extracted from the CCL corpus, the database collected from Chinese interview programmes, as well as some constructed sentences. Apart from these sources, a few examples are cited from internet, newspapers or published academic articles. In this thesis, the spoken Chinese sentences are first recorded according to their pronunciations; then a literal gloss is provided, followed by the translation of the whole sentence.

Finally, a note needs to be made that in the subsequent analysis, the sentences taken from the CCL corpus and the constructed sentences will not be marked, while the sources of other examples will be indicated in brackets. Especially for the collected spoken data, the abbreviated title of the programme as well as the broadcasting time will be provided. For instance, *LU20051021* means that the example is cited from the programme *Luyu youyue* 'A date with Luyu', and the exact episode was broadcast on 12 Oct, 2005.

## Chapter 4

### Basic Pragmatic Functions of Mandarin Adjectives

#### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I have illustrated the syntactic and semantic features of adjectives in Chinese, showing that the adjective category semantically designates the quality or property of entities/events and the adjectives in general can be used to fulfil four syntactic functions, namely the attributive, predicative, adverbial and complement functions. In this chapter the focus will be placed on an underexplored yet significant issue concerning adjectives: their pragmatic functions, i.e., what speakers use adjectives for in particular communicative settings. An investigation on the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives may unveil the communicative role of this category in actual use, thus shedding light on their significance in the linguistic system. The basic assumption of this exploration is that Mandarin adjectives can be used to fulfil different pragmatic functions in various contexts. To justify my point, let us take an initial look at some usage instances of the adjective *fada* ‘developed’.

- (1) *aodaliya he xinxilan dou shuyu fada guojia.*  
Australia and New Zealand all belong developed country  
‘Both Australia and New Zealand are developed countries.’
- (2) *zhexie guojia dou feichang fada.*  
these country all very developed  
‘All of these countries are highly developed.’
- (3) *shijie shang zui fada de guojia dang shu meiguo.*  
world on most developed DE country should be USA  
‘The most developed country in the world is the United States.’

It can be seen that the speakers use the adjective *fada* ‘developed’ to express disparate pragmatic functions in these utterances. In (1) the adjective *fada*, as the attribution of the head noun *guojia* ‘country’, serves to classify the countries in the world according to their economic power. That is, *fada guojia* ‘developed countries’ designates a subclass of countries, in contrast to the subclass of *fazhanzhong guojia* ‘developing countries’. In (2) the predicative adjective *fada* serves as an evaluation of the economic status of the countries in question. The adverb *feichang* ‘very’ suggests that the speaker is committed to the belief that the degree of their economic development is high. In (3) the adjective *fada*, together with the adverb *zui* ‘most’, designates a specific country selected from the whole list of countries in the world. This country is characterized by the highest degree of economic development. Therefore, the adjective *fada* ‘developed’, or *zui fada* ‘most developed’ to be exact, functions to identify referents in this utterance. These examples demonstrate that the same adjective tends to fulfil a diversity of expressive functions in various communicative contexts.

A review of the literature shows that no systematic studies have been conducted with regard to the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives, though some sporadic mentions might be seen. For instance, Zhu (1956/1980, 1982) points out that in Chinese, the non-predicative adjectives play a role of classification, and state adjectives imply a function of description. Fang (2000:239) observes that reduplicated adjectives and state adjectives can not only mark off the property of humans or objects, but also convey the conceptualizers’ feelings towards the conceptualized targets. Therefore, they function to describe the state or modality of entities. Guo (2002), following the analysis in



Hengeveld (1992), argues that adjectives mainly perform a modification function. All of these remarks touch upon the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives in use, yet they fail to elaborate on such functions of the adjective category.

The pragmatic or expressive functions of the English adjectives are widely explored in linguistics. Warren (1984) and Tucker (1998), for instance, indicate that the adjectives in English are used to classify, identify or describe the things in question. Thompson (1989) argues that adjectives have two discursive functions in conversational language: to predicate a property of an established discourse referent, or to introduce a new discourse referent. Observing from a typological perspective, Croft (1991) points out that modification is a universal pragmatic function of adjectives in human languages. Bache and Davidsen-Nielsen (1997) and Bache (2000) indicate that the functions of noun-modifiers include three types: specification, description, and categorization. Among them, the classifying adjectives “help establish precisely what sort of thing is involved in the expression, whereas specifying adjectives serve to “single out or quantify the referent of the construction in relation to some extent” (Bache, 2000:235). These attributive adjectives are arranged in a certain sequential order: specifying adjectives precede descriptive adjectives, followed by classifying adjectives. When an adjective appears in a different modification position, it may fulfil different functions. For instance, the adjective *popular* in *Scottish popular ballad* is a classifying adjective, whereas in *popular Scottish ballads* it is a descriptive adjective. Similarly, the functions of noun modifiers generalized by Radden and Dirven (2007) are characterizing, grounding and categorization. These generalizations concerning the

English adjectives are much enlightening for us to interpret the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives. However, due to the difference of the adjective category in the two languages, the proposed adjective functions cannot be used to generalize the Mandarin adjectives. Therefore, profound research is required in order to adequately address the issue.

A clear understanding of the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives may pave the way for the exploration of the subjectivity of the adjective category, which is the core of this research. In this chapter efforts will be made to systemically analyze the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives.

## **4.2 Basic Pragmatic Functions of Mandarin Adjectives**

The Mandarin adjectives in actual use may fulfil five basic pragmatic functions, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification, and depiction. These functions will be elucidated in turn in the ensuing sections.

### **4.2.1 The Function of Subcategorization**

Adjectives may be used to fulfil the subcategorization function, classifying the entities or events into different subgroups according to certain quality or property criteria. Wierzbicka (1986), Bhat (1994), Givón (2001) and many others observe that nouns usually represent a categorical concept which involves numerous property dimensions. For instance, the noun *tou* ‘head’ signifies a category of objects distinct from other categories such as body, arms and legs. The noun *zhuozi* ‘table’ designates a category of objects as well, distinct from other similar categories such as chairs, sofa,

and wardrobes. Each category of objects comprises a myriad of perceptible or cognizable properties such as quantity, shape, colour, texture, age, quality and so forth. When the instances in the category are re-grouped according to shared properties, a subcategorization of the category is realized. That is, the properties inherent to a given category of things, whose values are usually designated by adjectives, can be exploited to subcategorize the host category. This is why adjectives are often used to serve subcategorization function. For instance, *dengzi* ‘stools’ can be classified into many subcategories such as *chang deng* ‘long stool’, *fang deng* ‘square stool’, *yuan deng* ‘round stool’ according to the shape property; *Qiye* ‘enterprises’ can be classified into subcategories like *daxing qiye* ‘large enterprises’, *zhongxing qiye* ‘medium enterprises’ and *xiaoxing qiye* ‘small enterprises’ according to the property of size; *hua* ‘flowers’ can be classified into subcategories such as *bai hua* ‘white flower’, *hong hua* ‘red flower’, *huang hua* ‘yellow flowers’ according to the property of colour. For a certain category of objects, various properties can be employed for the purpose of subcategorization. *chenyi* ‘shirt’ for example, can be divided into *nanshi chenyi* ‘men’s shirts’ and *nüshi chenyi* ‘women’s shirts or blouses’ in terms of style; *hong chenyi* ‘red shirt’ and *bai chenyi* ‘white shirt’ in terms of colour; *xin chenyi* ‘new shirt’ and *jiu chenyi* ‘old shirt’ according to the property of age. In all of these examples, the attributive adjectives mark off the property criteria based on which the objects are classified into subcategories.

The subcategorization of entities or events based on the quality or property evoked by adjectives has some striking characteristics. First, the number of subcategories is

limited. In other words, the subcategories of a given class of objects can be exhaustively listed. Second, the subcategorization is achieved by referring to some prescribed or widely-acknowledged standards, despite the nature of the subcategories elicited by adjectives. For instance, an enterprise may be categorized into a large-, medium- or small-sized enterprise according to some prescribed standards such as the registered property, staff members and manufacturing capacity, rather than according to the intuition of the speaker. Therefore, unless a particular need arises, people do not create idiosyncratic categorizations. Third, the categorization for things is often constrained by conventions or habits. As suggested by Chao (1968:675ff, 686ff), the attributively-used adjectives often have collocation restrictions. For instance, the expressions like *bao zhi* ‘thin paper’, *zang yifu* ‘dirty clothes’ and *liang shui* ‘cold water’ are well-formed, while the expressions such as *bao huichen* ‘thin ashes’, *zang tang* ‘dirty candy’ and *liang lian* ‘cold face’ are awkward (Zhu, 1982:73-74). This can be explained in terms of the pragmatic functions of adjectives. The attributive adjectives in these expressions perform the subcategorization function. In this case, the classification of paper according to thickness conforms to general conventions, while the classification of ashes based on thickness is not a habitual act in Chinese culture. This classification convention is mirrored onto linguistic expressions, leading to the grammaticality contrast of the two expressions *bao zhi* ‘thin paper’ and \**bao huichen* ‘thin ashes’. The same is true for other contrastive expressions above. Finally, people use quality or property criteria to subcategorize things with the purpose to facilitate the referentiality

or predication of the things on the one hand, and the storage in and retrieval from memory on the other.

The Mandarin adjectives used for subcategorization have some typical syntactic features.

Firstly, the adjectives in such usage always occur at the attributive position, and the particle *de* cannot be inserted into the “A+N” construction. For instance, *youheng sheng* ‘top student’ is a subcategory of students according to their academic excellence. If *de* were inserted into the construction, the resulted expression *youheng de sheng* would be totally unacceptable. The expression *congming ren* ‘a bright person’ is a subcategory of people according to their intelligence, which is in contrast to other subcategories such as *yiban ren* ‘ordinary person’ or *ben ren* ‘foolish person’. If *de* were inserted between the adjective and the head noun, the derived construction *congming de ren* ‘a smart person’ would not indicate a subcategory of person, but an evaluation of the person’s intelligence.

Secondly, many adjectives for subcategorization are non-predicative adjectives. Zhu (1982) indicates that the principal function of *qubieci* (i.e., non-predicative adjectives) in Chinese is classification. Therefore the non-predicative adjectives are preferred when people categorize things. In addition, many non-predicative adjectives can be premodified by *fei* ‘non-’ to form a contrastive subcategory vis-à-vis the original subcategory. For instance, *yesheng dongwu* ‘wild animal’ is contrastive to *feiyesheng dongwu* ‘non-wild animal’ (i.e., domesticated animals); *guoyou qiye* ‘state-owned

enterprise' is contrastive to *feiguoyou qiye* 'non-state owned enterprise' (i.e., private enterprise).

Thirdly, since the attributive adjective functions to subcategorize the things designated by the noun, the "A+N" construction tends to constitute a special term for a category. For example, *hei ren* 'black people' is a term indicating a subcategory of people; *la jiang* 'chilli sauce' is a term for a subcategory of sauce. These instances suggest that the "A+N" construction is sometimes highly lexicalized and gradually becomes a proper noun due to frequent uses in daily interactions. The word *baicai* 'Chinese cabbage', for instance, literally meaning 'white vegetable', does not refer to a kind of white vegetable any more, but represents a proper name for a specific vegetable whose colour might be white or otherwise.

Since the adjectives for subcategorization demonstrate striking properties favourable for the classification of things, they can be probed with the following questions:

*What X / what type of X?*

The adjectives functioning to subcategorize things can be used to reply to such enquiries. It should be noted that in the reply form, the adjective is often accompanied by *de*. For instance,

(4) *wo xihuan he hong jiu*

1s like drink red wine

'I like drinking red wine.'

(5) *zhe shi yi jia siying gongsi.*

this be one CL privately-run company

'This is a private company.'

- (6) *ta gang qian le yi fen changqi hetong.*  
3s just sign LE one CL long-term contract  
'He signed a long-term contract just now.'

In these examples, the attributive adjectives can pass the probe test, thus functioning to subcategorize the things designated by the head nouns. In (4) the hearer may answer the enquiry 'what kind of wine (do you like)?' with the adjective *hong de* 'red one'. Similarly, in (5) *siying de* 'privately-run one' can be used to reply the enquiry 'what type of enterprise is this?' In (6) *changqi de* 'long-term one' can be used to answer the enquiry 'what type of contract did he sign?'

The adjectives for subcategorization are usually objective since the adjectives provide the property criteria for the classification of entities/events. However, the adjectives might be subjective in that the subcategories in the light of the property criteria designated by adjectives are associated with people's emotions or attitudes. It can be recognized that the emotions or attitudes evoked by the adjectives are shared by people in general. For instance, the adjectives *liangxing* 'virtuous' in *liangxing xunhuan* 'virtuous cycle' and *exing* 'vicious' in *exing xunhuan* 'vicious cycle' show general people's judgement about the quality of the cycle. Therefore, it is appropriate to propose that the adjectives for subcategorization could be objective or subjective.

In brief, the Mandarin adjectives in attributive position may fulfil subcategorization function in actual use. Based on the designated properties, such adjectives serve to classify the things into a limited number of subcategories. The adjectives for this function can pass the probing test "what X / what type of X".

#### **4.2.2 The Function of Identification**

The property denoted by adjectives can be used to single out a particular entity from a number of entities with similar features. The adjectives in such use can be said to fulfil the identification function. This function corresponds to the restrictive adjectives in semantics. When people engage in verbal interactions, needs often arise to designate an entity as the focus of attention or topic of the discussion. Since each entity normally shows some prominent property features which make it stand out from others, it is natural for people to single out a particular entity based on its property feature. That is why adjectives, as the designator of property values, are often used to select a certain entities from many things. For instance,

- (7) *tamen de xianren xiaozhang*  
 3p DE current headmaster  
 ‘their current headmaster’
- (8) *ben chang bisai de zuijia qiuyuan*  
 this CL match DE best player  
 ‘the best player of the match’

In (7) it is highly likely that the school has had several headmasters in history, and the adjective *xianren* ‘current’ is used to pick out a certain instance from the category of headmasters. In (8) the adjective phrase *zui jia* ‘best’ is used to select one player from all of the player in the match. Therefore, the attributive adjectives *xianren* ‘current’ and *zui jia* ‘best’ fulfil the identification function.

It has so far been demonstrated that the adjectives fulfilling identification function are used to single out a certain entity from a group of entities according to their property features. The adjectives in such usage are akin to the function of demonstrative pronouns like *zhege* ‘this’, *nage* ‘that’, *zhexie* ‘these’ and *naxie* ‘those’. In many cases,



the adjectives for identification can be substituted with demonstrative pronouns. For instance, the adjectives *xianren* ‘current’ in (7) and *zuijia* ‘best’ in (8) can be replaced with *zhe ge* ‘this’ to realize the same function of identifying targets. This shows that for a noun signifying indefinite referents, the attributive adjective provides a property feature for the referent, thus the noun phrase is set to designate a certain referent. In the light of these characteristics, the adjectives serving the identification function can be probed with the following enquiry:

*Which one/ones of X?*

For example,

(9) - *taiguo de qian zongli ye chuxi le huiyi.*

Thailand DE former premier also present LE conference

‘The former premier of Thailand also made his presence at the conference.’

- *na ge zongli?*

which CL premier

‘Which premier?’

- *qian zongli.*

former premier

‘The former one.’

(10) - *chubu fang'an yao gongbu le.*

preliminary programme will issue LE

‘The preliminary programme will be issued soon.’

- *na ge fang'an?*

which CL programme

‘Which programme?’

- *chubu fang'an*

preliminary programme

‘The preliminary one.’

Here the adjectives *qian* ‘former’ in (9) and *chubu* ‘preliminary’ in (10) are used to identify certain referents in the utterances according to their property features. As

shown in the examples, they can be used to answer the enquiries like ‘which one (are you talking about)’.

In Mandarin, there are some adjectives which are frequently used for identification function, such as *jiben* ‘basic’, *zhuyao* ‘major’, *shouyao* ‘primary’, *tongchang* ‘usual’, *shiji* ‘actual’ and *juti* ‘concrete’. In addition, the superlative-degree adjectives, namely the “*zui A*” construction as well as the ordinal number constructions are often used for a referent-identification function. Syntactically the adjectives serving the identification function normally occur attributively. Moreover, the noun phrase containing identifying adjectives usually appears as the subject in the sentence, or the topic of the information structure. This shows that adjectives for identification are responsible for singling out certain entities as the departure of the discussion.

The identification function of adjectives sometimes overlaps with the subcategorization function. This might be due to the fact that the entity as well as the category it belongs to is unique in the group. In this sense, identifying the category is equivalent to singling out the very entity. For instance,

- (11) *ba hong pingguo fang waimian.*  
BA red apple place outside  
‘Put the red apple outside (of the bag)’
- (12) *ni yao re main haishi liang mian?*  
2s want hot noodle or cold noodle  
‘What noodles do you want, hot or cold?’

In (11) *hong pingguo* ‘red apple’ is a subcategory of apples differentiated according to the property of colour. Therefore, the adjective *hong* ‘red’ fulfils a subcategorizing function. Apart from this function, the colour property serves as a criterion to single out

certain apples, thus the adjective *hong* ‘red’ performs an identification function as well. Likewise, in (12) the adjectives *re* ‘hot’ and *liang* ‘cold’ subcategorize the noodles based on the property of temperature. Moreover, they also function to select one from the two types of noodles. Therefore, the attributive adjectives play a dual role of subcategorization and identification.

In brief, the attributive adjectives in Mandarin may fulfil the identification function in actual use, singling out certain targets as the topic for discussion. The properties designated by the adjectives serve as the criteria for the selection and identification.

#### **4.2.3 The Evaluation Function**

Mandarin adjectives in use may fulfil evaluation function so that the speaker articulates his/her attitude or emotion regarding certain entities/events. In their interaction with the world, people always make a variety of judgments concerning the objects, phenomena or states of affairs, provoking positive or negative attitudes or emotions. For instance, people tend to evaluate, consciously or unconsciously, many things around them such as the look of a person, the appropriateness of the act, the importance of the events, and the quality of the objects. People may maintain or adjust their acts in order to obtain positive evaluations and avoid negative ones. The evaluations can be oriented towards numerous dimensions (see Chapter 2 for an overview), among which the good-bad, liking-disliking, pleasantness and significance are the most typical aspects (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003: 576; Albarracin, et al., 2005:3).

In psychology, the cognitive processing concerning the speaker's judgement of the world is called *evaluation* or *appraisal* (cf. Frijda, 1993; Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003; Oatley et al., 2006). When the evaluations are encoded with linguistic devices, evaluative languages are generated. The adjective category is the most typical and straightforward linguistic device for speakers to articulate their evaluations (Scheibman, 2002; Hood, 2004; Martin and White, 2005). For instance,

- (14) *che kai de feichang kuai.*  
 car drive DE very fast  
 'The car goes very fast.'
- (15) *jintian tianqi bucuo, changdi feichang bang.*  
 today weather not-bad site very excellent  
 'It is a fine day today, and the site is excellent.'
- (16) *zheli de jiedao ji zhengjie you piaoliang.*  
 here DE street both neat and beautiful  
 'The streets here are neat and beautiful.'

In these instances, all of the adjectives signify the speakers' evaluations to certain properties or qualities of the entities. In (14) the adjective *kuai* 'fast' in the complement position is used as an evaluation of the driving speed. In (15) the predicative adjectives *bucuo* 'fine' and *bang* 'excellent' respectively represent the speaker's positive evaluation to the weather condition and the quality of the site. In (16) the predicative adjectives *zhengjie* 'neat' and *piaoliang* 'beautiful' designate the speaker's positive evaluation to the sanitary condition and the look of the streets.

It should be noted that the evaluation function illustrated here is distinct from the evaluation in narrative structures. In narrative studies, evaluation constitutes a portion in the narratives, which serves to organize the discourse by encapsulating what has stated before. Winter (1982:190-192), for example, argues that evaluation tends to occur at the

boundary (i.e., the very beginning or the end) of the discourse, thereby providing a clue to the text organization. Hoey (1983) shows that one of the common overall narrative patterns in English is *situation–problem–response- evaluation/result*, with evaluation occurring last in the sequence. Therefore, evaluation in narratives provides some clues for the discourse organization. However, the evaluation function of adjectives is a generalization of the speaker’s attitude or emotions towards the quality or property of entities/events. Their organizational function will not be considered in this thesis.

The evaluation function is straightforwardly related to the subjectivity of adjectives in Mandarin. In other words, the speaker conveys his/her opinion, belief and/or emotion towards the entities or events in conceptualization via adjectives. The adjectives fulfilling evaluation function are normally qualitative adjectives, which occur together with degree adverbs. That is, the adjective constructions with degree modifiers typically serve evaluation function. In addition, the adjectives for evaluative use often occur at predicative and complement positions, and can be probed with the following enquiry:

*What do you think of X?*

For instance, the adjectives in (14) - (16) above can be used to respond to the enquiries “what do you think of the driving speed”, “what do you think of the weather and the site”, and “what do you think of the street” respectively.

For those adjectives in attributive or adverbial positions, when they can be transformed to predicative or complement positions without radical change of their semantic meanings, they are likely to fulfil evaluation function. For instance,

- (17) a. *ta mai le ge piaoliang de yangwawa.*  
 3s buy LE CL beautiful DE doll  
 ‘She bought a beautiful doll.’  
 b. *ta mai de yangwawa hen piaoliang.*  
 3s buy DE doll very beautiful  
 ‘The doll she bought is very beautiful.’
- (18) a. *qiangda de yidali dui zuizhong duoguan.*  
 strong DE Italy team at last win the championship  
 ‘The strong Italy team won the championship at last.’  
 b. *yidali dui hen qiangda, zuizhong duoguan.*  
 Italy team very strong at last win-championship  
 ‘The Italy team, which is very strong, won the championship at last.’
- (19) a. *ta meitian dou zai nuli gongzuo.*  
 3s everyday all being studious work  
 ‘He works hard every day.’  
 b. *ta meitian gongzuo dou hen nuli.*  
 he everyday work all very studious  
 ‘He works hard every day.’

Here the attributive adjectives in (17a) and (18a) can be transformed to predicative positions as (17b) and (18b) without significantly changing the semantic meanings of the sentences. The adverbial adjective *nuli* ‘studious’ in (19a) can be transformed to predicative position as well. In addition, the adjectives in these sentences can be used to reply the question “what do you think of X”, thus they fulfil the evaluative function, articulating the speakers’ attitudes concerning the quality or property of the objects at issue.

Moreover, adjectival evaluations can be subjective or objective according to the speaker’s personal commitment. When the evaluation expressed by adjectives is a pure reflection of the feature of quality/property in reality, it is objective evaluation. In contrast, when the evaluation shows the speaker’s personal comment to the quality/property of entities or events, it is subjective evaluation. In Chapter 5 the

objective and subjective evaluations designated by adjectives in Mandarin will be explicated in greater detail.

In brief, the qualitative adjectives in predicative and complement positions tend to fulfil evaluation function, showing the speaker's attitude or emotion towards the conceptualized entities or events.

#### **4.2.4 The Function of Specification**

Mandarin adjectives can be used to elaborate the properties of the conceptualized targets, fulfilling specification function in use. The speaker's indication of the property features of the targets contains no vivid embellishment, does not compare with any reference points, or infuse the speaker's attitude or emotion. The use of adjectives is primarily for the purpose of demonstrating the facts concerning the property. The adjectives serving this function are normally non-predicative adjectives or qualitative adjectives rather than state adjectives or adjective constructions involving degree modifiers. We can identify two types of representations for the adjectives fulfilling specification functions.

The first type is that the adjectives are used to provide additional information for the hearers in that the sentences without using adjectives would have encoded the intact ideas of the speakers. Since the adjectives serve to impart extra information for communication, they can be omitted without affecting the semantic meanings of the sentences. Syntactically, the adjectives fulfilling specification function often occur attributively or adverbially, yet they can be transformed to a separate clause, or to the

*shi A de* construction. Semantically, such adjectives are non-restrictive in the noun phrase. For instance,

- (20) a. *wo zuotian gang mai le liang ershou che.*  
 1s yesterday just buy LE CL second-hand car  
 ‘I just bought a second-hand car yesterday.’  
 b. *wo zuotian gang mai le liang che, ershou de.*  
 1s yesterday just buy LE CL car second-hand DE  
 ‘I just bought a car yesterday, a second-hand car.’
- (21) a. *ta shou li na zhe yi ge kong hezi.*  
 3s hand in hold ZHE one CL empty box  
 ‘He is holding an empty box in his hand.’  
 b. *ta shou li na zhe yi ge hezi, kong de.*  
 3s hand inside hold ZHE one CL box empty DE  
 ‘He is holding a box in his hand, an empty box.’
- (22) a. *qiang jiao xie fang zhe yi gen gunzi.*  
 wall corner leaning place ZHE one CL stick  
 ‘There is a stick leaning against the wall in the corner.’  
 b. *qiang jiao fang zhe yi gen gunzi, shi xie zhe de.*  
 wall corner place ZHE one CL stick be leaning ZHE DE  
 ‘There is a stick in the corner, which is leaning against the wall.’

In (20a) the speaker would have provided complete and sufficient information in communication when saying that he/she bought a car yesterday. The adjective *ershou* ‘second-hand’ is simply used to provide additional information about the state of the car. Therefore, the adjective *ershou* fulfils a specification function. This is more clearly demonstrated in (20b) where the additional information is encoded as a separate clause. Likewise, in (21a) the attributive adjective *kong* ‘empty’, which can be transformed into a separate clause as in (21b), serves as a specification of the substantial feature of the box. The adjective provides extra information for the hearer since the sentence without *kong* ‘empty’ are adequate for communication. In (22a) the adverbial adjective *xie* ‘leaning’ is used to specify the posture of the stick. It can be transformed to a separate



clause as in (22b), which clearly presents additional information about the position of the stick.

It should be noted that although the adjectives for specification do not encode core meanings in the sentences, the information they provide often becomes the focus for the hearers. The focus-attracting function of such adjectives can be explained with the Cooperation Principle (Grice, 1975, 1978) in communication. Since the utterance without the adjective is semantically complete, the additional property information designated by the adjective violates the Quantity Maxim of the Cooperation Principle (i.e., one should not provide more or less information than necessary in utterance). However, the hearer knows that the speaker is cooperative in communication, and the violation of the Quantity Maxim is intended to convey some implicature. In order to interpret the speaker's communicative intentions, the hearers would naturally turn their attention to the information designated by the additional adjectives. Therefore, the additional information designated by adjectives becomes the focus of attention for the hearers.

The second case is that the property features designated by the adjectives are the core information intended by the speakers. That is, the speakers use the adjectives in an attempt to spell out the property or quality of the entities/events. In such a situation, the omission of the adjectives would result in incomplete sentences both in terms of syntax and semantics. The adjectives in such usage are normally non-predicative or qualitative adjectives. They can be transformed to the “*shi A de*” construction, showing that they fulfil the specification function. For instance,

- (23) a. *na ge ren huang toufa, lan yanjing, zhongdeng shencai.*  
 that CL man yellow hair blue eye medium build  
 ‘That man has blond hair and blue eyes, with a medium build.’
- b. *na ge ren toufa shi huang de, yanjing shi lan de, shencai zhongdeng.*  
 that CL man hair be yellow DE eye be blue DE build medium  
 ‘That man has blond hair and blue eyes, with a medium build.’
- (24) *ta de qunzi shi xin de.*  
 3s DE skirt be new DE  
 ‘Her skirt is new.’

In (23a) the colour adjectives *huang* ‘yellow’ and *lan* ‘blue’ and the non-predicative adjective for size *zhongdeng* ‘medium’ are respectively used to elaborate the colour of the man’s hair and eyes and the size of the body. They can be transformed to the *shi A de* construction as in (23b). In addition, they cannot be omitted since the speaker uses them to provide crucial information in the utterance. Similarly, in (24) the adjective *xin* ‘new’ is used to specify the age of the girl’s skirt. In these examples, the adjectives occur in “*shi A de*” construction or can be transformed to such a construction, and they serve to specify to the hearers the objective property value or state of the entities. Therefore, these adjectives fulfil specification function.

It is noteworthy that in some sentences the information provided by the adjectives pertains to the core meanings of the utterances, yet the adjectives do not perform specification function. For instance,

- (25) *ta zhang zhe yi shuang miren de yanjing.*  
 3s grow ZHE one pair attractive DE eye  
 ‘She has a pair of charming eyes.’
- (26) *ta shi ge laoshi ren.*  
 3s be CL honest man  
 ‘He is an honest man.’

In the two examples, the qualitative adjectives *miren* ‘attractive’ and *laoshi* ‘honest’ convey core information in the two utterances. If they were absent, the sentences left would not be informative in communication. That is, we would rarely utter sentences like *ta zhang zhe yi shuang yanjing* ‘she has a pair of eyes’ or *ta shi ge ren* ‘he is a man’. In fact, the two examples are pragmatically equivalent to the utterances with the adjectives as predicative, as shown in (27) and (28) below. This is because the head nouns *yanjing* ‘eyes’ and *ren* ‘man’ in the two examples do not typically provide new information, and the adjectives are used to encode the core meaning intended by the speaker (cf. Thompson, 1989). Therefore, we can conclude that the adjectives in (25) and (26) are used for evaluation rather than specification.

- (27) *ta de yanjing hen miren.*  
 3s DE eyes very attractive  
 ‘Her eyes are very charming.’
- (28) *ta zhe ge ren hen laoshi.*  
 3s this CL man very honest  
 ‘He is very honest.’

Since the adjectives used for specification provide detailed information about the quality or property of the entities/events, they can be probed with the following enquiry:

*What does X look like?*

The adjectives serving specification function can be used to reply the probing enquiry. In addition, the adjectives for this function often occurs in, or can be transformed to, the *shi A de* construction. This syntactic feature can also help us to determine whether an adjective fulfil specification function.

The discussion above is concerned with the pragmatic function of adjectives in declarative sentences. In fact, the adverbial qualitative adjectives in imperative sentences usually fulfil a specification function as well. Since the speakers often use imperatives to ask or expect the hearers to do or not do something (Quirk *et al.*, 1985), the adverbial adjectives in the imperative sentences may specify the speakers' requirements or expectations. For example,

(29) *zixi kan yi kan.*

careful look one look

'Check it carefully.'

(30) *yihou yao zao qi a.*

later shall early get-up EM

'Get up early from now on.'

The adverbial adjectives in the examples state clearly the speaker's requirement and expectation to the hearers. To be specific, *zixi* 'careful' in (29) denotes the speaker's requirement to the hearer's manner of the inspection; *zao* 'early' in (30) indicates the speaker's expectation to the hearer in terms of time. Therefore, the adverbial adjectives in imperatives may perform a specification function, spelling out the speaker's requirements or expectations for the hearers.

In brief, when the non-predicative adjectives or qualitative adjectives are used to elaborate the quality or property of entities/events, they fulfil the specification function. The adjectives serving this function occur attributively or adverbially in the sentence. In declarative sentences the adjectives in such usage can often be transformed to the "*shi A de*" construction.

#### **4.2.5 The Function of Depiction**

The adjectives in use may provide a vivid description of the property of entities or the state of behaviours, thus fulfilling depiction function. In Mandarin, the depiction function is principally realized by state adjectives, including the reduplication of qualitative adjectives. Most of the depictive expressions are charged with certain attitudes or emotions. The depiction designated by state adjectives functions to create a vivid image on the mind of the hearers, enabling the hearers to echo the speaker's attitudes or feelings. In other words, the hearers or readers may, via the depiction, obtain a lively and clear understanding of the property state and yield an emotional attitude similar to the speaker. For instance,

- (31) *jieshang luanhonghong de, xiang shi duiwu jin le cun.*  
 on-the-street tumultuous DE like be army enter LE village  
 'There is a tumultuous rush on the street, just like an army entering a village'
- (32) *yi jian xiaoxiao de wuzi, ji shi woshi you shi gongzuoshi.*  
 one CL tiny-tiny DE room both be bedroom and be workroom  
 'The tiny room functions as bedroom and workroom.'
- (33) *ta xinli bingliangbingliang de.*  
 3s heart icy-cold DE  
 'He feels something icy-cold in his heart.'

In (31) the state adjective *luanhonghong* 'tumultuous' is used to depict the noisy state on the street, which conveys the speaker's negative attitude towards the scene. In (32) the reduplicative adjective *xiaoxiao* 'very small' as the attribute of the noun *wuzi* 'room' depicts the state of its smallness. In (33) the state adjective *bingliang* 'icy-cold' involves a depiction of the coldness, namely the temperature of the object is as cold as ice. In addition, the reduplication form of the adjective intensifies the force of the coldness. From these examples it can be seen that the state adjectives fulfil depiction function in utterances, describing the state of the property or quality in a vivid manner. The

adjectives in such usage make it easy for the hearers to simulate the entities or events with the depicted status, thus presumably eliciting certain feelings on their mind.

The adjectives realizing depiction function can be probed with the following enquiry:

*What is X like?*

The state adjectives can generally be used to reply the enquiry above. For instance, the adjective *luanhonghong* ‘tumultuous’ in (31) can be used to reply the question *jieshang zenmeyang* ‘what was like on the street’.

A close examination of the lexical forms of state adjectives shows that many adjectives per se contain elements for depiction. This is evident for the state adjectives comprising a qualitative-adjective morpheme in their lexical forms. The elements apart from the qualitative morpheme in such adjectives usually play a role of depiction, namely describing the state of the quality. In Mandarin, the state adjectives can be divided into the following subcategories according to their forms.

- BA: a. *xuebai* ‘snow-white’; *qihei* ‘pitch-dark’; *huore* ‘burning hot’;  
b. *shuoda* (lit. large-big) ‘gigantic’; *weixiao* (lit. tiny-small) ‘tiny’;  
*feipang* (lit. fleshy-fat) ‘fat’; *rongchang* (lit. extraneous-long) ‘lengthy’;  
c. *xichang* (lit. slim-long) ‘slender’; *aixiao* (lit. short-small) ‘undersized’;  
*bainen* (lit. white-tender) ‘delicate’; *shouruo* (lit. thin-weak) ‘weak’
- ABB: *hongtongtong* (lit. red + intensifier) ‘glaring red’; *liuyouyou* (lit. green + intensifier) ‘greenish’; *liangjingjing* (lit. bright + intensifier) ‘glittering’
- AA/AABB: *congcong* ‘hurriedly’; *changchang* ‘very long’; *kuaikuai* ‘very happy’
- A li AB: *hulihutu* ‘muddy-headed’; *shalishaqi* ‘silly’; *luoliluosuo* ‘wordily’
- Others: *luanqibazao* ‘messy’; *heibuliuqiu* ‘swarthy’; *laoshibajiao* ‘honest’

It can be seen that for the state adjectives in BA form, three minor types can be identified. The first type is that B represents a metaphorical comparison, normally

indicating a high degree of the quality A. For instance, *xuebai* ‘snow-white’ designates a colour which is “as white as snow”, namely a high degree of whiteness. The second type is that B directly modifies A, marking off the degree of the quality. For instance, the morpheme *shuo* in *shuoda* ‘gigantic’ indicates the degree of the bigness. The third type is that the B and A are juxtaposed adjective elements. However, one element more often than not serves as the core quality, and the other provides supplementary feature for the quality. These state adjectives with a BA form are usually used to depict the quality or property of the entities/events. For instance,

- (34) *rou zhu de xilan.*  
 meat cook DE pulpy  
 ‘The meat is thoroughly cooked.’
- (35) *zhe zhen shi yi ge juda de bianhua.*  
 this really be one CL huge DE change  
 ‘This is really a huge change.’
- (36) *you yi ge shougao de xiaohuozhi zhanqishenlai, guoqu gei tamen bangmang.*  
 have one CL tall-and-thin DE guy stand up go over give 3p help  
 ‘A young man, tall and thin, stood up and went over for help.’

The state adjectives *xilan* ‘pulpy’, *juda* ‘huge’ and *shougao* ‘tall and thin’ in these sentences are respectively used to depict the mashed state of the rice, the degree of the bigness and the thinly tall figure of the man.

For the state adjectives in other forms, most of them are either composed of an adjective morpheme followed by suffixes, or the reduplication of an adjective. Such state adjectives are termed ‘vivid forms’ of adjectives in Lü (1999), namely they can be used to manifest the quality or property of entities in a vivid manner (Chao, 1968; Li and Thompson, 1981). For instance, the reduplication form *renrenzhenzhen* ‘very careful’ is a depiction of the state of carefulness; *suanbulaji* (i.e., *suan* ‘sour’ + suffix

*bulaji*) is a depiction of the state of sourness, showing the speaker's satisfaction to the taste. Sometimes the same adjective morpheme may be bound with various suffixes to convey different emotional attitudes. For instance, the adjective *hongtongtong* (i.e., *hong* 'red' + *tongtong*) depicts a state of redness which pleases the speaker, whereas *honghuhu* (i.e., *hong* + *huhu*) depicts a state of redness that annoys the speaker.

The depiction function realized by state adjectives can be divided into two types. The first is pure depiction, namely the adjectives are directly used to describe the state of the quality or property, without referring to any standard. Those adjectives in reduplicative forms belong to this type, such as *congcong* 'hurriedly', *mengmeng* 'misty' and *yuyucongcong* 'verdant'. The second is evaluation-based depiction, i.e., the speaker involves his evaluation of the quality or property in the depiction. Zhu (1956/1980) has mentioned that the properties designated by the complex form of adjectives (i.e., state adjectives) usually have a bearing on the speaker's subjective appraisal to the properties. However, he did not explain how the properties are related to the speaker's appraisal as well as what the relationships are. In fact, the evaluation or appraisal underlying state adjectives is a result of the qualitative adjective morpheme in the lexicon of state adjectives. The foregoing discussion has shown that many state adjectives comprise a qualitative-adjective morpheme, which may signify the speaker's evaluation. That is, the speaker's evaluation to the quality or property is internalized as a qualitative morpheme. For instance, when the speaker uses *xuebai* 'snow-white' to depict the colour of an object, he/she must first evaluate the colour to be a high degree



of whiteness. When the speaker uses *yingbangbang* ‘stiff’ to depict his/her feel of the object, he/she must evaluate the object to be hard to a great extent.

Finally, it should be noted that the function of depiction discussed here is distinct from the ‘description’ in narrative or stylistic terms. For a descriptive text or paragraph, the adjectives in it do not necessarily fulfil depiction function. For instance,

- (37) *xiao guniang shi ge hunxueer, da yanjing, chang jiemao, gao biliang, zhishi*  
little girl be CL mixed-blood big eye long eyelash high nose-ridge only  
*fuse lie an....*  
skin-colour slightly dark  
‘The little girl is of mixed blood, with big eyes, long eyelashes, a big nose, and a dark complexion’

In this example, the adjectives appear in a descriptive paragraph, which describes the look of the little girl. However, the qualitative adjectives *da* ‘big’ in *da yanjing* ‘big eyes’, *chang* ‘long’ in *chang jiemao* ‘long eyelashes’ and *gao* ‘high’ in *gao biliang* ‘high nose ridge’ do not fulfil a depiction function. But rather, they are evaluative in function. That is, they are derived by a comparison to the normal size of noses, length of eyelashes and height of nose ridges respectively. Therefore, the depiction function is not identical with the functions of adjectives in a descriptive text.

In brief, the Mandarin adjectives in use can fulfil depiction function, vividly describing the state of the quality or property of entities/events. This function is chiefly realized by state adjectives, which can be used to reply the enquiry ‘what is X like’.

#### 4.2.6 Co-occurrence of Pragmatic Functions

The discussion above has presented the pragmatic functions expressed by Mandarin adjectives in use. A generalized illustration of the pragmatic functions as well

as the corresponding grammatical characteristics of the Mandarin adjectives is given in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 The pragmatic functions of adjectives in Mandarin**

	<b>Definition of the Function</b>	<b>Adjectival Forms</b>	<b>Syntactic Functions of Adjectives</b>	<b>Probing test</b>
<b>Subcategorization</b>	Classify the entities/events into subgroups according to quality or property criteria	Non-predicative adjectives; qualitative adjectives	attributive	<i>Which type of X / What X?</i>
<b>Identification</b>	Singling out certain referents as the topic of discussion	Non-predicative adjectives; qualitative adjectives	attributive	<i>Which X?</i>
<b>Evaluation</b>	Articulating judgements or attitudes towards the quality or property of entities/events	Qualitative adjectives	Attributive, Predicative, adverbial and complement	<i>What do you think of X?</i>
<b>Specification</b>	Objectively elaborating the property features of the entities/events	Non-predicative adjectives; qualitative adjectives	Attributive and adverbial	<i>What is X like?</i>
<b>Depiction</b>	Describing vividly the state of the quality or property of entities/events	State adjectives	Attributive, Predicative, adverbial and complement	<i>What is X like?</i>

When the syntactic and semantic criteria are taken into account, these pragmatic functions can be clearly differentiated, though overlaps between some functions do exist. For instance, the adjectives for specification and those for depiction respectively designate the speaker's elaboration and delineation of the quality or property of entities/events, and the adjectives realizing these two functions can pass the same

probing test “what is X like”. This shows that the two functions are similar to some extent. Given these facts, the two functions can be generalized as a broader function of *description*. In addition, the identification of referents is sometimes preconditioned by the subcategorization of the entities, and many adjectives used for depiction are grounded on an evaluation of the quality or property of entities/events. Therefore, the exact pragmatic functions for certain adjectives in use should be determined by an assemblage of factors.

It should be noted that the adjective utilized in an utterance often fulfils two or more pragmatic functions rather than one single function. However, of the pragmatic functions realized by a given adjective, one of them can usually be recognized as the principal function intended by the speaker in the context. In the foregoing discussion I mainly concentrate on the principal functions of adjectives in the usage contexts. To illustrate with more examples,

- (53) *ni shi ge congming ren, zenme hui zuo zhe zhong shi?*  
2s be CL clever man how can do this type thing  
‘You are a clever man, how come you did things like that?’
- (54) *ta ba jimi wenjian qiaoqiao dai hui le jia.*  
3s BA confidential document quietly take back LE home  
‘He quietly took the confidential document to his home.’

In (53) the noun phrase *congming ren* ‘clever man’ designates a class of people with high intelligence, thus the adjective *congming* ‘clever’ fulfils a subcategorization function. Moreover, the attributive adjective can be transformed to the predicative position, namely the first part of (53) is equivalent to the expression *ni hen congming* ‘you are clever’, showing that the adjective *congming* ‘clever’ fulfils an evaluation

function as well. Therefore, the adjective *congming* realizes two functions, i.e., subcategorization and evaluation. The evaluation function is presumably the principal function in this example, since the speaker is not meant to classify the hearer to a certain group, but to make a positive comment to the hearer's intelligence. In (54) the adjective *jimi* 'confidential' can be an evaluation to the significance of the document. Moreover, it is also used to identify a certain document, which is characterized by its confidentiality. Therefore, the adjective fulfil two pragmatic functions of evaluation and identification, with the latter as the major function in this context.

For some semantically ambiguous sentences, the principal function is hard to be determined. For instance,

- (55) *yonggan de shibing chong shangqu le.*  
 brave DE soldiers march up LE  
 'The brave soldiers have marched forward' OR  
 'The soldiers, who are brave, have marched forward.'

The adjective *yonggan* 'brave' may be used to identify certain soldiers, or to evaluate the courage of all soldiers. Therefore it plays an ambiguous functional role. Without other contextual information, the major function performed by the adjective cannot be determined. That is why it is ambiguous in pragmatics.

In brief, the adjectives in actual use may fulfil one or more than one of the five fundamental pragmatic functions. The context is always necessary for the determination of the principal function realized by an adjective in the utterance.

### 4.3 Relationship between Syntactic and Pragmatic Functions of Adjectives

The discussion above shows that the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives partly correspond to their syntactic functions. That is, the adjectives occurring in attributive, predicative, adverbial or complement positions usually fulfil certain pragmatic functions. For instance, the adjectives realizing subcategorization and identification normally appear attributively in a noun phrase (cf. Warren, 1984); the adjectives fulfilling evaluation and depiction functions are frequently found at predicative and complement positions. However, such pragmatic functions are not always indexical to their syntactic functions. In other words, the pragmatic functions of adjectives cannot be fully predicted according to the syntactic positions, nor are the adjectives in certain syntactic positions straightforwardly attributed to certain pragmatic functions. Although the discussion above has touched upon the relationship between the pragmatic and syntactic functions of adjectives, this linkage is far from clearly demonstrated. In this section I will examine further the relationship between syntactic and pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives.

#### **4.3.1 Pragmatic Functions of Attributive Adjectives**

The adjectives in attributive position have the potential to realize any one of the five pragmatic functions<sup>③</sup>. However, some formal markers may help us to distinguish between these pragmatic functions. One typical marker is the nominalizer *de*, whose presence or absence may provide a clue for the pragmatic functions of adjectives. For instance, the adjectives serving subcategorization function usually resist the use of *de* in

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<sup>③</sup> Thompson (1989) and Thompson and Tao (2010) argue that the attributive adjectives serve the function of introducing new referents in discourse. For instance, the adjective *kong* 'empty' in *kong pingzi* 'an empty bottle' is said to introduce a new referent (i.e., a bottle) into the discourse. However, the "introducing new-referents" function is, according to my interpretation, largely realized by the whole "A+(de)+N" construction rather than the adjectives per se. In this thesis, that function will not be considered.

the “A+N” construction; the adjectives serving identification and specification functions may, but not necessarily, take *de* in the nominal structure; the adjectives fulfilling evaluation and depiction functions normally require *de* in the “A+N” construction. Compared with the nominal structure with *de*, the *de*-less structure shows a more intimate relationship between the property (designated by the adjectives) and the entities/events (denoted by the head nouns). The evidence for this intimacy is that, for the “A+N” construction, the adjective for subcategorization and the head noun are often lexicalized as a label for a class of objects, whereas lexicalization is less likely for the “A+*de*+N” construction containing adjectives for evaluation and depiction.

The adjectives realizing various pragmatic functions can be used successively in the attributive position. The order of the attributive adjectives is as follows.

*(Identifying + Evaluative/Depictive/Specifying + Subcategorizing) + N*

The adjective for identification is placed leftmost, and the adjective for subcategorization is placed rightmost, namely next to the head noun. The adjectives for other functions occur between the identifying adjectives and the subcategorizing adjectives; their exact order, which I will not elaborate, is constrained by phonological, structural and even extralinguistic factors (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Ma, 1995; Adamson, 2000; Cui, 2002). This sequence can be explained as follows. The identifying adjectives single out referents as the topic in the discourse; this selection is the basis for referentiality and predication. The subcategorizing adjectives are proximal to the head noun since they indicate the most essential property of the entities. In general, the

spatial distance of the adjectives to the head noun is iconic to their conceptual distance (Haiman, 1985; Givón, 2001). For instance,

- (55) *piaoliang de yuan zhuo*  
 beautiful DE round table  
 ‘a beautiful round table’
- (56) *zheli zui gulao de zonghexing daxue*  
 here most old DE comprehensive university  
 ‘the oldest comprehensive university in this area’
- (57) *dangqian fuza duobian de guoji xingshi*  
 current complicated changeable DE international situation  
 ‘the complicated and changeable international situation in the current’

It can be seen that in (55) the adjective *piaoliang* ‘beautiful’, fulfilling evaluation function, precedes *yuan* ‘round’, which is used for subcategorization; in (56) the two successively used adjectives *zui gulao* ‘oldest’ and *zonghexing* ‘comprehensive-type’ serve identification and subcategorization functions respectively; in (57) the adjectives in succession, namely *dangqian* ‘current’, *fuza duobian* ‘complicated and changeable’ and *guoji* ‘international’, serve identification, evaluation and subcategorization functions respectively.

Moreover, the attributive adjectives for evaluation and depiction functions usually can be transformed to predicative position. The conceptual difference of an adjective in attributive and predicative positions is that the attributively used adjective designates the inherent and permanent property of the entity, whereas the predicatively used adjective designates the tentative property of the entity (cf. Wierzbicka, 1986; Cruse, 2004; Radden and Dirven, 2007). For instance,

- (58) *hen ben de fangfa* → *(zhege) fangfa hen ben.*  
 very clumsy DE method (this) method very clumsy

‘a clumsy method’	This method is very clumsy.
(59) <i>dada de yanjing</i>	→ <i>yanjing dada de.</i>
Big-big DE eye	eye big-big DE
‘big eyes’	‘(His) eyes are big.’

The adjectives *ben* ‘clumsy’ and *dada* ‘big-big’ in the two examples fulfil the evaluation and depiction functions respectively. When they occur attributively, it means that the property constitutes the inherent feature of the objects; when they occur predicatively, the property merely indicates the speaker’s tentative assessment or description. In addition, since emotions are the transient psychological state, the emotional adjectives rarely appear attributively before the personal nouns or pronouns. For example,

- (60) \* *shengqi de zhangsan* ‘the angry Zhangsan’  
 \* *gaoxing de gege* ‘the happy brother’

The ungrammaticality of the expressions is caused by the fact that the attributive position requires adjectives designating permanent properties rather than transient properties.

### 4.3.2 Pragmatic Functions of Predicative Adjectives

The predicative adjectives are usually employed to convey the speaker’s evaluation or depiction of the qualities or properties. The adjectives for evaluation are mainly qualitative adjectives, whereas the adjectives for depiction are state adjectives. It has been mentioned that the adjectives fulfilling subcategorization and specification functions sometimes occur in the “*shi A de*” construction. Though this construction always functions predicatively, the adjectives in the construction should not be taken as



predicative adjectives. Therefore, I tend to believe that predicative adjectives mainly realize evaluation and depiction functions. The subcategorizing and specifying adjectives usually do not occur predicatively.

Scheibman (2002) shows that predicatively used adjectives in English usually convey the speakers' judgments and opinions. For example, the utterance in (61) is a teacher's complaint about the general behaviour of substitute teachers in her school.

(61) It's like, ... **distorted**.  
...they don't know what they are doing. (Scheibman, 2002:143)

Here the predicative adjective *distorted* is definitely not an objective report of the event, but rather the speaker's evaluation to those teachers' behaviour. The idea that predicative adjectives express evaluative meaning is echoed in other studies as well. For instance, Hood (2004) takes the attribute in a relational clause as the resource for explicit attitude. Since the attributes ('qualities' to be exact) of relational processes in SFL's transitivity system are typically realized by predicative adjectives, Hood's view can be paraphrased as follows: predicative adjectives are evaluation devices.

These conclusions apply to Mandarin predicative adjectives as well. When adjectives are selected to predicate a nominal phrase, the speaker articulates his/her affect or attitude towards the quality or property of entities or events. In other words, the positioning on the property scale designated by the predicative adjectives indexes the speaker's evaluation to the quality or property. For instance,

(62) *ta hen yingjun, hen miren.*  
3s very handsome very charming  
'He is handsome and charming.'

- (63) *dangshi jiali tebie qiong.* (LU20051017)  
 Then home very poor  
 ‘We were very poor at that time.’

The adjectives *yingjun* ‘handsome’ and *miren* ‘charming’ in (62) and *qiong* ‘poor’ in (63) are all used as predicates, which directly encode the speakers’ evaluations towards the topics in the utterances.

It is well-known that when qualitative adjectives are used predicatively, degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’ are usually required. The predicative adjectives in their bare form (namely adjectives without modification by degree adverbs) often carry a meaning of comparison or contrast (Li and Thompson, 1981; Zhu, 1982; Li, 1986; Liu, *et al.*, 2001). For instance,

- (64) *jintian tianqi re.*  
 today weather hot  
 ‘It is hot today.’  
 (65) *zhe touer gao, nai touer di.*  
 this end high that end low  
 ‘This end is high; that end is low.’

With respect to the functions of the adjectives in such constructions, Wang (2003:71) argues that the bare predicative adjectives fulfil a classification function. According to him, the adjective *hong* ‘red’ in *ni de lianse hong* ‘your face is red’ is a subclass of face colour, which is contrastive to similar concepts like *hei lian* ‘black face’ and *huang lian* ‘yellow face’. This is implausible, since the foregoing exploration has demonstrated that the adjectives for classification normally appear in attributive position instead of predicative position. I contend that the qualitative adjectives *re* ‘red’ in (64) and *gao* ‘high’ and *di* ‘low’ in (65) are used for evaluation. The evaluation function in both

examples is realized by comparing it with the properties of other reference points, though the reference point in (64) remains implicit. To illustrate with (65), the height of “this end” (namely a high value) is evaluated by referring to the height of the other end, and the height of “that end” (namely a low value) is evaluated by referring to the height of “this end”. Here the speaker is definitely not classifying the height of the two ends. Therefore, the bare predicative adjectives fulfil evaluation function rather than subcategorization function.

For the state adjectives appearing in predicative position, they are mainly used for the purpose of vivid description of the properties at issue, realizing a depiction function. This function is particularly evident for the adjectives with BA or ABB forms. The meaning and functions of reduplicated adjectives in Mandarin are explored in detail in Chapter 9.

### 4.3.3 Pragmatic Functions of Adverbial Adjectives

In Mandarin, adverbial adjectives semantically indicate the manner and results of actions or behaviours. Regarding their pragmatic functions, Zheng (2000:3) indicates that the adverbial adjectives in Chinese are functionally not confined to an additional modification or restriction; they can indicate description or elaboration. According to the analysis in this thesis, adverbial adjectives in Mandarin are used to realize three pragmatic functions: evaluation, specification or depiction. These functions are respectively reflected by the adjectives in the following utterances.

- (66) *tamen piaoliang de wancheng le renwu.*  
3p beautiful DE finish LE task  
'They finished the task beautifully.'

- (67) *shuangfang cao qian le yi fen xieyi.*  
 two sides rough sign LE one CL contract  
 ‘The two sides initiated (lit. signed roughly) a contract.’
- (68) *ta jicongcong de zou le.*  
 3s hurriedly DE go LE  
 ‘he left hurriedly.’

In (66) the adverbial adjective *piaoliang* ‘beautiful’ fulfils evaluation function, commenting on the quality of the working process. In (67) the adverbial adjective *cao* ‘rough’ specifies the nature of the signing. In (68) the adverbial state adjective *jicongcong* ‘hurriedly’ depicts the hasty state of the subject.

The evaluation function of adverbial elements is noticed by scholars advocating SFL. In SFL, the transitivity system concerns how language is used to represent patterns of experience, namely the experiential function of language. It “construes the world of experience into a manageable set of PROCESS TYPES” (Halliday 1994:106, uppercase original). The SFL differentiates six processes: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential processes, of which the first three are main types in the English transitivity system. Each process consists of three components: the process itself, participants in the process, and circumstances associated with the process, respectively realized by verbal group, nominal group, and adverbial group or prepositional phrases.

With respect to the components of circumstance, manner assumes a special role vis-à-vis other elements such as location, time, and cause. Stillar (1998), Hood (2004) and Martin and White (2005) point out that the speaker or writer’s choice of manner expressions always implicates his/her attitudes and points of view. Stillar (1998:36), in particular, argues that the circumstance of manner mainly contributes to interpersonal meaning rather than experiential meaning, thus it is necessary to separate it from other

circumstantial meanings. In terms of the transitivity system in SFL, the adjectives occurring as verb premodifiers are regarded as realizations of circumstances of manner associated with processes. In Mandarin, circumstances of manner are often realized by adjectival forms. For instance,

- (69) *ta mingque de jiang le, mingnian chunwan shuoxiangsheng de fangshi,*  
 3s clear DE say LE next year Spring-Festival-Gala comic-talk-show DE ways  
*yao mofang Yi Zhongtian.* (FENGHUANG 20090112)  
 must imitate Yi Zhongtian  
 ‘He made it clear that the comic talk show in next year’s Spring Festival Gala must imitate Yi Zhongtian’s (talking) mode.’
- (70) *ta hen zixi de kan zhe mei yi ge ren.*  
 3s very careful DE see ZHE each one CL person  
 ‘He carefully looked at everyone there’

The adjective *mingque* ‘clearly’ in (69) and the modified adjective *zixi* ‘carefully’ in (70) are both verb premodifiers, functioning as circumstances of manner. The attributes designated by the adjectival forms derive from the speakers’ evaluations to the saying and the clapping process. Therefore, the adjectival forms fulfil evaluative functions.

It can be seen that many monosyllabic adjectives are used as adverbials of verbs, yet their usage is highly restrictive. For instance, *yuan wang* ‘to see from afar’ is a grammatical construction, whereas its opposite *jin wang* ‘to see from nearby’ is ungrammatical; *yan cheng* ‘punish quietly’ is an acceptable word, while its opposite *kuan cheng* ‘punish lightly’ is not. For the lexical words above, the adjectival elements in the adverbial position usually specify the manner of the actions or behaviours.

The quality or property designated by adverbial adjectives sometimes involves the agent’s volition. That is, the agent has done something deliberately. For instance,

- (71) *ta duo na le liang ge.*  
 3s more take LE two CL  
 ‘He took away two extra ones.’
- (72) *wo zao lai le ban ge xiaoshi.*  
 1s early come LE half CL hour  
 ‘I arrived half an hour earlier (than the designated time).’

In the two examples, taking away something more than necessary and arriving earlier than the designated time are the agents’ volitional acts. In other words, they implemented the acts on purpose. The adverbial adjective manifests their volition. Since the volition always takes place prior to the acts, the adjective-verb sequence in the linear form is iconic to the conceptual sequence. It should be noted that the adjectives here fulfil evaluation function in use. It is the speaker who evaluates the result of the actions as *duo* ‘more’ or *zao* ‘earlier’.

Moreover, the adverbial state adjectives in the following examples may involve the agent’s volition as well.

- (73) *ta shushufufu de shui le yi jiao.*  
 3s very-comfortable DE sleep LE one sleep  
 ‘He had an enjoyable sleep.’
- (74) *ta yuanyuan de hua le ge quan.*  
 3s round-round DE draw LE CL circle  
 ‘She managed to draw a round circle.’

It can be seen that the sleeping state *shushufufu* ‘very comfortable’ in (73) and the result state of the drawing *yuanyuan* ‘very round’ in (74) are what the agents had expected. The adverbial adjectives are used to depict the state of the actions, namely the feeling of the sleep and the degree of the roundedness.

Finally, the adverbial adjectives in imperative sentences specify the speaker’s requirement or describe the speaker’s expected state of actions. For instance,

- (75) *zixi jiancha yixia.*  
 careful check once  
 ‘Check it carefully.’
- (76) *qingqing de pai pai ta.*  
 tender-tender DE pat pat him  
 ‘Pat him lightly.’

In (75) the adverbial adjective *zixi* ‘careful’ specifies the speaker’s requirement to the inspection. In (76) the adverbial adjective *qingqing* ‘soft’ not only depicts the expected force of the pat, but also conveys the speaker’s requirement for the hearer’s pat.

In general, the adverbial adjectives in Mandarin pragmatically may fulfil evaluation, specification, and depiction functions.

#### 4.3.4 Pragmatic Functions of Complement Adjectives

Similar to predicative adjectives, the adjectives in complement position are mainly used to realize evaluation and depiction functions. The relationship between the syntactic and pragmatic functions of complement adjectives can be illustrated in five aspects.

Firstly, the complement adjectives can indicate the speaker’s direct evaluation of the quality or property of entities, actions or events. In such cases, the particle *de* is required between the verb and the complement. For instance,

- (77) *ta geer chang de bucuo.*  
 3s song sing DE not bad  
 ‘She is a good singer.’
- (78) *ta daban de hen shimao.*  
 3s dress-up DE very fashionable  
 ‘She was dressed up fashionably.’
- (79) *ta huida de hen congming.*  
 3s reply DE very clever  
 ‘He gave them a clever reply.’

In these examples, the complement adjectives *bucuo* ‘not-bad, well’, *shimao* ‘fashionable’ and *congming* ‘clever’ are used to evaluate the quality of his singing, her dressing and his reply respectively. In addition, the complement adjectives can be emotional adjectives, conveying the speaker’s emotions or evaluations. For instance,

(80) *haizi men wan de hen kaixin.*

child PL play DE very happy  
‘The children played happily.’

(81) *kaoshi mei jige, ta kanqilai hen nanguo.*

exam not pass 3s seem very sad  
‘He looked sad because of his failure in the exam.’

The affective adjectives *kaixin* ‘happy’ and *nanguo* ‘sad’ indicate the speaker’s evaluation to the emotions of the children and the male student.

Secondly, the complement adjectives designate the speaker’s evaluation to the results of the actions or behaviours. As illustrated earlier, the evaluation can be subjective or objective. For instance,

(82) *ni jintian lai wan le.*

2s today come late LE  
‘You are late today.’

(83) *ta xie cuo le liang ge zi.*

3s write wrong LE two CL word  
‘He spelt two words wrongly.’

(84) *wo ba xiangzi kun jieshi le.*

1s BA box tie firm LE  
‘I tied the boxes firmly.’

In (82) and (83) the adjectives *wan* ‘late’ and *cuo* ‘wrong’ are the speakers’ objective evaluations of the hearers’ time of arrival and the subject’s spelling. In (84) the adjective *jieshi* ‘firm’ is the speaker’s personal comment about the result of the tying.



Thirdly, the complement adjectives semantically indicate the natural result of the actions or behaviours. Such adjectives are used to designate the speaker's objective evaluation. For example,

- (85) *zhe haizi zhang gao le.*  
this child grow tall LE  
'The child is taller now.'
- (86) *xiezi chuan jiu le.*  
shoes wear old LE  
'The shoes are worn.'
- (87) *yifu shai gan le.*  
clothes to sun dry LE  
'The clothes have been dried (under the sun).'

The adjectives in these examples all show the natural result caused by certain actions. To be specific, *gao* 'tall' shows the natural result of growing; *jiu* 'old' indicates the natural result of wearing; *gan* 'dry' indicates the natural result due to the heat of the sun. These results are objective in that the properties reflect the reality, without involving the speaker's personal attitudes.

Fourthly, some adjectives are syntactically used as the complement of other adjectives, showing the extent of or people's reactions to the properties of head adjectives. These complement adjectives often fulfil evaluation function. For instance,

- (88) *tianqi re de nanshou.*  
weather hot DE suffering  
'The weather is scorching hot.'
- (89) *dian li de guke shao de kelian.*  
shop in DE customer few DE pitiful  
'There are pitifully few customers in the shop.'
- (90) *ta lengjing de kepa.*  
3s calm DE horrible  
'He looks horribly calm.'

In (88) the complement adjective *nanshou* ‘suffering’ shows the extent of the hotness. In (89) the adjective *kelian* ‘pitiful’ indicates the speaker’s emotional evaluation to the number of customers in the store. In (90) *kepa* ‘horrible’ is the speaker’s evaluation of the subject’s calmness. Therefore, the adjectives used as complement to the head adjectives mark off the speaker’s emotional evaluations.

Finally, the complement adjectives can be state adjectives, which serve as a depiction to the states of the quality or property. For instance,

(91) *ta ba fangjian dasao de ganganjingjing.*

3s BA room sweep DE very clean

‘She swept the room clean.’

(92) *cao ge de qishuashua de.*

grass cut DE very trim DE

‘The grass has been trimly cut.’

The reduplicative adjective *ganganjingjing* ‘very clean’ in (91) and the vivifying adjective *qishuashua* ‘trim’ in (92) are respectively used to depict the state of cleanness of the room and trimness of the grass.

In brief, the complement adjectives in Mandarin are generally used to fulfil evaluation and depiction functions.

#### **4.4 Adjectives of Various Pragmatic Functions: Distributions in Spoken Discourse**

In previous sections I have presented the basic pragmatic functions fulfilled by Mandarin adjectives, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. The critical issue at this stage is the distribution of Mandarin adjectives realizing various functions in spoken discourse. The exploration of their distribution

may shed light on the most typical functions people intend to express via adjectives in the verbal interactions.

In this section, a quantitative exploration of the adjectival functions in spoken Mandarin will be carried out. For this purpose, I have extracted ten stretches of interview dialogues (approximately 30,000 characters) from my spoken database. These dialogues are transcribed from different TV or online interview programmes in China (see appendix). The data from diversified sources are investigated in order to diminish the impact of personal style on the frequency of adjective uses.

Altogether 699 adjective tokens are identified from these dialogues. Since this study concerns what adjectives are mainly used to do, each adjective is marked with only one pragmatic function (i.e., the principal function). Sometimes the primary function fulfilled by the adjective may be ambiguous. In such cases the contextual information will be heavily relied upon to make the decision. For instance,

(93) *ni kending shi litou zui yaoyan de yi ge juese.*  
2s definitely be inside most eye-catching DE one CL role  
'You must be the most outstanding role in it.'

Here the adjective *yaoyan* 'eye-catching', together with the adverb *zui* 'most', are used attributively in the sentence. It might fulfil two pragmatic functions: identification of the role or evaluation of the significance of the role. However, the context shows that the speaker was giving his own comment to the role played by the hearer, and this utterance served as a generalization of his opinions. Based on this observation, evaluation is marked as the major function intended by the speaker in the use of the adjective *yaoyan*

‘eye-catching’. Therefore, the marking of the pragmatic functions is determined by the syntactic and semantic criteria and the contextual information.

The distribution of syntactic and pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives in the genre of face-to-face interview is shown in Table 4.2<sup>④</sup>. It can be seen that in spoken Mandarin, nearly three-quarters of the adjectives are used for evaluation (72.7%). This figure is about 2.7 times as much as the total percentage of the adjectives realizing the other four functions (i.e., 27.3%). The contrast suggests that in communicative interactions, Mandarin adjectives are chiefly used to evaluate the entities or events at hand. Via the evaluations achieved by adjectives, the speakers may articulate their beliefs, emotions or attitudes regarding the evaluated things, and the audience may infer the speaker’s value system toward the world.

**Table 4.2 Functional distribution of adjectives in spoken Mandarin**

	Attributive	Predicative	Adverbial	Complement	Total (%)
Subcategorization	74	-	-	-	74 (17.6%)
Identification	44	-	-	-	44 (6.3%)
Evaluation	132	279	18	79	508 (72.7%)
Specification	32	10	12	4	58 (8.3%)
Depiction	6	1	8	0	15 (2.1%)
Total (%)	288 (41.2%)	290 (41.5%)	38 (5.4%)	83 (11.9%)	699 (100%)

In addition, the table shows that 17.6% of the adjectives in Mandarin are used for subcategorization. In communication people occasionally need to talk about a class of

<sup>④</sup> Since some pragmatic functions are never realized by adjectives in certain syntactic positions, this incompatibility is marked as “-” in the table.

objects, or to attribute particular objects to specific categories. As I have illustrated earlier, it is natural for people to establish subcategories of objects according to their property features. Therefore, the subcategorization function is frequently found in communication.

With respect to the adjectives fulfilling depiction function, only 15 tokens (accounting for 2.1%) are found in the dialogues. These instances mostly occur in attributive and adverbial positions instead of predicative or complement positions. This shows that in daily conversations Chinese people rarely use adjectives for the purpose of depiction. People engage in verbal interactions with others in order to exchange information and establish rapport with the interlocutors (respectively realizing the ‘ideational’ and ‘interpersonal’ functions in Halliday’s (1994) terms). Due to the spontaneity of utterances, people usually prefer brief and direct expressions. The depiction function of adjectives, however, is primarily realized by state adjectives for the purpose of vivid description or embellishment. Therefore, this function may be readily found in written rather than spoken discourse.

Moreover, Table 4.2 shows that the attributively-used adjectives and the predicatively-used adjectives in spoken discourse are nearly the same in terms of token quantity. This shows that both attributive and predicative adjectives are the basic syntactic functions of adjectives in communication. In Chapter 1 I have mentioned the conflicting ideas proposed by Shen (1999), Guo (2001) and many others, arguing that either the attributive or the predicative function is the basic function of adjectives in Chinese. In my statistics, however, it shows that both of the two adjective functions are

basic in spoken discourse<sup>⑤</sup>. The approximation of their token quantity might be due to the fact that the predicative adjectives in Mandarin are primarily used to perform evaluative function, while the attributive adjectives can be used to perform all of the five types of pragmatic functions. Especially for the evaluation function, it can be realized by either attributive or predicative adjectives in spoken Mandarin. Therefore, the token quantities of attributive and predicative adjectives are not sharply distinct in spoken discourse.

In general, Mandarin adjectives are frequently used to fulfil evaluation functions, demonstrating the interlocutors' attitudes and emotions towards the entities/events in their daily encounters. In addition, the analysis has shown that both the attributive and predicative adjectives are the basic functions of adjectives, and they have no significant difference in their token quantity in spoken Mandarin.

#### **4.5 Summary**

In this Chapter I have demonstrated that the Mandarin adjectives are used to fulfil five pragmatic functions, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. To recapitulate, the adjectives for subcategorization provide qualitative criteria of classifying the entities/events into subgroups. The adjectives in such use normally appear attributively, and the particle *de* is not required for their modification of nouns. The adjectives for identification single out certain referents as the topic of discussion. The adjectives in such usage occur attributively, and function

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<sup>⑤</sup> It should be noted that the syntactic functions of adjectives are treated differently in various studies (e.g., Thompson and Tao, 2010; Shen, 1999; Guo, 2001). Therefore, the statistical result shown in this research may not necessarily invalidate the results in other studies.

similarly as demonstrative pronouns. The adjectives for evaluation indicate the speaker's assessment to the quality or property of objects. Such adjectives are often found in predicative and complement positions. The adjectives for specification objectively elaborate the quality or property of entities/events. The speakers use such adjectives in order to make the audience know more or better about the targeted entities/events. Such adjectives often appear in a separate clause or in the “*shi A de*” construction. The adjectives for depiction make a vivid description of the quality or property of entities/events, creating a picturesque image on the hearers' mind. This function is primarily realized by state adjectives. Moreover, the relationships between the pragmatic functions and the syntactic functions of Mandarin adjectives are explored, showing that there is no rigorous correspondence between these functions. The findings may deepen people's understanding of the grammatical meaning of adjective category as a whole.

With regard to the subjectivity of Mandarin adjectives, it can be seen that the adjectives for evaluation and depiction are mostly subjective in nature, since the speaker's personal beliefs or attitudes are involved in the related utterances. The foregoing analysis has shown that the evaluation and depiction functions are chiefly realized by qualitative and state adjectives respectively. In the subsequent discussion, the subjective features and functions of qualitative adjectives and relevant constructions will be explored in Chapter 5 and 6, and the meaning and functions of a special type of state adjectives (i.e., reduplicated adjectives) will be discussed in Chapter 9.

## Chapter 5

### Adjectival Evaluation as Reference-Point Constructions

#### 5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 I have identified five basic pragmatic functions fulfilled by Mandarin adjectives in a communicative context, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. Among them, the evaluation function, chiefly realized by qualitative adjectives in Mandarin, is intimately associated with the judgements and attitudes expressed by the speaker. As Thompson (1996:65) states, the speaker's evaluation should be taken into account in any analysis of the interpersonal meanings of a discourse. In view of the aim in this thesis, viz. the subjectivity underlying the adjectival uses in spoken Mandarin, this chapter will zoom in and focus on the evaluation function, investigating how qualitative adjectives are employed by Chinese speakers to convey evaluations. For the convenience of discussion, the adjectives used for evaluation function are termed evaluative adjectives.

To evaluate entities or events in the surrounding world is human nature. As Malrieu (1999:281) puts it, "evaluation is almost as basic to human cognition as awareness. It is a form of vigilance, of watchfulness, which operates, so to speak, in the background of our consciousness". Particularly in daily conversations, people cannot help but articulate their evaluations to the prominent property of entities/events. The adjectives are often used to designate the speaker's evaluations. Many linguistic studies on evaluation have demonstrated that the adjective category is the most frequently utilized



linguistic resource for evaluative meanings (Thompson and Hunston, 2000; Scheibman, 2002; Martin and White, 2005). Scheibman (2002), for instance, shows that adjectives are the major linguistic category for speakers to express evaluations and attitudes in American casual conversations. In a similar vein, Hood (2004) observes that the congruent form for the expression of attitude is adjectival. In view of the speakers' involvement in evaluation, it seems safe to argue that the adjectives in human language are one of the primary sources for linguistic subjectivity.

In linguistics, evaluative adjectives are traditionally regarded as the equivalent to the value-laden adjectives such as *hao* 'good', *huai* 'bad', *keai* 'lovely', *zaogao* 'terrible', *youqu* 'interesting' and *wuliao* 'boring'. Givón (1993:63), for example, states that evaluative adjectives, which often occur in antonymic pairs, "signal the subjective preference of the speaker toward an entity, e.g. good/bad, pretty/ugly, nice/lousy, desirable/undesirable". However, the notion of *evaluative adjectives* used in this thesis is a broad concept, comprising all adjective instances encoding the conceptualizers' judgements and attitudes to the quality or property of entities/events. For instance, the adjectives *yuan* 'far' and *an* 'dark' are not value-laden adjectives in semantics, yet in the following utterances they are evaluative in function, since the speakers' judgements to the length of the road and the brightness in the room are encoded.

- (1) *lu hai hen yuan.*  
road still very far  
'There is still a long way ahead.'
- (2) *wu li hen an.*  
room inside very dark  
'It is dark inside the room.'

In this chapter, I will explore how the qualitative adjectives in Mandarin are used to conceptualize the speakers' evaluations, and to what extent the evaluative adjectives are subjective. Since emotional adjectives are very different from other adjectives in terms of evaluation, the subjectivity of such adjectives will be explored in Chapter 6. Therefore, the adjectives in this chapter are confined to the non-emotional qualitative adjectives in Mandarin.

This chapter is organized as follows. It first explores the fundamental nature of adjectival evaluation constructions. Then it analyzes the subjectivity and objectivity of the adjectival evaluations. It goes on to examine the interactive functions of evaluative adjectives. Based on the analysis, an overall evaluation system is proposed. A summary is presented at the end of the chapter.

## **5.2 Adjectival Evaluation as Reference-Point Constructions**

It is clear that the evaluations indicated by adjectives show the speaker's judgement or attitude to the quality or property of entities/events. At this stage one critical issue needs to be addressed: how do people employ adjectives to advance their evaluations? In this section I will explore the mechanism for adjectival evaluation, and propose that the adjectival evaluation essentially constitutes a reference-point construction (Langacker, 1993; 1999: 171-202).

### **5.2.1 Reference Points and Reference-Point Constructions**

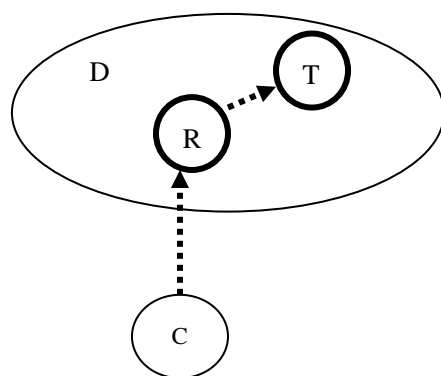
Making reference to objects is one of the indispensable abilities for human beings in their perception and cognition of the world. Reference phenomenon is ubiquitous in our

experience, despite the fact that in most cases we are not consciously aware of it. Any entity or event is likely to be utilized as a reference point for the access of other entities or events. For instance, people are largely unaware that they take the earth as a reference point for geographic orientation, such as using words like *east*, *west*, *north* and *south*. People often take their own spatial and temporal position as a reference point to locate other objects, such as *front*, *behind*, *left* and *right*, *past* and *future*. Moreover, they may use a particular object as a reference point to position other objects. Take the expression *zhuozi shang de shuibe* ‘the cup on the table’ for example; the speaker identifies a cup by referring to the location of the table, thus *zhuozi* ‘table’ serve as a reference-point in the conceptualization. Reference phenomena are definitely not confined to spatial and temporal domains. They are readily found in many other domains as well. For instance, the partial objects are always conceptualized with the whole as a reference point, such as the *body* functioning as a reference point for *arms*, *legs*, *head*, etc. The kinship terms (e.g., father, mother, uncle, brother, cousin) are chosen with a certain point in the genealogical chart of a family as reference point. That is why such terms in use often occur in possessive constructions. For example, the referents of the expressions *my cousin* and *my aunt’s mother-in-law* are respectively designated with the speaker and the speaker’s aunt in the genealogical system as reference points.

Based on these insights, Langacker (1987, 1993, 1999) regards the reference-point ability as one of the fundamental cognitive capacities possessed by human beings. According to him, this ability plays a significant role in a variety of cognitive processes

such as categorization, abstraction and metaphors. In cognitive linguistics, the reference-point ability refers to “the ability to invoke the conception of one entity for the purposes of establishing *mental contact* with another, i.e. to single it out for individual conscious awareness” (Langacker, 1999:173, italics original). The linguistic construction involving reference point can be termed a reference-point construction, which is sketched in Figure 5.1.

**Fig 5.1 A reference-point construction**



In this figure, the labels C, R and T represent conceptualizer (usually the speaker of an utterance), reference point and target respectively. The label D refers to dominion, namely the conceptual domain activated by the reference point. For instance, the dominion activated by *mouse* might include a mouse’s shape, look, size, food, manner of moving, and even a cat or the episode of a mouse-hunting experience. The dotted arrows designate the mental path. This figure shows that for a reference-point construction, the conceptualizer C uses the reference point R to establish mental contact with the target T in the dominion D.

Many linguistic phenomena can be analyzed from the perspective of reference-point construction. Langacker (1999:174-188) elucidates the possessive

construction in English as a reference-point construction. In the expression “the cat’s fleas”, for instance, the fleas are the target of conceptualization and the conceptualizer uses the cat as a bridge to establish mental access to the target. The cat is singled out as a reference point simply because the cat, compared to the fleas, is more prominent in people’s cognition, and through this construction, the fleas can be properly anchored. In addition, in the following utterance, *baba* ‘father’ functions as a reference point for the conceptualization of the child’s look.

- (3) *zhe haizi zhang de xiang baba.*  
this child grow DE like father  
‘This child resembles his father.’

Here the child’s look is conceptualized by a comparison to the father’s look.

### 5.2.2 Adjectival Evaluation as Reference-Point Constructions

As to the adjectival evaluation in Mandarin, I propose that it is made on the basis of a comparison with certain reference points, thus the evaluative constructions with adjectives in utterances are essentially reference-point constructions.

In adjective studies, it is generally acknowledged that the meaning of gradable adjectives often implies a comparison with some norm or scale (cf. Clark, 1973; Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 1986:206; Ludlow, 1989; Kennedy, 1999; Paradis, 2001:54; Taylor, 2002:220; Kennedy and McNally, 2005; Pander Maat, 2006, among numerous others). Lyons (1977:273-274), for instance, argues that the use of a gradable antonym always involves an implicit or explicit comparison. For example, when one says *nei fangzi hen da* ‘that house is big’, the speaker is not ascribing the attribute of size to the referent ‘that house’, but expressing his/her evaluation to the house (viz. *da* ‘big’) after

comparing the house with certain norms. The result of the comparison is that ‘that house’ is relatively bigger than the referenced norm. Here the mental process of comparison goes offline, namely the speaker makes the comparison in the background, and the norm for comparison is not unveiled. The gradable adjectives used as predicates often involve an underlying and defining feature of comparison. As Radden and Dirven (2007:130) indicate, an instance can be qualified in a scalar way only when there is an explicit or implicit standard or norm against which its quantity can be assessed.

In previous chapters, I have shown that the adjective category constitutes one of the major resources for evaluation. If we integrate the adjectival evaluation with the reference-point comparison, it might be tenable to state that adjectival evaluations are realized by the speaker’s comparing of the quality or property value of the target with certain standards or norms in a certain frame. That is, adjectival evaluation is actually a reference-point construction. In the subsequent discussion, I will justify my proposal by elaborating the features of reference points for evaluation and the dominion evoked by the reference points.

### **5.2.2.1 Reference Points for Adjectival Evaluations**

In the previous studies on evaluative languages, it is widely acknowledged that linguistic evaluation is elicited through a comparison to established norms or standard values. Hunston (1994:191), for instance, notes that expressing evaluation in a text is not merely a statement of personal attitude, but involves an appeal to shared norms and values as well. The comparison with such reference points, as indicated by Hunston and Sinclair (2000:92), is usually a matter of subjectivity. However, the standards or norms

against which evaluations are made are usually just given a passing mention, and few studies have been seriously devoted to the characteristics of such reference points. In fact, the reference points used for evaluation can be explicitly presented or implicitly accessed. The features of explicit and implicit reference points for evaluation will be addressed separately in the subsequent discussions.

### 5.2.2.1.1 Explicit Reference Points and Adjectival Evaluation

The reference points for evaluation can be explicitly presented in utterances. Syntactically, such evaluations are normally realized via comparative markers such as *bi* ‘to compare’, *xiangbi laishuo* ‘comparatively speaking’, *geng* ‘more’ and *zui* ‘most’. That is, the evaluations are expressed by comparative constructions. It should be noted that the evaluation is made not by comparing the reference points per se, but the quality or property value associated with them. For instance,

- (4) *zhibuguo yinwei ni chushen bi wo hao, shou de jiaoyu bi wo gao.*  
 only because 2s origin compare 1s good receive DE education compare 1s high  
 ‘It is only because you were born better than me, and the education you have received is higher than me.’
- (5) *zhe bi wo yi ge ren chi hao chuan hao geng you yiyi.*  
 this compare 1s one CL man eat well wear well more have meaning  
 ‘This is more meaningful than my sole well being.’
- (6) *yu qita yundongyuan xiangbi, wo yao xingyun de duo.*  
 with other athletes compare 1s probably lucky DE much  
 ‘Compared with other athletes, I was much luckier.’ (ZhongGuo 20080912)
- (7) *ta zai banli nianling zui xiao.*  
 3s at class age most small  
 ‘He is the youngest in the class.’

These evaluation constructions contain explicit reference points. To be specific, in (4) the hearer is evaluated by a comparison with the speaker’s family background, showing that the former is better in quality. Moreover, the level of the hearer’s education is

evaluated in comparison with the speaker's education level, showing that the former is higher. Similarly, in (5) the significance of 'this' matter is evaluated in comparison with the speaker's personal benefit; in (6) the fortune of the speaker is compared with that of other athletes; in (7) the subject's height is evaluated in comparison with other students in the class. It can be seen that all of the evaluations here are represented as comparative constructions.

It is noteworthy that in comparative constructions, the reference points may be omitted in particular contexts due to their prominence in the audience's cognition. In such case, it is always possible to trace the reference points and present them overtly in the surface structure. For instance,

- (8) *ta chang de zui hao.*  
3s sing DE most good  
'She sings the best.'

Here the reference point is not overtly given. However, in the context the evaluation is definitely made by comparing her singing with some others. Therefore, this can still be regarded as an evaluation with explicit reference point.

In brief, the adjectival evaluation can be made by explicitly comparing with reference points, and such evaluation is usually realized as comparative constructions.

#### **5.2.2.1.2 Implicit Reference Points and Adjectival Evaluation**

In most cases, people employ adjectives to express evaluations without mentioning the reference points. That is, the reference points are implicit in the surface structure, yet exist innately in the speaker's cognition. In syntax, such evaluations are not realized as comparative constructions. I propose that at least four aspects are frequently used as

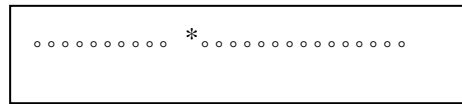


implicit reference points. The adjectival evaluations essentially indicate that the target's quality or property either conforms to or deviates from the referenced standard or norm.

### **(I) Normality and Normal Value**

The notion NORMALITY refers to the normal, consistent and stable state or pattern of entities generalized by conceptualizers from a range of similar or related entities, or from the continuous performances of a particular entity. In their daily encounters with the world, people unconsciously abstract some patterns for the normal properties of entities or the canonical development of events, and store them in cognition. For the members in a certain group, normality is reflected by the majority members. For instance, it conforms to normality that in hospitals nurses are females, since male nurses are generally fewer in quantity. For another example, since city dwellers have electricity supply in most of their daily life, the supply of electricity to homes is normal for them. Therefore, a period of time without electricity supply is deviation from normality, and special notice should be announced to the affected residents. Generally speaking, people are not sensitive to the entities or events in normality state, thus will not place their attentional focus on such things unless particular needs arise. In contrast, people are extremely sensitive to the entities or events deviating from normality, and their attention will immediately be drawn to such abnormal things. In the following graph, we would most probably focus our attention on the star rather than any one of the circles. This is because circles occurring in the graph conform to the normality, which draws little attention, while the star deviates from the normality, thus attracting much of our attention.

**Fig 5.2 Normality and attention**



It should be noted that normality is not a personal standard, but a standard shared by at least a group of people. It could be universal for human beings, or community- or culture-specific. For instance, pursuing good things is the normality for general people; in most cultures monogamous marriage conforms to normality, while in some others polygamous marriage might be normality.

Moreover, since the things in normality state are unmarked cases, for the economy of expressions, only those things deviating from normality are encoded in language. This encoding manner can be called a **normality uncoding principle**. To illustrate with the electricity supply example again, since the supply of electricity is normal, no notice is necessary to inform the residents about the supply for the next day. The notice is only necessary when the normal supply will be affected. This principle applies to lexical expressions as well. In (9) the expressions in the left column are well-formed in Chinese, while the opposite expressions in the right column are hardly acceptable.

(9) <i>wuren zhanji</i> ‘unmanned combat aircraft’	? <i>youren zhanji</i> ‘manned combat aircraft’
<i>wusheng dianhua</i> ‘cordless phone’	? <i>yousheng dianhua</i> ‘corded phone’
<i>jia fa</i> ‘wig’	? <i>zhen fa</i> ‘genuine hair’
<i>jia zhi</i> ‘artificial limb’	? <i>zhen zhi</i> ‘real limb’
<i>buxiugang</i> ‘stainless steel’	? <i>xiugang</i> ‘stainable steel’
<i>dao liu</i> ‘back flow’	? <i>shunliu</i> ‘front flow’

The contrast can be attributed to the normality of the encoded contents. It can be seen that the expressions in the left column encode marked items, whereas the expressions in the right encode unmarked cases. For instance, the aircrafts are normally operated by

humans; the telephones normally have cords connected to them; the hair of humans is normally genuine, etc. Since people generally believe in the normal cases and usually think about them in that way, it is of little significance to encode them in language. Therefore, the expressions in the right column are rarely found in communication. It is sufficient for people to encode the marked cases in language, as shown in the left column.

As for the property of entities, normality is often reflected in terms of quantification, and the normal property value is often taken as a reference point for evaluation. In their daily interactions, people tend to acquire a normal property value vis-à-vis the entities in a certain group. The normal property value for objects is often referred to as ‘standard value’ in linguistics, though it has rarely been elaborated (Kennedy, 2001; Rotstein and Winter, 2004; Kennedy and McNally, 2005; Pander Maat, 2006). In fact, the normal value can be the averaged property value underlying numerous instances of the same or similar type(s), or the consistent level in a chronological phase, or the stable ratio between the members within a same frame. For instance, normal adults of a particular geographic area tend to have relatively stable values in terms of height, shape of the body, size of nose, eyes, mouth, etc. The property value in normality can be called normal value, which is commonly held in people’s conceptions. The normal values for entities are stored in the people’s cognition, and can be activated when people evaluate the world. That is, people evaluate the quality or property of entities/events by referring to these internalized normal values. For instance, when a normal person’s height is greater than the normal value construed by the speaker,

the height immediately becomes the salient feature of the person. As noted earlier, the salient features of the perceived entities tend to be evaluated by perceivers. Therefore, the utterance such as *ta hen gao* ‘he is very tall’ indicates that the height of the subject exceeds the normal height of adults.

It is noteworthy that the normal property value is not an exact quantity, but has a quantification range. The construal of normal property value for certain entities is roughly the same in general people’s cognition, yet the exact boundaries of the normal value may vary from person to person, or differ in disparate communities or cultures. Suppose someone makes the following evaluation: *that lady is tall*. This evaluation is made by comparing the normal height of the lady with the construed normal heights of women in general. If this view is shared by most conceptualizers, it may suggest that people have a similar value range for the normal height of women in general. Conversely, if the evaluation is not shared by many people, it might suggest that the normal height for women construed by the speaker is not consistent with the normality construed by others. In this situation, people may challenge the speaker with the question: *do you consider that to be tall?*. Moreover, in a basketball club, the player with a height of, say, 1.80 metres, is likely to be evaluated as *short*. However, when compared with the normal height of general people, that height would most probably be evaluated as *tall* rather than *short*, simply because the average value for normal people is in a lower range.

In brief, when people use adjectives to advance evaluations, the normal property value construed by the conceptualizer may be activated as a reference point. The

adjectival evaluation usually marks off a deviation from the normal property value, i.e., indicating a property value higher or lower than the normality.

## **(II) Expectation and Expectative Value**

People do not always evaluate the world by making a comparison to the normality. The adjectival evaluation may be related to the speaker's expectations to the evaluated entities or events. The term EXPECTATION here refers to the speaker's predictive judgement or wish regarding the entities or events. People often hold some expectations, positive or negative, towards themselves or the things at hand. As to the same objects, people's expectations might differ widely, or be similar to large extents. The value associated with expectations can be called expectative value. Suppose two students in the class scored 80 marks in a test. One of them evaluates his performance as *bad*, while the other evaluates his result as *excellent*. The different evaluations vis-à-vis the same score are probably resulted from their different expectations: for the former student, the score was below his expectative value for the exam, while for the latter student, the score was beyond his expectative value.

The speaker's expectation can be divided into two types. The first is the speaker's predictive judgement about what things are likely to be. The judgement could be positive or negative. The second is the speaker's anticipation or wish about what things will be or should be. This anticipation is always positive, sine it is human nature to want something good. For instance, people always wish to have good life, achieve certain goals, possessing favourable conditions and so forth. The speaker's expectations might derive from his/her prior knowledge, emotions and personal goals, and these

expectations might be satisfied or deviated in actual happenings. Take the following utterance for instance,

- (10) *wo yiwei ni cong xiao xihuan dianying ne!* (LU 20051021)  
1s think 2s since young like film EM  
'I thought you liked movies since you were young.'

Here the speaker used the verb *yiwei* 'think' to show clearly her expectation to the hearer, a film director. That is, the speaker expected that the hearer must be fond of movies since he was young. However, the verb *yiwei* in the main clause also suggests that her former expectation turned out to be inaccurate, namely her expectation does not conform to the reality. Therefore, the psychological verb *yiwei* here can be seen as a counter-expectation marker.

The expressions with a reference to expectations are easily found in human language. Heine, *et al.* (1991) point out that in all languages known to us, the consistency with norms (*viz.* expected situations) tends to be expressed in unmarked forms, whereas the deviation from norms (*viz.* counter-expectation situations) tends to be expressed in marked forms. Due to their individual differences in such aspects as knowledge status, social and cultural background, the interlocutors often hold different expectations *vis-à-vis* the same objects or events. In such cases, counter-expectation (CE) markers such as *but*, *too*, *only*, *in fact* and *still* tend to be used in speech to indicate the inconsistency between expectations and reality. According to Heine and colleagues, the CE markers share at least two properties:

- a) Their use implies a comparison between what is asserted on the one hand and what is either presupposed, expected, or assumed to be the norm on the other.

- b) The former is at variance with the latter, and the main function of the CE marker is to relate the assertion to the world of presuppositions, expectations, and norms.

(Heine, *et al.*, 1991:192)

In addition, Dahl (2001) argues that counter-expectation information has high information value, while information that can be predicted by expectation has low information value. Therefore, the linguistic expressions are closely related to human expectations.

With regard to adjectival evaluations, the expected property values are often used as a reference point for comparison. For the entity/event at issue, the speaker predicts or anticipates a certain value of their property in advance. Thus, the actual evaluation signifies either conformity to or deviation from the expected property value. For instance, the customer has an expectation about the price of the vegetables; the evaluation in (11) suggests that the actual price is lower than the speaker's expected price.

- (11) *jintian de cai bu gui.*  
today DE vegetable not expensive  
'The vegetable is not expensive today.'

For another example, imagine a situation where a person invites a couple to have a dinner at his home. As such, the host must assess the three diners' appetite before he starts to prepare the Chinese meal. Suppose they eat up all the dishes and rice without feeling full, the host may use the adjective *duo* 'much' to evaluate the couple's appetite, or use *shao* 'little' to evaluate the amount of the food he has prepared.

- (12) *tamen chide zhen duo!*  
3p ate really much

‘They really ate a lot.’

- (13) *jintian zuode fan tai shao le.*  
today cooked rice too little LE  
‘I didn’t cook enough today.’

In (12) the evaluation designated by the adjective *duo* ‘much’ is derived from a comparison with the host’s expectation to the couple’s appetite. That is, the couple’s appetite exceeded the host’s expectation. In (13) the evaluation designated by the adjective *shao* ‘little’ is derived from a comparison with the host’s prediction to the sufficient amount of the meal. It means that the food he had prepared according to his prediction falls short of the amount in necessity. The evaluations encoded by the adjectives *duo* and *shao* signal a discrepancy with the host’s expectations. The two evaluations in (12) and (13) differ in their pragmatic effects. That is, the speaker in utterance (12) places blame on the appetite of the guests, while in utterance (13) he blames on himself, suggesting that his inaccurate expectation was the cause of the short supply of food.

It should be mentioned that as the reference points for evaluation, the expectation differs from normality in several ways.

Firstly, the normal property value is derived from a person’s abstraction from multiple entities or events in a certain category, and it can serve as a reference point for the evaluation of any particular entity or event of the same category. Expectations, on the other hand, are specific to particular entities. They may not hold when other objects are evaluated. In other words, the normal values construed by the speaker are a norm for a group of entities in a certain domain, while expectations are attributed to a particular entity by the speaker.



Secondly, evaluations based on normal values are concerned with whether the objects are above or below the average level, whereas evaluations based on expectations are concerned with whether the objects agree with or deviate from such expectations. For instance,

- (14) *zhai haizi hen guai.*  
this child very nice  
'This child is very nice.'
- (15) *zhai haizi jintian hen guai.*  
this child today very nice  
'This child is nice today.'

In (14) the speaker evaluated the child by comparing children's normal performance, namely the normal value of 'niceness'. The child evaluated here was above the normal value for children. Here the utterance suggests little about the speaker's expectations. In (15), by contrast, the speaker evaluated the child based on his/her expectation. That is, the child's performance today deviated from the speaker's expectation. The utterance concerns little about other children's average performance level.

Thirdly, the normality of property always exists in human cognition, while the expectation to entities or events may or may not exist. For instance, people may not have any expectations for the objects they are going to interact with. However, expectations are related to normality in that people's expectations to certain entities are often derived from their normal values. That is, the normality is in many cases the basis for expectations.

### **(III) Goals and Needs**

When people advance evaluations, they tend to refer to and compare with various

goals they have set up. The goals are generally a personal matter, which pertain to basic needs and deal with what one wants to be. These goals can also be conceived of as the evaluators' expectations vis-à-vis entities or events. By referring to these goals, events or things can be evaluated in terms of desirability or undesirability. People always set up different goals for different tasks. Ortony *et al.* (1988) distinguish three types of goals: 1) active-pursuit goals, which are goals that a person tries to obtain, such as becoming a concert pianist; 2) interest goals, which are goals that are usually not pursued, because one has little control over their realization, as with preserving one's health or seeing one's friend's success, and 3) replenishment goals, which are goals that wax and wane, such as hunger and getting petrol for one's car. Ellsworth and Scherer (2003:578) state that people have hierarchies of goals and needs that they try to satisfy, such as the goal of survival, the goals of maintaining positive social relationships, the goal of enjoying pleasurable experiences, and even the goal of crossing the street to buy a newspaper. These various goals can be accessed when people evaluate entities or events. The elements that facilitate the goal achievement tend to be evaluated as desirable, while those elements hindering the achievement of goals tend to be evaluated as undesirable.

For instance,

(16) *hao qiu!*

good ball

'Good pass!'

(17) *zhege shi zui lixiang de zhuangtai.* (ZHONGGUO 20080805)

this be most ideal DE status

'This would be the most ideal case.'

In (16), the speaker evaluated the player's pass as *hao* 'good', since it facilitated his

home team to score a goal. In other words, the pass was in line with the speaker's expectation, thus a positive evaluation was elicited. In (17), the adjective *lixiang* 'ideal' in its actual context refers to the establishment of explicit air pollution indexes. The speaker believed that such indexes would be beneficial for China's development. Therefore, the positive evaluation to the imagined case suggests that the speaker's expectation would then be satisfied.

The goals are intimately related to the needs of human beings. People may demonstrate certain subjective (including physical and mental) needs for certain entities. Such subjective needs are often used as a reference point for the evaluation of the property of entities. For instance,

- (18) *keting youdian xiao.*  
living-room a bit small  
'The living room is a bit small.'
- (19) *ta jiu he duo le.*  
3s alcohol drink much LE  
'He has drunk too much alcohol.'

In (18) the speaker has a subjective need for the floor area of the living room. The adjective *xiao* 'small' indicates that the actual area is below his need. Similarly in (19), the subject has a need or limit for alcohol consumption, and the evaluation expressed by the adjective *duo* 'much' shows that the actual amount of alcohol consumed by him is more than necessary.

The extent to which the needs are realized is often a trigger for emotions. More specifically, when such needs are fulfilled or surpassed, people may experience a sense of satisfaction. Conversely, when the needs are not fully met, people may feel frustrated

or disappointed.

Finally, it should be noted that both the goals and the subjective needs can be categorized as expectations, since they are what the conceptualizer expects to get or realize. What makes them outstanding is that they can be positive or negative, yet always accord to the interest of the conceptualizers.

#### **(IV) Social Norms**

People in the same community tend to have shared moral and behavioural standards based on which the quality of the agents' actions is assessed (Schank and Abelson, 1977; Ortony, *et al.*, 1988; Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003). These standards are called social norms in this study. The social norms are generally conventions, laws, rules or regularities guiding or constraining people's behaviours. As Ortony, *et al.* (1988:55) put it,

What we have in mind as standards are the various moral, legal, and conventional laws, rules, regularities, norms, and codes of conduct and performance. These are often standard for a culture or subculture, although some may be unique to individuals or groups of individuals. One often does strive to adhere to or uphold standards to which one subscribes, at least insofar as they are relevant in a particular situation.

Therefore, such norms are concerned with what one thinks ought to be, and are justified by social and cultural terms. The social nature of the norms is also elaborated in Ortony, *et al.* (1988).

Many [standards] are socially learned, and involve norms and consensus. They frequently relate to the manner of behaviour as much as to the content, and their ultimate justification is often in terms of social, or socially determined, considerations rather than in terms of personal ones. (Ortony, *et al.*, 1988:45)

The social norms can be used as reference points, based on which adjectival

evaluations are made. By referring to a hierarchy of social standards, the actions or behaviours of the agents can be evaluated in terms of praiseworthiness or blameworthiness, appropriateness or inappropriateness. That is, when a person's behaviour deviates from the norms, the speaker tends to blame him, thus a negative evaluation is advanced. On the other hand, when a person's behaviour agrees upon the standards, the speaker tends to praise him, thus a positive evaluation is articulated. For instance,

- (20) *zheyang tiaozheng shi heli de.*  
 this way adjustment be reasonable DE  
 'This adjustment is reasonable.'
- (21) *zhe ge xiaohai ting youlimao de.* (LU20060421)  
 this CL child very having polite DE  
 'This boy is very polite.'

In these examples, there are no explicit criteria for the reasonableness of actions or politeness of behaviours. However, there seem to be certain default social norms against which the reasonableness and politeness are judged. Therefore, the adjectival evaluations here are made by comparing the social norms. For some other examples,

- (22) *ni de daan shi cuo de.*  
 2s DE answer be wrong DE  
 'Your answer is wrong.'
- (23) *zheme zuo shi bu hefa de.*  
 this doing be not lawful DE  
 'It is illegal to do this.'
- (24) *jiance xianshi, zhe pi chanpin shi hege de.*  
 inspection show this batch product be qualified DE  
 'Inspection shows that the products in this batch meet required standards.'

The evaluations in these examples are elicited based on a reference to social norms. For

example, in (22) the evaluation *cuo* ‘wrong’ is given when the speaker identifies that the hearer’s answer is not compliant with the standard answer. In (23) the evaluation *bu hefa* ‘illegal’ is oriented to the act in reference to the regulations of the law. In (24) the speaker assesses the qualification of the products based on the specification for the products. It can be seen that this type of evaluation is typically realized via the predicative construction *shi A de* in Mandarin. Moreover, the verbal morpheme *he-* ‘to comply with’ may serve as a clue for an evaluation with prescribed norms as reference, as seen in *heli* ‘reasonable (lit. complying with reason)’, *hefa* ‘legal (lit. complying with law)’ and *hege* ‘qualified (lit. complying with standard)’. Since whether the evaluated entities are compliant with the prescribed norms tends not to be coloured by personal opinions, the evaluations are relatively objective.

To summarize, the adjectival evaluations always involve a comparison of the quality or property of entities/events with certain reference points. When the reference points are explicitly presented, the evaluations usually appear in non-comparative constructions. In contrast, in the non-comparative sentences, the reference points for comparison are implicit. In such cases, the speaker may refer to and compare with normality, evaluation, goals/need or social norms in order to make evaluation to entities/events.

#### **5.2.2.2 Frames and Evaluation**

It has been mentioned that in reference-point constructions, the reference point activates a dominion where the mental access to the target is operated. In the process of evaluations, the dominion activated is equal to a frame of the comparison. That is,

people usually evaluate things by referring to some standards or norms rooted in a certain frame. In this part, the relationship between frames and evaluation will be explored.

#### **5.2.2.2.1 The Concept of Frame**

The functional and cognitive-based linguistics holds an encyclopaedic view of word meaning, indicating that an open-ended set of encyclopaedic knowledge is always incorporated in lexical and syntactic meanings (cf. Fillmore, 1982; Givón, 1984; Langacker, 1987, 1991a, 2008; Wierzbicka, 2003; Croft and Cruse, 2004). In people's daily interactions in the world, a vast repository of experiences pertaining to certain aspects of entities/events are obtained and then stored in the experiencer's cognition. When a lexical item is mentioned, a range of stored knowledge in the interlocutors' memory may be activated, which help the language users to simulate and comprehend its lexical meanings. For instance, when talking about cars, language users might activate a repertoire of knowledge about a car's shape, component parts such as wheels, engines and tyres, certain brands of cars, specific personal experience about driving the car, the evaluations to cars, even the rising price of petrol and the environmental protection concepts. Obviously, such a set of knowledge is acquired through people's daily encounters with cars. It is not the case that the full set of knowledge would be accessed every time the word car is mentioned. The contextual information in communication may guide the interlocutor to evoke the most relevant knowledge optimal for comprehension (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). In this spirit, word meaning is encyclopaedic in nature, and it cannot be understood independent of the knowledge base

to which it is linked (Petrucci, 1996; Evans and Green, 2006).

However, the encyclopaedic knowledge is not stored in human memory as disorganized chaos. But rather, the relevant information associated with entities is structured in frames, which refer to the structured mental representations of conceptual categories (Fillmore, 1977, 1982, 1985). The term *FRAME* is found in the literature in various labels such as *schema*, *scripts*, *scenario*, *ideational scaffolding*, *cognitive models*, *idealized cognitive models*, *domain* and *folk theory* (Schank and Abelson, 1977; Tannen, 1979; Fillmore, 1982; Kövecses, 2006), and each of these constructs “provides a way of characterizing the structured encyclopaedic knowledge which is inextricably connected with linguistic knowledge” (Cienki, 2007). It is a schematization of stored experiences, parts of which can be evoked by words associated with it. It is typically exemplified by the ‘commercial event’ frame, wherein a number of elements such as the buyer, the seller, the goods, the money and the transaction processes are involved. When verbs such as *buy*, *sell*, *pay*, *spend*, *cost*, *charge* are used or heard, the frame is indexed or evoked as background information for the understanding. In other words, these semantically-related lexical items serve as ‘points of access’ (Evans and Green, 2006:221) to the encyclopaedic knowledge of commercial transactions. Therefore, the concept of frames is extremely useful in the process of discourse interpretation (cf. Ensink and Sauer, 2003).

#### **5.2.2.2.2 Evaluation in Frames**

Fillmore (1982) procedurally mentions the significance of frames to evaluation. As he indicates, the semantic interpretation of value attribution (i.e. Evaluation) “depends



crucially on lexical framing”. Take the adjective *good* for example; its meaning is largely determined by the frames evoked by the modified noun:

The fact that speakers of English are able to interpret such phrases as A GOOD PENCIL, GOOD COFFEE, A GOOD MOTHER, A GOOD PILOT, etc., shows that they are able to call into their consciousness for this purpose the fact that a pencil is used for writing and can be evaluated for how easy or efficient it is to write with it, or how clearly its traces appear on the paper, the fact that coffee is a drink and can be evaluated for its taste, its contribution to the drinkers’ alertness, etc., that mothers and pilots do what they professionally and conventionally do and can be evaluated for how easily, how effectively, and how efficiently they do it. ..Some nouns have frames associated with them whose evaluative dimensions are provided in advance, while others designate things that could be evaluated only if the context provided some basis for the evaluation. When we come across the phrase A GOOD STICK we expect to find in the context some explanation of a situation within which one stick could function better than another. (Fillmore, 1982: 25)

Fillmore’s remarks are extremely enlightening. When a noun is used, a frame or several different frames relating to the referents are activated (cf. Wierzbicka, 1986). Language users can use evaluative adjectives to assess any components in the activated frames. Suppose someone is observing a man, the frame<sup>®</sup> of *ren* ‘human being’ is immediately activated. By virtue of this frame, one may evaluate the person’s height as *gao* ‘tall’ or *ai* ‘short’, his body shape as *pang* ‘fat’ or *shou* ‘thin’, his hair as *chang* ‘long’ or *duan* ‘short’, his look as *shuai* ‘handsome’ or *chou* ‘ugly’, his intelligence as *congming* ‘clever’ or *ben* ‘stupid’, and so forth. These evaluations may remain external to the frame structures or get integrated into the frame structures.

Adjectival evaluations are operated in frames evoked by the evaluated objects. When an adjective is used for property evaluation, the reference point and the target should be within the same frame. When objects in other frames need to be compared,

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<sup>®</sup> It might be argued that *ren* ‘human being’ activates numerous frames. Here I just illustrate with the general frame.

the comparison should be overtly presented. Suppose there is a person who is seven feet (or 2.1m) tall, it would be normal for us to evaluate him as *hen gao* ‘very tall’; a tree of the same height, in contrast, cannot normally be evaluated as *gao* ‘tall’ (cf. Neeleman, *et al.*, 2004). This contrast can be interpreted in frame-based evaluations: to evaluate a person as ‘tall’ means that he/she is tall in the frame of human beings, compared with the normal heights of adults, whereas to evaluate a tree as ‘tall’ means that it is tall in the frame of trees, compared with the normal heights of similar trees (in a certain area). Since things in different frames have different normality values, the same height would not be evaluated in the same manner when it is associated with things in different frames.

For another example, the following utterance is produced when a mother is calling for her child to wear a hat.

(25) *lai, dai shang zhe ge da maozi!*  
 come wear on this CL big hat  
 ‘Come, put on this big hat!’

Here the adjective *da* ‘big’ might mean that the hat is big compared to other hats. In this case, the noun *maozi* ‘hat’ evokes a frame of general hats, and the comparison is done within the frame of hats rather than other things. The other possibility is that the adjective *da* means that the hat is big compared to the hats usually worn by the child. That is, the mother empathizes with the child, evaluating the size of the hat from the child’s perspective. The hat might actually be small in normal adults’ eyes. Similarly, Pander Maat (2006: 291) mentions that a truck evaluated as *enormous* by a three year old child may not be exceptionally big in the eyes of an adult.

In brief, the adjectival evaluation is made within a certain frame activated by the evaluated entities. Out of the frame, the evaluation may not stand.

### 5.3 Objectivity and Subjectivity of Adjectival Evaluations

In the light of the nature of the reference points, the evaluations expressed by qualitative adjectives in Mandarin discourse can be relatively objective or totally subjective. In this part I will offer some accounts for the objectivity and subjectivity of adjectival evaluations.

#### 5.3.1 Objectivity of Adjectival Evaluation

When the speaker uses adjectives to make objective evaluations, he/she does not put his/her subjective interpretation into the evaluative process. Such evaluations are normally advanced by comparing with explicit reference points.

For the properties such as length, weight, height and speed, the property value of the objects can be obtained through measurement. That is, people may utilize measuring instruments to get the exact property value of the entities. It is always possible for people to check whether the evaluation truly reflects the reality or not by deliberately measuring up the property values of the entities in question. With such measurable property values as reference points, the evaluations underlying the comparative constructions are absolutely objective. For instance,

- (26) *wo zai ban li zui ai.*  
1s at class inside most short  
'I am the shortest in the class.'
- (27) *ta pao de geng kuai.*  
3s run DE more fast

‘He runs faster.’

(28) *ta nianling da xie.*

3s age big a-bit

‘He is older in age.’

(29) *xiangcun bi chengshi anjing.*

village compare city quiet

‘It is quieter in villages than in cities.’

The adjectival constructions in these examples are all used to perform objective evaluation function. The speakers’ evaluations to entities are formulated by referring to the property values of other entities, and such values are objective in that they can be measured via certain instruments. To be specific, in (26) the speaker evaluates his/her height by referring to the height of others students in the class. The evaluation is objective in that whether or not the speaker is the shortest in the class can be verified by measuring the actual height of each student. In a similar vein, the speaker’s evaluations to his running speed in (27) and his age in (28) are derived by a comparison with certain reference points, although they are not explicitly shown in the sentences. The evaluations are objective since the actual property values are measurable and the comparison with reference points is not affected by the evaluator’s personal opinions. In (29) the speaker evaluates the quietness in village with a comparison to the quietness value in cities. The evaluation is objective in that people may measure the decibel value of noises in the two places and determine whether the speaker’s evaluation is correct.

In some cases, people may have specific requirements for the property values of entities. Even though the actual quantification of the need is not given explicitly, it does exist. The evaluation is objective when it is made by comparing with the actual need for property value. For instance,

- (30) *zhe tiao shengzi chang le.*  
 this CL rope long LE  
 ‘This rope is longer (than necessary).’
- (31) *ni dai de liwu shao le.*  
 2s bring DE gift few LE  
 ‘You brought fewer gifts (than necessary).’

Here the speaker has an objective need for the length of the rope (e.g., one metre) and the quantity of the gifts for distribution (e.g., fifty gifts on a one each basis), though the quantity of the need is not shown in the linguistic expressions. The adjectival evaluations in the two sentences indicate that the actual length of the rope in (30) exceeds the requirement, while the number of gifts brought by the hearer in (31) falls short of necessity. It can be seen that the needs are objective in terms of quantification. When referring to such an objective need, the evaluation to the entities is objective as well.

In some cases, though the quantifications of the evaluated entities and the reference points cannot be calculated by measuring instruments, they can be manifested in some other ways. The adjectival evaluations underlying the comparative constructions are still objective. For instance,

- (32) *Zhangsan bi Lisi xuexi hao.*  
 Zhangsan compare Lisi study well  
 ‘Zhangsan is better than Lisi in study.’
- (33) *Zhangsan bi Lisi geng qiangzhuang.*  
 Zhangsan compare Lisi more strong  
 ‘Zhangsan is stronger than Lisi.’
- (34) *ta de fangfa zui youxiao.*  
 3s DE methods most effective  
 ‘His methods are the most effective.’

In (32), the quality of a person's study can be reflected by his/her academic records; in (33), the build of a person can be manifested by a physical examination; in (34), the effectiveness of the methods can be examined by the problems resolved. Therefore, when a speaker refers to the property value indirectly manifested as objective quantification, the evaluation is also absolutely objective.

The discussion above shows that the adjectival evaluations are absolutely objective when the reference points represent measurable qualities or properties. However, when the explicit reference points indicate immeasurable qualities or properties, the evaluations could be partially objective in that the reality is reflected in the comparison. For instance,

(35) *zhe ge fangjian zui ganjing.*

this CL room most clean

'This room is the cleanest.'

(36) *nali de qifen buru zher renao.*

there DE atmosphere not-as-good-as here lively

'The atmosphere there is more lively than here.'

(37) *waibian geng liangtang.*

outside more bright

'It is brighter on the outside.'

In these examples, the property values signified by the adjectives *ganjing* 'clean', *renao* 'lively' and *liangtang* 'bright' are seemingly not measurable. However, a comparison between the quality or property value of the two entities may reflect their quantificational difference. Take (35) for instance; there seems to be no manageable measurement for cleanness; yet the relative cleanness is more easily recognized when several places are compared. Consequently, the evaluation made in reference to immeasurable property is relatively objective. Similar is true for the rest two examples.

It should be noted that with the technical development, many properties are becoming measurable. Therefore, the adjectival evaluations in comparative constructions show a tendency of objectivization in actual uses.

### **5.3.2 The Subjectivity of Adjectival Evaluations**

When the speaker refers to a standard or value subjectively established in his/her cognition, the evaluation is subjective. The adjectives used for subjective evaluation is usually accompanied with degree adverbs and occur at predicative or complement positions in the sentences. In the subsequent discussion I will illustrate the subjective evaluations and their motivations in use.

#### **5.3.2.1 The Subjective Evaluations**

The adjectival evaluations made in reference to the implicit reference points are all subjective in nature. That is, when the normal property value, expectative value, goals and needs, or social norms are accessed, the elicited evaluations are subjective. Among them, the evaluations of entities/events in reference to social norms show a conformity to or deviation from the social norms such as regulations or rules. Therefore, the evaluation of the actions or behaviours is oriented towards praiseworthiness or blameworthiness, appropriateness or inappropriateness. The normality shows the speaker's construal to the regular or habitual state or patterns of entities/events, thus it is a subjective standard, and the evaluations in comparison to it is absolutely subjective as well. The expectations, together with goals and needs, which can be encompassed under the broad term of expectations, are totally subjective since they reflect the speaker's own beliefs or viewpoints.

In the previous section I have shown that the degree adverbs such as *bijiao* ‘comparatively’, *geng* ‘more’ and *zui* ‘most’, the verb *bi* ‘compare’, and the construction *yu...xiangbi* ‘compared with...’ often occur in objective evaluation constructions. Different from objective evaluations, the adjectives used for subjective evaluations are often modified by degree adverbs such as *hen* ‘very’, *feichang* ‘very’, *ting* ‘rather’, *tai* ‘too’, *zhen* ‘really’ and *jiqi* ‘extremely’. In addition, I have illustrated that in comparative sentences, the evaluation made in reference to immeasurable property is relatively objective. Since such evaluations involve the conceptualizer’s construal to the property, they are also subjective in nature. The evaluations involving both objective and subjective elements can be claimed as either relatively subjective or relatively objective.

### **5.3.2.2 Motivations for the Subjectivity of Evaluative Adjectives**

It can be seen that the evaluative adjectives in non-comparative sentences share one common feature: they all index subjective quantity. The quantity is subjective in the sense that they indicate the speaker’s own construal. That is, for an adjective to be evaluative, it must involve the speaker’s personal construal to a certain quantity. The notion CONSTRUAL in Cognitive Linguistics refers to the alternative ways of seeing a state of affairs (Langacker, 1987; Croft and Cruse, 2004). Construal underlies human conceptualization, and is one of the basic cognitive capacities acquired by human beings in their daily interactions with the world. In Chapter 2, I have mentioned the different construal associated with the expressions of *half-full* and *half-empty* vis-à-vis the same amount of water in the bottle. For another example, somebody who shows an



unwillingness to give out money in a particular situation might be evaluated as *stingy* by some people and *thrifty* by some others (Fillmore, 1982:125). Here the difference between the two evaluative expressions is a result of various construals. As explained by Fillmore, the adjective *thrifty* evokes a thrifty-wasteful dimension, thus evaluating a person as thrifty means that he is not wasteful. The adjective *stingy*, in contrast, evokes a stingy-generous dimension, and evaluating a person as stingy means that he is not generous. In fact, since people take different perspectives to view the same entities or state of affairs, their construal tends to vary slightly or dramatically. The construal finds their expression in linguistic forms. That is, different grammatical forms may be used to reflect the language users' various conceptualizations to the same entities or events.

People's construal of the same property may be influenced by a range of factors. That is, a particular entity or situation can be conceptualized variously in the light of the perspectives for viewing, the reference points, the psychological state as well as the goal of the viewers. Adjectival evaluation registers the evaluator's construal to the quantification of the quality or property designated by adjectives. Human beings can perceive multiple property dimensions of an object such as its size, quantity, length, height, functions and aesthetics, and construe the property in quantitative terms. That is, for each property, the actual property value of a particular entity can be positioned at different points on a property scale. For instance, when looking at the face of a girl, some may evaluate it as *feichang haokan* 'very beautiful', others may evaluate it as *haokan* 'beautiful', *yiban* 'plain', *bu haokan* 'not beautiful' or even *hen chou* 'very ugly'. In this case the girl's look is interpreted as a thing that can be quantified with

degrees, and each of the conceptualizers may position their construal of the value of beauty at a certain segment on the beautifulness scale. Since such positions are determined by the conceptualizers' different construal, the adjectives used for evaluation are subjective, reflecting the speakers' beliefs or judgements.

Thus, the subjectivity of adjectival evaluations is motivated by the quantitative construal of certain properties. From this stand, two corollaries follow:

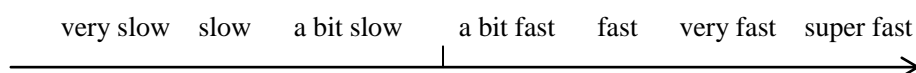
- i) If the quality or property designated by an adjective activates quantity construal, the adjective tends to be evaluative. This is because people's construal of the quantity may vary from person to person.
- ii) Otherwise, if the quantity or property does not activate any quantity construal, the adjective tends to be non-evaluative. The non-evaluative adjectives usually perform subcategorization, identification or specification functions.

These cognitive motivations for adjectival evaluation can be used to account for the adjectival evaluativity in the following examples:

- (36) a. *ta zou de hen kuai.*  
 3s walk DE very fast  
 'He walks very fast.'
- b. *Liaogong xihuan zuo kuai che.*  
 Mr. Liao like ride fast train  
 'Mr. Liao likes taking the express train.'

The adjective *kuai* 'fast' activates a speed scale, which forms a cline ranging from *very slow*, *slow*, *fast*, to *very fast* and *extremely fast*, as illustrated in Figure 5.3.

**Fig 5.3 Value cline for fast**



In order to assess a person's walking speed, people need to position his/her actual speed

on a certain range of the speed scale. Given the various standards or norms referred to, different people tend to position the person's actual speed at a different segment on the speed scale. That is, people may conceptualize his/her speed as *very slow*, *a bit slow*, *fast*, *very fast*, or *extremely fast*. In (36a) the speaker places his speed on the 'very fast' range. Therefore, the evaluation encoded by the adjective *kuai* 'fast' is subjective. In (36b) the adjective *kuai* in *kuai che* 'fast train' does not position the train's speed on any range of the speed cline, but classifies the train as a type with minimum speed limit. Therefore, the adjective in this context is not evaluative but subcategorizing in function.

However, since the quantity of speed is subject to construal, the adjective *per se* has the potential to activate quantification, thus express some degree of evaluativity in certain contexts. For instance,

- (37) *kuai che jiushi kuai.*  
 fast train just be fast  
 'This express train is fast indeed.'

Here the attributive adjective *kuai* 'fast', though mainly functioning to classify the train, is evaluative to some extent, since the speaker's utterance suggests that the speed quality for express trains can be negotiated. Presumably, what the speaker means is that the train can be called *kuai che* 'fast train' only if the riders do evaluate its speed as *kuai* 'fast'. In this case, the express train is worthy of its name.

In brief, the motivation for evaluative adjectives is that the actual quality or property of the entity/event can be positioned on a certain range of the property scale. Since people's construal to the quality or property differs from one another, the exact positioning of the adjectives on the scale is negotiable.

### 5.3.3 Continuum of Objectivity and Subjectivity

The subjectivity of adjectival evaluations varies in degrees. Many scholars have realized that some evaluations are more subjective than others. Scheibman (2002), for instance, shows that in English, valuation adjectives (e.g., *good, funny, interesting*) are more subjective than physical property adjectives (e.g., *big, long, old*). However, she does not explain the underlying reasons. Swale and Burke (2003) state that the adjectives of size used as evaluative expressions are more likely to occur in spoken discourse than in written discourse. That is, adjectives of size express more subjective meaning in spoken discourse than in written discourse.

I propose that the comparison to different norms may result in various degrees of subjectivity, and the objective and subjective evaluations form a continuum. Here the underlying assumption is as follows.

The more individualized or idiosyncratic the reference point is, the more subjective the adjectival evaluation is. The more measurable and explicit the reference point is, the more objective the adjectival evaluation is.

When the reference points are measurable properties which are explicitly presented, the adjectival evaluations tend to be absolutely objective. Such evaluations are usually realized by comparative constructions. However, when the reference points are not measurable properties, the evaluation underlying the comparative adjectival construction is a combination of subjectivity and objectivity.

In the non-comparative sentences, the evaluation tends to be elicited by a comparison with the normal property value or the expectation (including goal and need) value. Since such reference points are constructed by the speaker him/herself, the

evaluations thus elicited are absolutely subjective. Compare the two utterances,

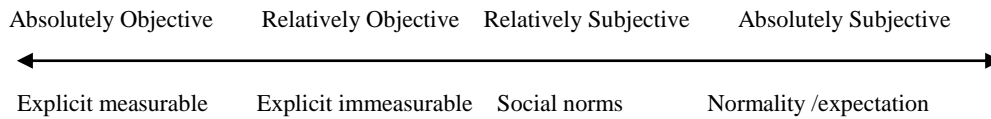
- (38) *ta zai ban li pao de zui kuai.*  
3s at class in run DE most fast  
'He is the fastest runner in the class.'
- (39) *ta pao de feichang kuai.*  
3s run DE very fast  
'He runs very fast.'

The adjective *kuai* 'fast' in the two utterances expresses the speaker's evaluation to the subject's speed. Judging from the superlative marker *zui*, the evaluation in (38) is probably derived from a comparison of subject's running speed with others in the class. In (39), in contrast, due to the lack of explicit comparison markers, the evaluation is probably derived from an implicit comparison of the subject's running speed with the speaker's construed 'normal running speed' for the subject's counterparts. It is also likely that the comparison is made between the subject's actual speed and the speaker's expectation to his/her speed. In a word, the evaluation in (38) is more subjective than that in (37). The contrast between the two examples illustrates how the different compared norms determine the degree of subjectivity of the same adjective in different utterances.

On the other hand, people belonging to the same community tend to share certain social standards or norms. When these shared norms are activated as reference points, the evaluation is not totally the speaker's personal attitude, thus it is less subjective than the evaluations with reference to normality and expectations.

Based on the discussion above, a continuum of objectivity and subjectivity with respect to adjectival evaluations in Mandarin can be derived as follows.

**Fig 5.4 Objectivity-subjectivity continuum**



It can be seen that the evaluations with explicit and measurable reference points are absolutely objective, while the evaluations with normality or expectation (including goals and needs) as reference points are absolutely subjective. In addition, for the evaluations with explicit yet immeasurable properties or social norms as reference points, they are partially objective and partially subjective.

In brief, the evaluation advanced can be objective or subjective in the light of the nature of the reference point, and a continuum of subjectivity and objectivity of the adjectival evaluations can be established.

#### **5.4 The Interactive Functions of Adjectival Evaluation**

In the previous sections I have illustrated that Chinese speakers elicit adjectival evaluations towards the quality or property of entities or events by comparing them with implicit or explicit reference points. In this way, the speakers may express their judgments or attitudes in a subjective or relatively objective manner. In this section I will go a step further and investigate the interactive functions of adjectival evaluation, namely the purpose of the speakers' evaluations as well as their effects exerted on the hearers. As argued by Thompson and Tao (2010), evaluation (*assessment* in their term) constitutes a primary way for people to negotiate stance, alignment and perspective. This can be shown in two aspects.

#### 5.4.1 Value Positioning Function

The attitudes associated with evaluative adjectives are an index to the speaker's value system, which is established through embodied experience. Since people's interactions are indispensable from their culture and society, their attitudes often reflect part of their communal ideological system. As Thompson and Hunston (2000:6) indicate, every act of evaluation expresses a communal value-system, and every act of evaluation goes towards building up that value-system. Therefore, the speaker expresses his/her attitudes by adjectival evaluations, which help to construct identity, and provide index to his/her communal ideology. Many studies concerning languages in written discourse such as Ivanic (1998) and Samson (2004), postulate a similar position that the writer's linguistic choices serve to establish authorial identity and authority. Hence, the audience may infer from the evaluations and get access to the speaker/writer's outlook of values.

In addition, the speaker's evaluations often imply his/her certainty about the judgements or comments. In assertives, the speaker's stance is so firm that it seems that he/she is talking about an undeniable fact. This strong position might be face-threatening, especially when the speaker makes a negative evaluation relating to interlocutors. Therefore, in order to save the hearer or the agent's negative face, a hedge *wo jue de* 'I think' is often used in spoken discourse. This hedge shows that the negative evaluation is merely the speaker's personal opinion rather than a fact or truth observed by everybody. Compare:

(40) a. *ta hen xiaoqi.*

- 3s very stingy  
'He is stingy.'  
b. *wo jue de ta hen xiaoqi.*  
1s feel 3s very stingy  
'I think he is stingy.'

In (40a), the speaker's evaluation to the subject's personality is as strong as a fact. In contrast, the evaluation in (40b) suggests that the negative evaluation is just the speaker's personal judgement, which is open for challenge.

#### **5.4.2 Manipulation of the Hearers**

Evaluation can be advanced in both spoken and written discourses. In casual conversations, people nearly cannot speak without encoding their emotions, beliefs, expectations and judgements in utterances (Scheibman, 2002). Adjectival evaluations are advanced by the speaker not only for the positioning of his/her value system, but more importantly for the purpose of constructing solidarity with the hearers (cf. Lemke, 1992; Eggins and Slade, 1997; Stillar, 1998; White, 1998; Thompson and Hunston, 2000; Martin and White, 2005). In other words, besides marking off the speakers' attitudes, adjectival evaluations also serve to establish certain relationships with the hearers. This interactive function is sometimes termed 'relational function' (Stillar, 1998) or 'intersubjectivity' (Verhagen, 2005).

In evaluation studies, the evaluation is described in dichotomies, such as averred and attributed evaluations, explicit and implicit, inscribed and invoked evaluations, etc. (cf. Hunston, 2000; Martin and White, 2005; Bednarek, 2006, 2009; among others). Sinclair (1986), for instance, made a distinction between attributed language, i.e., any piece of language presented as deriving from other sources rather than the



speaker/writer per se, and averred language, i.e., the speaker/writer's own words or ideas. That is, averred evaluation refers to the evaluation made by the speaker, whereas attributed evaluation refers to the evaluation derived from someone other than the speaker his/herself. With respect to adjectival evaluation, the speaker assumes full or partial responsibility for the evaluation through direct or modified averral or attribution. Such a distinction is crucial for adjectival evaluation in the sense that it can be used to position the hearer/reader to attach more or less credence to the various pieces of information (Hunston, 2000:178; Martin, 2000). In many situations, the speaker selects averral or attributed evaluations in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the statements. For instance, the expression *Scientists said that...* is not only a report of the scientists' viewpoints, but also implies that the propositional content has a high degree of validity so that the readers/hearers may attach great credence to it.

This is also true for the evaluations utilized in written texts. G. Thompson (1996:65) makes the point that the central part of the meaning constructed in any text is evaluation, and any analysis of the interpersonal meanings of a written text cannot afford to ignore the evaluative expressions. Take academic writing for example, it is generally expected that the statements are objective reports of the results achieved via experiments or reasoning. Therefore, the writer's personal assessment should be minimally projected. However, Hunston (1993, 1994) indicates that the purpose of a research article is not simply to report, but to persuade (the audience). That is, the author writes the article in order to persuade the readers (the academic community) to accept his/her claims. For that purpose, the work of other researchers as well as that of the writer's own is

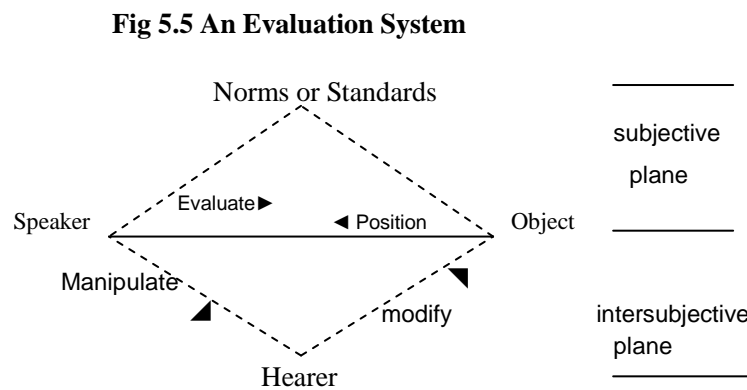
inevitably evaluated. In addition, there is no sharp distinction between factual statements and evaluative expressions. In every clause, the writer's choice of degree of certainty and commitment towards the proposition, termed STATUS by Hunston (1993:65), is compulsory, and thus it is simply impossible to write a non-evaluative clause. She proposes that every clause or statement in a text carries with it a particular status, and many of the statements are value-laden:

On the interactive plane, each statement is of a particular type (e.g. a fact or an assessment) and has a source (e.g. averred by the writer, or attributed to someone else): these determine its status. At the same time, many of the statements are given a positive or negative value (e.g. that it is supported by evidence, or that it is not true). (Hunston, 1993:65)

In general, adjectival evaluations in discourse are not only used to convey the speakers/writers' judgments or attitudes, but also used to align or disalign the audience so that their actions or behaviours are manipulated.

### 5.5 An Overall Adjectival Evaluation System

Based on the discussions above, an overall adjectival evaluation system can be sketched as Figure 5.5.



It can be seen that this system contains two planes: a subjective plane and an

intersubjective plane. On the subjective plane, the speaker, as an evaluator, evaluates the quality or property of targeted objects by explicitly or implicitly referring to certain norms or standards. Since the speaker's value configurations are imbedded in the evaluation, the evaluated objects serve to position the speaker's personal or communal value system. That is, the evaluations may display the speaker's identity, conveying who he/she is to others. On the intersubjective plane, the speaker uses adjectival evaluations to manipulate the hearers in a way that the hearers modify their attitude towards or acts on the objects. If the reference points or the correlation with the hearers were ignored, the evaluation analysis would be incomplete.

## **5.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have examined the evaluation function expressed by the adjectives in Mandarin. It has been demonstrated that the adjectival evaluation is essentially a reference-point construction. That is, people evaluate the quality or property of entities/events by comparing the property value of the targets with certain reference points. The reference points can be realized in a variety of forms, including measurable properties, the speaker's expectations, normality, goals/needs, or social norms. The evaluations can be subjective or objective according to the involvement of personal attitudes or construal, and the subjectivity or objectivity is largely determined by the nature of the reference points. With respect to its interactive functions, the adjectival evaluations serve as an important device for positing the speaker's value system and exerting influence on the hearers' actions or behaviours. Finally, a complete evaluation

system should contain not only the evaluator (i.e., the speaker) and the target objects, but also the reference points and the hearers.

## Chapter 6

### The Functions and Subjectivity of Affective Adjectives

#### 6.1 Introduction

Emotion is an innate expressive resource for human beings and can be embodied “physiologically from almost the moment of birth” (Martin and White, 2005:42). In their perception of the entities and events in their daily encounters, people may be triggered to one or several emotional states. Emotions can be registered via numerous verbal or non-verbal means, among which the verbally articulated emotions can be divided into two general types: explicit emotions and implicit emotions. More specifically, people may directly and explicitly present their emotions via affective adjectives such as *angry*, *sad* and *happy*. In contrast, emotions may be indirectly implied through apparently neutral expressions or utterances. For instance,

- (1) *zheli shenme cai li dou fang gali.*  
here whatever dish in all put curry  
'Here curry is found in all dishes.'

The utterance seems to be a neutral report of the food served in the restaurant, since no explicit affective expressions occur in the sentence. However, given the background information or the values of the speaker, one may recognize that for someone who dislikes the taste of curry, such utterance may imply a negative emotion (i.e., displeasure) towards the food served in the restaurant, while for someone fond of curry, the utterance tends to imply a positive emotion (i.e., satisfaction) towards the food for consumption. However, deprived of the relevant background information, the implicit

emotions underlying the utterances are hard to be determined. In this chapter, I concentrate on the explicit emotions expressed by affective adjectives in Mandarin.

Following Marin and White (2005), the person experiencing an emotional state is termed Emoter, and the phenomena evoking the Emoter's emotions are termed Trigger. Among the various linguistic devices for emotions, the affective adjectives are presumably the most frequently utilized linguistic device in colloquial register.

Affective adjectives are used to reflect certain emotional states of the Emoter. According to the quality of the subjective experiences, the emotions can be generally divided into two types: positive emotions and negative emotions. The positive emotions are elicited by the pleasant experiences construed by people in a particular culture, while the negative emotions are provoked by the commonly-construed unpleasant experiences in the culture. Accordingly, the affective adjectives in each language can be positive or negative in meaning. The positive affective adjectives are used to code positive emotions, whereas the negative affective adjectives are used to code negative emotions. In Mandarin, the qualitative adjectives in (2) are frequently employed in spoken discourse to register people's emotional feelings. Here the adjectives in the left column generally designate positive emotions, while the adjectives in the right column normally denote negative emotions.

(2) <i>gaoxing</i> / <i>kaixin</i> 'happy'	<i>shengqi</i> / <i>qifen</i> 'angry'
<i>manyi</i> 'satisfactory'	<i>nanguo</i> / <i>shangxin</i> 'sad'
<i>zihao</i> / <i>jiaobao</i> 'proud'	<i>taoyan</i> 'nasty'
<i>jidong</i> 'excited'	<i>kunao</i> 'painful'
<i>shuang</i> 'awesome'	<i>yanfan</i> 'fed up'
<i>gandong</i> / <i>ganren</i> 'moving'	<i>ganga</i> 'embarrassed'
<i>pingjing</i> 'calm'	<i>chijing</i> / <i>jingya</i> 'surprised'

*huixin / shiwang* ‘disappointed’  
*zhaoji* ‘anxious’  
*yihan* ‘regretful’  
*neijiu* ‘guilty’

It can be seen that some emotions can be encoded with more than one lexical item. Take the emotion of *happiness* for instance; it can be coded with affective adjectives *gaoxing* or *kaixin*, with little semantic difference<sup>⑦</sup>. For example,

(3) *ni lai le wo dangran hen gaoxing.*

2s come LE 1s surely very happy

‘Surely I’m happy at your coming.’

(4) *ni lai le wo dangran hen kaixin.*

2s come LE 1s surely very happy

‘Surely I’m happy at your coming.’

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on the coding of emotions with affective adjectives in Mandarin. The issues to be explored include the functions of affective adjectives and how the speaker’s subjectivity is conveyed through the use of affective adjectives in spoken Chinese.

## 6.2 Syntactic and Pragmatic Functions of Affective Adjectives in Mandarin

### 6.2.1 Syntactic Behaviours of Affective Adjectives

Syntactically, the affective adjectives in Mandarin can be used as the predicate of a sentence, showing the emotional state of the Emoter. The adjectives in (3) and (4), for example, fulfil predicative function in the sentences. Moreover, most of the affective adjectives can function as the complement of psychological verbs like *gandao* and *juede* ‘feel’. For instance,

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<sup>⑦</sup> Although the two adjectives are synonyms, they have many syntactic and pragmatic differences. I will not come to detail for that.

- (5) *wo gandao hen shiwang.*  
 1s feel very disappointed  
 ‘I feel very disappointed.’
- (6) *ta juede youdian nanweiqing.*  
 3s feel a bit ashamed  
 ‘she felt a bit ashamed.’

Here the adjectives *shiwang* ‘disappointed’ and *nanweiqing* ‘ashamed’ respectively function as the complement of psychological verbs *gandao* and *juede*, both of which can be glossed as ‘feel’.

When the emotion Trigger is to be mentioned, the prepositions *dui/duiyu* ‘about, for’ are often used to introduce the entities that the emotion is directed at. In addition, the construction with *rang* ‘make, let’ can be used to introduce the Emoter of the emotion. In this case the Triggers are usually coded as the subject of the sentence. For instance,

- (7) *wo dui ta gandao hen shiwang.*  
 1s about him feel very disappointed  
 ‘I feel disappointed at him.’
- (8) *duiyu zhe zhong shi, ta juede youdian nanweiqing.*  
 about this sore thing 3s feel a bit ashamed  
 ‘She felt a bit ashamed for things like this.’
- (9) *zhe ge jieguo rang ta feichang nanguo.*  
 this CL result make 3s very sad  
 ‘Such a result made him feel bad.’

In (7) the speaker’s disappointment is directed at *ta* ‘him’. In (8) the speaker’s shame is incurred by *zhe zhong shi* ‘this sort of things’. The emotion triggers in the two sentences are introduced via the preposition *dui* ‘about’. In (9) it is the result which triggered his sadness. Here the result is coded as the subject of the sentence, and the Emoter is introduced as the object of *rang* ‘make’.



Affective adjectives can syntactically function attributively or adverbially in a sentence. I have mentioned in Chapter 4 that due to the transient nature of the emotional surge, affective adjectives like *gaoxing* ‘happy’, *shengqi* ‘angry’ and *shangxin* ‘sad’ are rarely used as the attributive of personal nouns or pronouns. However, when the head noun is non-personal entities, the attributive can be represented by affective adjectives.

For instance,

- (10) *gaoxing de biaoqing* ‘a happy expression’  
*xingfen de xinqing* ‘a happy feeling’  
*shengqi de yangzi* ‘an outraged look’  
*shangxin de yewan* ‘a sorrowful night’  
*ganga de shike* ‘an embarrassing moment’

However, most of these attributively-used affective expressions often occur in written discourse rather than casual conversations. In my collected spoken data, such constructions are rarely found. In addition, when affective adjectives function as adverbials, they indicate the emotional states of the agents who are engaging in certain activities. For example,

- (11) *dajia gaoxing de xiao le.*  
all happy DE laugh LE  
‘All of them laughed merrily.’
- (12) *wo chijing de faxian danzi shang youxie shiqing xuyao mashang qu zuo.*  
I<sub>s</sub> surprised DE find list on some thing need immediately go do  
‘I was surprised to find that some matters on the list need to be handled immediately.’

The adverbial affective adjectives are rare in casual conversations as well. In my collected spoken data, the affective adjectives in such usage are not found at all. The scarcity of adverbial usage in spoken discourse might be due to the fact that the adverbial affective adjectives are modifying elements, indicating the accompanying

emotional states of the actions. However, people rarely use modifying elements in spoken discourse. Consequently, both attributively- and adverbially-used affective adjectives do not prevail in spoken Mandarin.

### **6.2.2 Pragmatic Functions of Affective Adjectives**

Pragmatically, affective adjectives are used to register the speaker's own emotions towards entities/events, or to generalize the emotional states of others. The speaker's own emotion is largely aroused by evaluative judgement of the things at hand. As Frijda (1993) argues, people's emotions "result from the appraisal of events with respect to their implications for well-being or for the satisfaction of goals, motives, or concerns". Moreover, in the Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005), affective adjectives are regarded as realizing devices for *affect* or *appreciation: reaction*, showing that they not only mark off emotional attitudes, but signify the speaker's evaluation.

It is clear that the positive affective adjectives are used to mark off the speaker's positive evaluation of the entities/events, while the negative affective adjectives are used to encode the speaker's negative evaluation of the entities/events. However, distinct from the evaluation function realized by other qualitative adjectives, the evaluation underlying affective adjectives is not directly associated with the speaker's assessment of quality or property, but reflects the his/her emotional attitude towards the qualitative assessment. In other words, affective adjectives fulfil an indirect evaluative function regarding the quality or property of entities/events. For instance, the adjective *shiwang* 'disappointed' in (5) encodes the speaker's negative emotion after a negative evaluation of the trigger's behaviour or performance.

Apart from registering the Emoters' emotional states evoked by Triggers, affective adjectives are also used to show people's general emotional reactions towards the evaluated entities or events. The affective adjectives in such usage often occur in the construction *ling ren ... de shi* 'what makes somebody X is'. This construction normally occurs at the initial position of a sentence, fulfilling an overall sentential evaluation function. For example,

- (13) *ling ren yihan de shi, shu buneng dang fan chi.*  
 make people regrettable DE be book cannot take-as food eat  
 'Regrettably, books are not food for consumption.'
- (14) *geng ling ren jidong de shi, meiguo san wei zongtong bushi, fute, ligen jun qinlin xianchan.*  
 more make people exciting DE be US three CL president Bush Ford Reagan  
 all arrive-in-person the site  
 'What is more exciting was that three ex-presidents of the US arrived at the site in person.'

It can be seen that the affective adjectives in the two utterances above are used as emotional evaluation to events at hand. In (13) the speaker feels regrettable about the event (i.e., books are not food); in (14) the speaker thinks the arrival of the three ex-presidents as an exciting affair. In such examples, the emotional reactions designated by the affective adjectives are actually demonstrated by the speaker. However, the speaker extends his/her emotional reactions to others, suggesting that those emotions are shared by general people. In this way the speaker may exert an influence on the audience so that they are aligned to the designated emotional states.

In brief, the affective adjectives in spoken Mandarin often occur in predicative and complement positions, fulfilling evaluation function in use.

### 6.3 Subjectivity of Affective Adjectives in Mandarin

Since the affective adjectives in Mandarin are used to indicate the inner feelings of the Emoter, one may assume that they are absolutely subjective in nature. However, the declaration of the speaker's own feelings is strikingly different from the report of other people's emotions. In this section, I will deal with the subjectivity of affective adjectives in Mandarin spoken discourse.

As mentioned in 6.2.2, affective adjectives can be used to register the speaker's own emotions, or to generalize others' emotions. When a speaker uses affective adjectives to talk about self-emotion, his/her perception or evaluation to the entities or state of affairs in question is addressed. Since the self emotion is the speaker's inner feelings, nobody else is eligible to affirm or deny the existence of the emotion, though the behavioural surge may help to validate the speaker's declaration of emotions. In this sense, the expression of the speaker's own feelings is absolutely subjective. This type of subjective emotion is represented through first-person subject in a sentence. For instance,

(15) *wo hen haipa.*

Is very scared  
'I'm very scared.'

(16) *wo tebie shangxin.*

Is particularly sad  
'I'm extremely sad.'

In (15) the emotion state represented by *haipa* 'scared' involves the speaker's experience of high attention and negative valence, high certainty about what is happening or one's ability to cope with it, and so on (Ellsworth and Scherer, 2003:575).

Since this emotion is a reflection of the speaker's inner experience, its existence is hard to be denied or challenged by others. Similarly in (16), unless the hearers have sufficient reasons to believe that the speaker is telling a lie or a joke, or using irony, it would be nearly impossible for them to deny the speaker's declaration of sadness. That is, the hearers cannot respond the speaker with "No, you are not" in order to deny their emotion declaration. Therefore, the use of affective adjectives for the representation of self emotion is absolutely subjective.

On the other hand, talking about others' emotions differs significantly from the declaration of self emotion. In linguistics, some scholars believe that the expressions indicating others' emotions "are primarily descriptive rather than directly expressive of the speaker's *own* feelings" (Biber and Finegan, 1989:97, italics original), thus should be excluded from the scope of subjectivity studies. However, a closer inspection shows that the report of others' emotions involves the conceptualizers' subjective judgements as well. Here the notion *frame* (or alternatively *stereotype* (Putnam, 1975) or *idealized cognitive model* (ICM, Lakoff, 1987)) is particularly significant for emotion conceptualization.

When affective adjectives are used to register others' feelings, the speaker's judgement or prediction of the agent's behaviours is involved. To be specific, when the speaker conceptualizes the emotive attitudes of others, a frame of emotion is established in the speaker's cognition. The Emoter in certain emotional state tends to show a set of physiological and motor reactions. For instance, when one gets angry, the sensible reactions or behaviours may include red face, speeding-up breaths, rising body

temperature, raised speaking voice, etc. Based on their embodied experiences, people establish a recognizable correlation between emotions and corresponding external behaviours, and form many independent emotion frames in their cognition. In the process of conceptualizing other's emotions, the stored emotion frames in memory will be activated as a reference. Once the reactions or behaviours of the Emoter are in accord with some typical features in a certain emotion frame, people would judge that the target person is in a certain emotional state. This is the mechanism for determining the emotional state of other Emoters.

Since the speaker's evaluation of Emoter's emotion involves the activation of the stored emotion frame, this evaluation process is relatively subjective in nature. For instance, the emotions designated by adjectives in the following utterances are derived from the speakers' personal judgement of the Emoter's reactions or behaviours.

(17) *ta tiao de ting kaixin de.* (LU 20070117)

3s dance DE very happy DE

'He danced happily.'

(18) *wo ma hen shengqi.* (LU20051111)

1s mum very angry

'My mother was very angry.'

(19) *ta yao le yao tou, xiande hen shiwang.*

3s shake LE shake head seem very disappointed

'She shook her head, looking very disappointed.'

It is not likely that the subjects had told the speaker about their emotions before the utterances were produced. Most probably, the subjects displayed some behaviour patterns, which serve as the basis for the speakers to judge the subjects' emotional states. Take (18) for illustration; the speaker observes the looks of the subject and believes that

her facial expressions are in accordance with the typical features of the *angry* frame. Thus the speaker's evaluation of the subject's emotion, namely *shengqi* 'very angry' is based on a reference to the angry frame stored in cognition, and the evaluation is relatively subjective. In a similar vein, the speaker in (19) identifies that the subject's behaviours are in accordance with the typical features of the *disappointment* frame. Therefore, the speaker's evaluation of the subject's emotion, namely *shiwang* 'disappointed' is derived by a reference to the established emotion frame, suggesting that it is a relatively subjective evaluation.

In brief, it is absolutely subjective for the Emoter to register his/her own feelings, while it is relatively subjective when other people's emotions are evaluated, since the established emotion frame in the speaker's cognition is provoked as a reference point.

#### **6.4 Summary**

In this chapter I have examined the syntactic and pragmatic functions of affective adjectives in Mandarin, and demonstrate their subjectivity feature in spoken discourse. The affective adjectives in Mandarin syntactically fulfil attributive, predicative, adverbial and complement functions; among them the predicative and complement functions are more typical in spoken discourse. Affective adjectives generally fulfil the evaluation function in actual use. The declaration of the Emoter's own feelings is absolutely subjective, whereas the evaluation of others feelings is relatively subjective. The speaker sometimes encodes his/her emotional reactions as a general one in order to

align with the audience. In conclusion, affective adjectives are essentially evaluative adjectives, and demonstrate the speaker's subjectivity when in use.



## Chapter 7

### Meanings and Functions of Adjectival Negation

#### 7.1 Introduction

Negation, as a significant and controversial grammatical category in natural language, has attracted long-lasting academic interests in a wide range of fields such as philosophy, logic, psychology and linguistics. It is generally believed that the affirmative is straightforward and unmarked, while the negation is indirect and marked, laden with multiple meanings and functions (Jespersen, 1924; Lyons, 1977; Horn, 1989; Shen, 1999; Shi, 2001; Verhagen, 2005). This chapter aims to provide an explanatory account of the linguistic behaviours relating to adjectival negation in Mandarin, showing that the speaker, more often than not, uses adjectival negation for the purpose of subjectivity.

The negation in Mandarin Chinese is primarily represented by two negative markers *bu* and *mei*<sup>®</sup>. The former is chiefly responsible for the negation of judgement, volition, fact and quality, while the latter is often used to negate possession and existence of things, or the accomplishment or achievement of actions and behaviours (Lü, 1999; Liu, et al., 2001: 253-258). Some Chinese cognitive linguists hold that the two negative markers are complementarily distributed on the whole: the continuous or unbounded concepts are negated with *bu*, and the discrete or bounded concepts are negated by *mei* (Shen, 1999; Shi, 2001; see Paradis (2001) for the notion of

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<sup>®</sup> An alternative form for the negative marker *mei* is *meiyou*. The two forms are mostly exchangeable in use. For the sake of convenience, *mei* is used as a representative form in this chapter.

*boundedness*). For instance,

- (1) *ta bu xihuan Beijing.*  
3s not like Beijing  
'He does not like Beijing.'
- (2) *ta mei qu guo Beijing.*  
3s not go GUO Beijing  
'She has never been to Beijing.'

In (1) the liking of a place is normally a habitual mental act, without obvious beginning or ending points unless specified. Therefore, the predicate verb *xihuan* 'like' represents an unbounded concept, which can only be negated by *bu* rather than *mei*. In (2) 'a person has been to a place' is a telic, thus bounded event, which has inherent beginning and ending points. Thus, the predicate *qu guo Beijing* 'has been to Beijing' is negated by *mei* rather than *bu*.

There has been a profusion of research on negation in the Chinese language, and the focus of such studies falls on three facets, namely the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints on the usage of negative markers, the characteristics of metalinguistic negation, and the quantitative negation indicated by *bu* and *mei* (cf. Xiao and McEnery, 2008; Shang, 2010). Although unanimity concerning the meaning and functions of *bu* and *mei* is far from being reached by scholars (Xiao and McEnery, 2008), these studies have indubitably contributed to a profound understanding of the nature of negation in Chinese for the language researchers and learners.

This chapter focuses on the negation of adjectives in Mandarin. Given the scope of the adjective category delineated in this thesis, I take *bu* rather than *mei* as the sole negative marker for adjectival negation. That is, the adjectives in Mandarin are negated,

if applicable, by adding *bu* before them. The list below presents some adjectives and their negation forms.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (3) <i>hei</i> ‘black’ – <i>bu hei</i> ‘not black’                 | <i>da</i> ‘big’ – <i>bu da</i> ‘not big’               |
| <i>chang</i> ‘long’ – <i>bu chang</i> ‘not long’                   | <i>ai</i> ‘short’ – <i>bu ai</i> ‘not short’           |
| <i>jiandan</i> ‘simple’ – <i>bu jiandan</i> ‘not simple’           | <i>xinxian</i> ‘fresh’ – <i>bu xinxian</i> ‘not fresh’ |
| <i>piaoliang</i> ‘beautiful’ – <i>bu piaoliang</i> ‘not beautiful’ | <i>dui</i> ‘right’ – <i>bu dui</i> ‘wrong’             |

Some people may argue that adjectives can be negated by *mei* as well, as exemplified in (4) and (5).

- (4) *shizi hai mei hong.*  
 persimmon still not red  
 ‘The persimmon (on the tree) has not yet turned red.’
- (5) *ren sui mei lao, xin que lao le.*  
 person though not old, heart but old LE  
 ‘Though he is not old in age, his heart is already old.’

In the two examples above, the negative marker *mei* seems to negate the adjectives *hong* ‘red’ and *lao* ‘old’ respectively. However, in contrast to the quality negated by *bu* in (3), what *mei* negates in (4) and (5) are essentially the changes under the guise of the property (viz. adjectives). In other words, the apparent ‘adjectives’ in the two sentences above are actually verbs. One proof of this view is that the negated items *hong* and *lao* can be substituted by *bian hong* ‘become red’ and *bian lao* ‘get old’, which spell out the change indicated by the verb *bian*. In addition, the affirmative forms of the two negative sentences are respectively *shizi hong le* ‘the persimmon has turned red’ and *ren lao le* ‘he is old’; the aspect marker *le* following *hong* and *lao* implies that the predicates are acted by verbs. As the practice in this thesis, such verbs under the guise of adjectives will not be considered. Given that, *bu* is the sole negative marker for adjectival negation

in Mandarin.

What is the grammatical meaning of adjectival negation? This seemingly simple question is hard to answer properly. The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (2005) and Lü (1999) mention that the lexical item *bu* is used for negation. However, it is evident that the meaning of adjectival negation differs widely in various constructions. For instance, *bu dui* ‘not right’ indicates the opposite of rightness, namely ‘wrong’; *bu leng* ‘not cold’, however, does not mean its opposite ‘hot’, but a low degree of coldness; *bu gao* ‘not tall’ may well be the opposite of *gao* ‘tall’, viz. *ai* ‘short’, or designate a mean height characterizing neither tall nor short. Therefore, the meanings of adjectival negation in Mandarin are heterogeneous, and profound exploration is required.

To address this issue, Teng (1974), following the arguments in Jespersen (1924), proposes that the negation of state verbs (namely adjectives) in Mandarin designates a contrary meaning or a contradictory meaning. For instance, *bu chang* ‘not long’, as a contradictory term, signifies anything but ‘long’ rather than the opposing ‘short’; *bu gaoxing* ‘not happy’, as a contrary term, refers to the opposite emotion ‘sad, unhappy’. However, Teng’s (1974) study does not make clear how the overall adjective category and the two types of meanings are related. Shi (2001) argues that adjectival negation is used to express a low degree of the property. For instance, the negation *bu bai* in the sentence *chenyi bu bai* ‘the shirt is not white’ indicates that the shirt is white in colour, yet the degree of whiteness is low. This explanation is plausible, yet it fails to generalize the overall meaning of adjectival negations, since many negation forms do not convey such a quantitative meaning. For instance, *bu dui* ‘not right’ does not mean a low degree

of rightness, nor does *bu jia* ‘not fake’ mean a low degree of fakeness. Zhang (2006:162-163) claims that the meaning of adjectival negation in Mandarin has a significant bearing on human expectation. To be specific, when *bu* is used to negate an adjective associated with human expectation, it is a qualitative negation, which denies the existence of the quality; on the contrary, when *bu* is used to negate an adjective without associating with any expectations, it is a quantitative negation, marking off a low degree of the quality. For example, the negative form *bu anquan* ‘not safe’ means no safety at all, since *safety* is a property people expect to maintain. In contrast, the negation *bu bai* ‘not white’ means the whiteness is low in that the property of colour is not something people expect. Zhang’s (2006) explanation of adjectival negation is enlightening. However, counter examples are readily found in linguistic uses. For instance, the adjective *jingcai* ‘wonderful’ designates a property that caters for human expectation, and its negation *bu jingcai*, according to Zhang (2006), should be a qualitative negation to excellence. However, it can also be a quantitative negation, as shown in (6), indicating a low degree of excellence.

- (6) *ni zuowan de biao yan bu jingcai.*  
2s last-night DE performance not excellent  
‘Your performance last night was far from splendid.’

Therefore, human expectation may not be a determining factor to the semantics of adjectival negation in Mandarin.

In this chapter, I will explore the meanings and functions of adjectival negation in Mandarin, taking into account the conceptual features of adjectives and the pragmatic constraints. The analysis will demonstrate that subjectivity is conveyed by the speaker

through adjectival negation in spoken Mandarin. In addition, the discursive functions of adjectival negation will be discussed.

## 7.2 Semantic Conditions for Adjectival Negation

Not all adjectives in Mandarin can be negated. Generally speaking, those adjectives subjected to negation are qualitative adjectives, while those non-predicative adjectives and state adjectives usually cannot be negated by *bu*. The adjectives in (3) are all gradable adjectives, designating pure property which can be graded into various degrees, and such gradable adjectives can be premodified by *bu* to yield their negation forms. The adjectives in (7) and (8), by contrast, are non-predicative adjectives and state adjectives respectively, and their combination with negative marker *bu* yields ungrammatical forms.

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| (7) | * <i>bu daxing</i> ‘not large-sized’    | * <i>bu guoyou</i> ‘not state-owned’     |
|     | * <i>bu manxing</i> ‘not chronic’       | * <i>bu zhongshi</i> ‘not Chinese-style’ |
|     | * <i>bu muzhi</i> ‘not timber’          | * <i>bu yesheng</i> ‘not wild’           |
| (8) | * <i>bu xuebai</i> ‘not snow-white’     | * <i>bu zhongduo</i> ‘not numerous’      |
|     | * <i>bu jingqiaoqiao</i> ‘not quiet’    | * <i>bu honghong</i> ‘not very red’      |
|     | * <i>bu liuyouyou</i> ‘not fresh green’ | * <i>bu shushufufu</i> ‘not comfortable’ |

In fact, the non-gradable adjectives in (7) and (8) normally cannot be modified by any degree modifiers, including *hen* ‘very’ and *wanquan* ‘completely, totally’<sup>⑨</sup>. In contrast, the adjectives that can be negated by *bu* can also be modified by a variety of modifiers such as *youdian* ‘slightly’, *hen* ‘very’, *feichang* ‘very’, *jiqu* ‘extremely’ and *wanquan*

<sup>⑨</sup> Some of the non-predicative adjectives can combine with *fei* ‘non-’ to form a negated expression, indicating something other than the property. Such a negated form is complementary in meaning to the adjective. For instance, *fei guoyou qiye* ‘non- state-owned enterprise’ is the complementary form of *guoyou qiye* ‘state-owned enterprise’, *fei zhenggui budui* ‘non regular army’ is the complementary form of *zhenggui budui* ‘regular army’.

‘totally’. This shows that one of the necessary conditions for adjectival negation is that the adjectives should be gradable. In this sense, the negative marker *bu* and degree modifiers are consistent in their syntactic functions, viz. modifying gradable adjectives. The functional parallelism between the negative markers and degree adverbs is presumably the major reason why Lü (1999), Liu, *et al.* (2001) and many others take *bu* as an adverb rather than a separate part of speech.

However, it is not the case that all gradable adjectives can be negated by *bu*. For instance, the adjectives in (9) all contain a negative morpheme in their base. Although such adjectives can be modified by degree modifiers such as *hen* ‘very’, they do not collocate with *bu*.

(9) *bucuo* ‘not bad, well’    *buli* ‘unfavourable’    *bu’an* ‘restless’    *buxing* ‘unfortunate’  
*wugu* ‘innocent’    *wuliao* ‘boring’    *wuneng* ‘incapable’    *meiyong* ‘useless’

Their incompatibility with *bu* shows that the negative morphemes in their base are resistant to further negation.

Moreover, those gradable adjectives containing a morpheme of *you* ‘have’ cannot be negated by *bu* either. For instance,

(10) *youyi* ‘beneficiary’    *youyong* ‘useful’    *youxiao* ‘effective’    *youqian* ‘wealthy’  
*wuyi* ‘not beneficiary’    *meiyong* ‘useless’    *wuxiao* ‘invalid’    *meiqian* ‘poor’

The negation of such adjectives is usually marked by *wu* or *mei*, both meaning ‘without’. Since the adjectival form “*you+X*” indicates a meaning of ‘having something’, its negative form naturally designates ‘not having something’, a sense more compatible with *wu* / *mei* ‘without’ than *bu*.

In brief, most of the gradable adjectives can be negated by *bu*, while non-predicative adjectives and state adjectives resist negation. However, due to the internal structure of the lexicon, some gradable adjectives cannot be negated by *bu*.

It should be noted that some adjectives in Mandarin merely or mostly appear in negative forms, while the affirmative forms are either not well-formed words or rarely occur independently in declarative sentences. For instance,

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (11) <i>bujingqi</i> ‘being in depression’ - ? <i>jingqi</i> | <i>bu’an</i> ‘restless’ - ? <i>an</i>       |
| <i>buxianghua</i> ‘unreasonable’ - ? <i>xianghua</i>         | <i>buxiu</i> ‘immortal’ - ? <i>xiu</i>      |
| <i>budeliao</i> ‘outrageous’ - ? <i>deliao</i>               | <i>budeyi</i> ‘unavoidable’ - ? <i>deyi</i> |

The asymmetric distribution between the affirmative and negative forms can be explained by the normality in human’s linguistic expression. I have shown in Chapter 5 that the things and affairs in their normal status do not draw particular attention, unless one purposely adjusts his/her attentional focus to them. Actually, people may not have conscious awareness about what the normal status is. However, the norms do exist in people’s cognition and will be activated in proper occasions. For instance, those entities or events that go beyond their normality immediately capture the observers’ attention, and people find themselves ready to talk about the abnormal situations. As a result, the things in their normal status do not need to be represented by particular lexicon; only those beyond normal status are encoded with lexicon to fulfil the needs of communication. For instance, in Chinese there is an expression of *zuopiezi* ‘left-hander’, while the expression of *youpiezi* ‘right-hander’ is rarely used; people often talk about *nii qiangren* ‘strong women’, yet its opposite concept *nan qiangren* ‘strong men’ does not constitute a lexical unit (Shen, 1999). Such a contrast is motivated by the economy



principle in linguistic expression. Since the right-hand predominance is normal for human beings, it is unnecessary to coin a word for such unmarked case; a word referring to the marked case should suffice. Likewise, the concept of *qiangren* ‘strong person’ is usually associated with a male rather than a female. Therefore, a specific word *nü qiangren* is created to refer to the marked case, namely a woman of exceptional talent or ability. For the negative adjectives in (11), their predominance over the corresponding affirmative forms can be explained in a similar vein: these negative adjectives are used to represent the marked property of things, while the affirmative forms rarely appear in language since the normal property is unmarked and does not need to be lexicalized.

### 7.3 Semantic Features of Adjectival Negation

It has been demonstrated in 7.2 that the Mandarin adjectives subjected to negation are generally gradable adjectives. According to Paradis (2001), the gradable adjectives can be categorized into scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives and limit adjectives. The central and prototypical adjectives are scalar adjectives, which can be modified by degree adverbs like *very*. They activate a scale onto which a range of values of the property can be mapped. Extreme adjectives are also conceptualized on a property scale. However, instead of representing a range on the scale, as scalar adjectives do, extreme adjectives mark off the ultimate points on the scale. Moreover, rather than being modified by *very*, extreme adjectives can only be intensified by reinforcing adverbs such as *totally*, *utterly*, *absolutely* or *completely*. Adjectives such as *perfect* and *terrible* belong to this category, which correspond to the two ultimate points on the scale of

MERIT. Finally, limit adjectives do not activate any scale; they are conceptualized in terms of ‘either...or’, and divide the conceptual domain into two incompatible parts. Such adjectives can be modified by ‘totally’ or ‘absolutely’. The complementaries *alive* and *dead* in English are typical examples of limit adjectives.

Following Paradis (2001), the gradable adjectives in Mandarin can be divided into scalar, extreme and limit adjectives as well. In the subsequent discussion, such a categorization of adjectives will be applied. It should be pointed out that the Mandarin gradable adjectives and their counterpart in English do not necessarily belong to the same adjective category. For instance, the merit adjectives *perfect* and *terrible* in English are extreme adjectives, whereas their counterparts *wanmei* and *zaogao* in Mandarin are scalar adjectives in that they can be modified by degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’ rather than reinforcing adverbs such as *wanquan* ‘totally’. Moreover, *dead* and *alive* in English are limit adjectives, while their equivalents *si* and *huo* in Mandarin are non-gradable when used as adjectives. Therefore, the construal to the same property is likely to be different for Mandarin speakers and English speakers.

In the following sections I will explore the characteristics of different types of gradable adjectives, and examine the heterogeneous meanings of adjectival negation in Mandarin.

### **7.3.1 Limit Adjectives and Negation**

One striking feature of limit adjectives is that a limit adjective and its opposite divide a conceptual domain of property into two distinct parts. Leech (1981) terms such a partition *binary taxonomy*. Such being the case, the property of any objects falls into

either part of the domain. If we take A and B to represent the two distinct attributes, their relationship can be illustrated as in Figure 7.1.

**Fig 7.1 Conceptualization of limit adjectives**



The following adjectives in Mandarin are limit adjectives. These adjectives designate properties that cannot be graded in terms of degrees, thus they normally do not combine with degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’. However, they can basically be modified by *quan / wanquan* ‘totally’ or *juedui* ‘absolutely’.

- |                                  |                            |                            |                        |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| (12) <i>zhen</i> ‘genuine, true’ | <i>jia</i> ‘fake, false’   | <i>zhengque</i> ‘correct’  | <i>cuowu</i> ‘wrong’   |
| <i>dui</i> ‘right’               | <i>cuo</i> ‘wrong’         | <i>xiangtong</i> ‘same’    | <i>yiyang</i> ‘same’   |
| <i>yizhi</i> ‘congruent’         | <i>pingxing</i> ‘parallel’ | <i>duichen</i> ‘symmetric’ | <i>keneng</i> ‘likely’ |

Theoretically, each limit adjective and its opposite bisect the property domain, and no pivotal region exists between the two parts. For instance, an entity can be either *zhen* ‘genuine’ or *jia* ‘fake’; an answer is either *dui* ‘right’ or *cuo* ‘wrong’; two objects can be *yiyang* ‘same’ or *butong* ‘different’, and so forth.

Limit adjectives are complementaries (Lyons, 1977, 1995; Cruse, 1986; Paradis, 2001; Croft and Cruse, 2004). When a limit adjective is negated, the negative form designates the complementary attribute vis-à-vis the attribute denoted by the affirmative adjective. In other words, the negated construction *bu A* refers to the contradictory property B. If we use A and  $\bar{A}$  to represent the limit adjective and its complementary respectively, the negation of A refers specifically to  $\bar{A}$ , namely:

$$bu A = \bar{A}$$

For instance, *bu dui* ‘not right’ indicates *cuo* ‘wrong’, and *bu zhen* ‘not true’ means *jia* ‘false’. Some complementary attributes do not have corresponding lexical words, and they are simply represented by the “*bu+ A*” form. For example, *bu keneng*, *bu yiyang*, and *bu yizhi* are the negative forms for *keneng* ‘possible’, *yiyang* ‘same’ and *yizhi* ‘congruent’. In brief, limit adjectives and their negative forms constitute complementary pairs, and the negation of one property value designates the complementary value.

It is noteworthy that in actual language use, limit adjectives are not completely resistant to degree modifications. A search of the corpus and the internet shows that the collocations like *hen jia* ‘very fake’, *hen dui* ‘very correct’, *hen yizhi* ‘very consistent’ are expressions frequently occurring in the current spoken language. The use of such expressions suggests an evolutionary tendency from limit adjectives towards scalar adjectives.

Although limit adjectives like *xiangtong*, *yiyang* and *yizhi* and their negatives *butong*, *bu yiyang* and *bu yizhi* form complementary pairs, the syntactic behaviours of the affirmative and the negative are not parallel. For instance, the affirmative adjectives can only be modified by adverb *wanquan* ‘totally’, while the negative forms can be modified by *wanquan*, and *hen* as well. Compare:

- |      |   |                         |
|------|---|-------------------------|
| (13) | <i>xiangtong</i> : <i>wanquan xiangtong</i> | <i>*hen xiangtong</i>   |
|      | <i>wanquan butong</i>                       | <i>hen bu xiangtong</i> |
|      | <i>yiyang</i> : <i>wanquan yiyang</i>       | <i>*hen yiyang</i>      |
|      | <i>wanquan buyiyang</i>                     | <i>hen buyiyang</i>     |
|      | <i>duichen</i> : <i>wanquan duichen</i>     | <i>*hen duichen</i>     |
|      | <i>wanquan bu duichen</i>                   | <i>hen buduichen</i>    |

The contrast in the syntactic behaviours between the affirmative and the negative adjectives can also be accounted for in terms of normality. Generally speaking, in a certain domain, those objects with similar and congruent features are normal and unmarked members, while those objects with deviant and incongruent features are abnormal and marked members. The marked members usually draw most of the observers' attention, while the unmarked ones are rarely focused on. For the marked objects, people may concern not only their distinctive features, but also to what extent these features are deviant from the normality. In other words, people might be curious to know whether they are slightly or significantly different from the unmarked members. By contrast, it is unnecessary to examine to what extent the unmarked objects are normal.

For the syntactic contrasts in (13), the affirmative adjectives designate the property of normal and unmarked objects, whereas the negative forms signify the property of abnormal and marked objects. For the unmarked objects, their degree of consistence with the normality is of little significance for communicative needs. For the marked objects, however, the extent of their deviance from the normality is significant; the degree adverb *hen* 'very' can be used to denote a high degree of deviance. This is why the negative forms in (13) can be modified by *hen* while their affirmatives cannot.

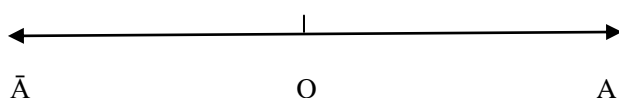
To sum up, when a gradable adjective activates a binary property domain, it is attributed to the subcategory of limit adjectives; the negation of limit adjectives refers to the complementary attribute vis-à-vis the attribute denoted by the affirmative, namely  $bu A = \bar{A}$ .

### 7.3.2 Scalar Adjectives and Negation

Scalar adjectives are prototypical gradable adjectives in Mandarin. They can freely collocate with degree adverbs such as *hen* ‘very’, *feichang* ‘very’ and *jiqu* ‘extremely’, occur in comparative and superlative constructions, and even be reduplicated to form new adjectives. The property indicated by scalar adjectives always evokes a property scale. The scale are open-ended, and the property values of the objects may “approach the end of the scale asymptotically”, but never reach the maximum or minimum (Cruse, 1986:206; Paradis, 2001:52). For instance, on the length scale, the concrete length of the objects can be any value ranging from *ji duan* ‘extremely short’ to *ji chang* ‘extremely long’, yet the minimum or maximum length is never reached.

The scalar adjectives in Mandarin may evoke two types of property scale. The first type can be termed a binary scale, which is a symmetric scale extending infinitely along two directions, as shown in Figure 7.2.

Fig 7.2 Binary scale



Most scalar adjectives have antonyms, and the antonymous pair, namely  $A$  and  $\bar{A}$ , combine to evoke a binary scale, each corresponding to one of the two poles. The boundary point  $O$  is, strictly speaking, not the turning point between the antonymous property values, but rather a pivotal region representing the mean value of the property. In other words, the property values denoted by  $O$  characterize “neither  $A$  nor  $\bar{A}$ ”. Take the height scale for instance, the antonymous adjectives *gao* ‘high’ and *di* ‘low’

correspond to property values on the two poles respectively. On the highness pole, the property values can be any of the following ranges: *youdian gao* ‘slightly high’, *jiao gao* ‘rather high’, *hen/feichang gao* ‘very high’ or *jiqi gao* ‘extremely high’. On the lowness pole, the property values are symmetric to the highness pole, viz. ranging from *youdian di* ‘slightly low’, *jiao di* ‘rather low’, *hen/feichang di* ‘very low’, to *jiqi di* ‘extremely low’. The boundary point O represents the height that is neither high nor low, namely the mean height of the objects.

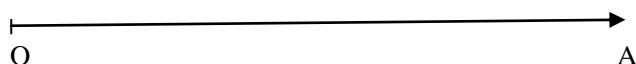
For the scalar adjectives associated with a binary scale, their negation *bu A* may refer to the contrary attribute  $\bar{A}$ , or the mean value of the property. On the scale, the negation is mapped as a range on the property scale, which may either refer to the antonymous value of A, namely  $\bar{A}$ , or indicate the mean value of the property. For instance, the adjective *da* ‘big’ and its antonym *xiao* ‘small’ evoke a binary scale of *size*. The negation form *bu da* ‘not big’ may refer to the property value of *xiao*, or the intermediate value of *bu da bu xiao* ‘neither big nor small’. The adjective *congming* ‘clever’ and its antonym *ben* ‘stupid’ evoke a binary *intelligence* scale. The negation form *bu congming* may refer to the value of *ben* ‘stupid’, or the plain intelligence which is conceptualized by *bu congming bu ben* ‘neither clever nor stupid’.

It should be noted that the median property value corresponds to the normal state of the property, which generally do not have specific lexical expressions. It is usually represented by phrases such as *bu A bu  $\bar{A}$*  ‘neither A nor  $\bar{A}$ ’, *yiban shuiping* ‘a mean level’, etc. However, exceptions do exist. That is, the mean values for some properties have corresponding lexical forms. For instance, the temperature conceptualized by *bu*

*liang bu tang* ‘neither cool nor hot’ is lexicalized as *wen* ‘lukewarm’; the colour conceptualized by *bu bai bu hei* ‘neither white nor black’ is lexicalized as *hui* ‘gray’. This shows that for a few properties, the boundary region on the scale is represented by the mean-value adjectives.

The second type of property scale associated with scalar adjectives are a unary scale, which begins with a logical zero point and extends infinitely along one direction. The property value of the objects may extend asymptotically towards the maximum or minimum end of the scale, yet it can never turn to its antonymous property value on the other end. The unary scale is illustrated in Figure 7.3.

**Fig 7.3 Unary scale**



Here the starting point O is zero, meaning the degree of A is in its minimum. However, the zero value is only valid on a theoretical manner. In fact, this property state can never be reached in that it is impossible for an object in reality to feature as a zero property.

For the scalar adjectives associated with a unary scale, their negation *bu A* means a low degree of the property. For instance, the colour denoted by the expression *hong hua* ‘red flower’ is definitely red, despite how pale the redness might be. In addition, its redness can be in a wide range of degrees. Therefore, the gradable adjective *hong* ‘red’ in this context activates a unary scale of *redness*. The negation of the adjective *hong* ‘red’, as in (14), does not mean that the flower is of some colour other than *red*, but indicates that the degree of its redness is low.



- (14) *hong hua bu hong*.  
red flower not red  
'The red flower is not red.'

Similarly, in (15) the winter season is normally cold. Despite how warm the temperature might be, it can never be conceptualized as *re* 'hot'. In other words, the winter is always some degree of coldness instead of any degree of hotness. Therefore, the gradable adjective *leng* 'cold' here activates a unary scale of temperature. The negation *bu leng* 'not cold' does not refer to the antonymous property *re* 'hotness', but indicates that the degree of coldness is low, namely the winter is sort of warm.

- (15) *jinnian dongtian bu leng*.  
this-year winter not cold  
'This winter is not cold.'

The above examples suggest that the properties of unary-scale adjectives are usually context-sensitive, conceptualizing the immanent qualia of the objects. The values of such properties can be high or low, but never transit to their opposite or other properties so long as the properties stand by right. In this case, the negation of the adjectives indicates a low degree of the property rather than the contrary property.

### 7.3.3 Extreme Adjectives and Negation

Extreme adjectives designate properties of objects in their maximum or minimum value. That is, the property scales have endpoints (cf. Kennedy, 1999; Rotstein and Winter, 2004; Kennedy and McNally, 2005). In English, many adjectives have corresponding extreme adjectival forms. For instance, the adjectives in the right column of (16) can be seen as extreme adjectives, indicating the extreme value of the property for the adjectives in the left column.

- (16) hungry - starving  
 big - huge  
 small - tiny  
 cold - freezing  
 good - perfect  
 bad - terrible

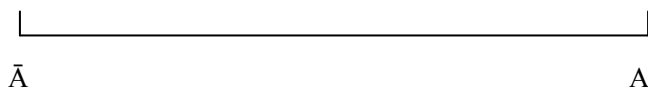
However, extreme adjectives in Mandarin are very few in quantity. The adjectives in (17) are some instances of this category.

- (17) *gan* ‘dry’    *anquan* ‘safe’    *kong* ‘empty’    *man* ‘full’

Among them, *gan* ‘dry’, *anquan* ‘safe’ and *kong* ‘empty’ respectively conceptualize the property of zero wetness, zero danger and zero amount of the contents, whereas *man* ‘full’ conceptualizes the maximum value of contents in a container.

The values of extreme adjectives are projected onto the property scales as terminal points. There are two types of scale evoked by extreme adjectives in Mandarin. The first is a symmetrical property scale with its two terminals closed. The property value of an extreme adjective is mapped onto one of the terminals, and the two extreme states are continuously linked by various values. The scale of such adjectives is illustrated in Figure 7.4.

**Fig 7.4 Double-closed scale**



Here the two terminals  $A$  and  $\bar{A}$  represent the extreme values of the property. The property value of an object can be mapped onto one of the extreme points, or somewhere between the two terminals on the scale. In Mandarin, the two extreme

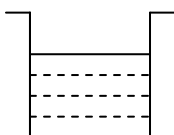
adjectives *kong* ‘empty’ and *man* ‘full’ form an antonym pair, designating the property of amount. They are mapped onto the double-closed *amount* scale as two terminals. When a container is conceptualized as *kong*, it means that the volume of the contents in the container is in its minimum, namely zero. In contrast, when *man* ‘full’ is employed to conceptualize the amount of contents, it means that no spare room is left for more contents, i.e., the contents in the container is in its maximum.

The negation of extreme adjectives of this type indicates the median value of the property. In other words, the negative form *bu A* designates a property value between the two extremes. Such median values are sometimes expressed with *ban* ‘half’. For instance, both *bu man* ‘not full’ and *bu kong* ‘not empty’ indicate the median value between emptiness and fullness, and such value can be conceptualized as *ban man* ‘half full’ or *ban kong* ‘half empty’. Since the affirmative adjectives and their negative forms represent the extreme degree and median degree respectively, it can be generalized that negation of extreme adjectives marks off a relatively low degree of the property, namely lower than the extreme value of the property.

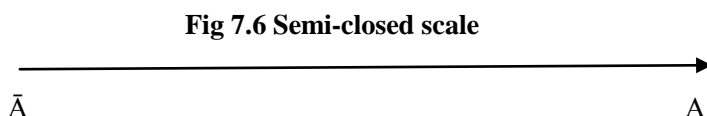
It should be pointed out that for the same amount of contents in the vessel, the container may be conceptualized as *bu kong* ‘not empty’ or *bu man* ‘not full’ by the conceptualizers according to their observing perspective as well as their affect in communication. Take the water volume in the glasses (Figure 7.5) for instance, if the conceptualizer observes the glasses from its top, he/she may use *bu man* to conceptualize the water level in the vessel; by contrast, if the conceptualizer observes the glasses from its bottom, he/she may conceptualize it with *bu kong*. In addition, if the

speaker has an expectation of fullness or emptiness, the negative forms *bu man* and *bu kong* indicate that the actual amount in the container is counter to his/her expectation. Therefore, the negation conveys a discontent attitude on the part of the speaker.

**Fig 7.5 Conceptualization of a half glass of water**



The second type of scale evoked by extreme adjectives is an asymmetrical scale with one end open and the other closed, as shown in Figure 7.6.



Here  $\bar{A}$  and  $A$  form a semi-closed scale, with  $A$  representing the maximum property value of extreme adjectives. The scale is similar to the unary scale in Figure 7.3 except that the extreme value can be reached.

The negation of extreme adjectives of this type may indicate any property value on the pole of  $\bar{A}$ . For instance, *gan* ‘dry’ and *shi* ‘wet’ form an antonym pair, with *gan* ‘dry’ being an extreme adjective. The property of wetness can be of a range of degrees, while the extreme case of wetness is *gan* ‘dry’, which can be interpreted as the minimum or zero wetness. Thus, *gan* and *shi* activates a semi-closed scale of wetness, with *gan* representing the value of the closed terminal. In this case, *bu gan* ‘not dry’ can be any degree of wetness. This instance shows that for a pair of antonymous adjectives, their quantificational features may be quite different. For instance, the adjective *shi* ‘wet’ as a

scalar adjective is projected on the *wetness* scale as a range, while its antonym *gan* ‘dry’ is projected as a terminal point on the scale.

It should be noted that the property value conceptualized as a point on the scale is merely valid on a theoretical basis. In actual use, however, people may construe the extreme point on the scale as a range with various degrees. For instance, although *man* ‘full’ represents the maximum amount in a container, a search of the corpus and internet shows that it can be intensified by *hen* ‘very’, as shown in (18) and (19).

(18) *ta de richeng anpai de hen man.*

3s DE schedule arrange DE very full

‘His diary is very full.’

(19) *jing shui hen man.*

well water very full

‘The well is very full.’

Here the extreme adjective *man* ‘full’ does not represent the maximum value any more. Instead, it resembles a scalar adjective. Likewise, other extreme adjectives such as *anquan* ‘safe’, *gan* ‘dry’ and *kong* ‘empty’, can be intensified by *hen* ‘very’ as well. This shows that the property designated by extreme adjectives may be construed gradably by conceptualizers for various communicative purposes.

### 7.3.4 *bu A bu B*: A Special Construction of Adjectival Negation

Apart from the negation of gradable adjectives, some non-gradable adjectives may combine with negative marker *bu* to form a special construction of adjectival negation, namely *bu A bu B* ‘neither A nor B’. This construction is exemplified by *bu nan bu nü* ‘neither a male nor a female’, *bu zhong bu yang* ‘neither Chinese-style nor foreign-style’, etc.

We have shown that when A and B are gradable adjectives, the construction *bu A bu B* indicates the mean value of the property. For instance, *bu hao bu huai* ‘neither good nor bad’ means a mean merit, and *bu gao bu ai* ‘neither tall nor short’ indicates a moderate height. In this case, the *bu A bu B* construction is equal to a complicated sentence structure *ji bu A, ye bu B* ‘neither A, nor B’. Sometimes, the construction puts across a meaning of suitability, advancing the speaker’s positive evaluation. For instance, *bu chang bu duan* ‘neither long nor short’ indicates that the speaker deems the length is right for the purpose of occasion. However, for the construction *bu A bu B* formed by non-gradable adjectives, it means that the object is neither totally A, nor totally B, but a mixed intermediate state. The construction can be substituted by *ban A ban B* ‘half A and half B’ (Lü, 1999). It often conveys the speaker’s negative attitude towards it. For example,

- (20) *zhe zhong bu nan bu nü de chang fa, shizai shi yi da kunrao.*  
 this type not male not female DE long hair indeed is one big trouble  
 ‘The long hair, making him look like neither a man nor a woman, is really a big trouble.’
- (21) *wo bu shi zhongguoren, ye bu shi meiguoren, wo bu zhong bu xi, bu tu*  
 I am not be Chinese also not be American I am not Chinese not western not local  
*bu yang, wo bu shi ren, zhe gai hao le ba?*  
 not foreign I am not be man this should well LE QM  
 ‘I’m not a Chinese, nor an American, neither fish nor fowl, I’m not a man at all, is that okay?’

In the examples above, the construction *bu A bu B* demonstrates the speakers’ discontents towards the entities in discussion.

### 7.3.5 Summary

In this whole section I have offered a detailed account of the conceptual features of gradable adjectives and the grammatical meaning of adjectival negation in Mandarin.

Following Paradis (2001), I categorize the gradable adjectives into three types: scalar adjectives, extreme adjectives and limit adjectives. Limit adjectives are complementaries, and the negation of a limit adjective  $A$  is equal to the meaning of its complementary adjective  $\bar{A}$ . Scalar adjectives are prototypical adjectives, and the negation of a scalar adjective may equal the meaning of its antonym  $\bar{A}$ , or indicate a mean value of the property characterizing neither  $A$  nor  $\bar{A}$ , or express a low degree of  $A$ . The negation of extreme adjectives indicates a degree lower than the extreme value. The syntactic and semantic features of gradable adjectives and their negations in Mandarin are shown in Table 7.1. In addition, I have mentioned that some non-gradable adjectives can form *bu A bu B* ‘neither A nor B’ construction, conveying the speaker’s discontent towards the property.

**Table 7.1 Features of gradable adjectives and their negation**

	<b>Conceptual Features</b>	<b>Compatible Adverbs</b>	<b>Meaning of Negation</b>
<b>Limit adjectives</b>	A binary partition of the property domain	<i>wanquan, juegui</i>	Attribute complementary to the attribute designated by the affirmative
<b>Scalar adjectives</b>	A range on the property scale	<i>youdian, hen, feichang, zui</i>	Attribute contrary to the attribute designated by the affirmative; a mean value; a low degree of the property
<b>Extreme adjectives</b>	Terminals on the property scale	<i>wanquan</i>	The extreme value is not reached.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the division of the gradable adjectives is not absolute. It is fairly common to see that non-scalar adjectives function similarly as scalar ones. This conversion presumably results from people’s analogy for adjectival uses. Since the property denoted by scalar adjectives can be graded into various degrees, people may analogize that limit adjectives and extreme adjectives function similarly.

Moreover, this conversion may pertain to the speaker's communicative intentions such as emphasis, precision in expressions, etc. However, even though there is a possibility of conversion, the original meaning of their negation maintains. That is, although the limit adjective like *zhengque* 'correct' and extreme adjective like *man* 'full' may be modified by *feichang* 'very' in actual use, the negation form *bu zhengque* still refers to the complementary attribute *cuowu* 'wrong', and *bu man* 'not full' refers to the value less than fullness.

#### 7.4 The Subjectivity of Adjectival Negation

It is clear that every object possesses a myriad of properties, most of which manifest themselves in various degrees: large or small, high or low. In section 7.3 I have demonstrated that the negation of scalar adjectives in Mandarin may represent a quantitative negation, indicating a mean level or a low degree of the property. The association between negation and low degree is perhaps universally true in human languages. Jespersen (1924) once points out that the negative marker 'not' has a meaning of 'less than' in many languages.

[T]he general rule in all (or most) languages is that *not* means 'less than', or in other words 'between the term qualified and nothing.' Thus, *not good* means 'inferior', but does not comprise 'excellent'; *not lukewarm* indicates a lower temperature than lukewarm, something between lukewarm and icy, not something between lukewarm and hot. (Jespersen, 1924:325-326)

Now one may wonder how the degree of the property is determined. In other words, what is the reference point of the low degree designated by negation? In this section I will try to address these issues from the perspective of subjectivity.



During their embodied experience with the world, people generalize the normal, average and consistent value from the members within a given domain or from the continuous behaviours of a certain thing. This value is the normal value (see Chapter 5 for detailed discussion). The low-degree meaning of adjectival negation implies that the actual property value of objects falls short of the normal value of the objects in a certain domain. Since the normal property value of objects is an average value characterizing neither high nor low, any value lower than it would be a low degree of the property. For instance,

(22) *ta gezi bu gao, danshi xiande hen jieshi.*

3s height not tall but seem very strong  
 ‘He is not tall, but looks very strong.’

(23) *ta zhang de bu piaoliang.*

3s grow DE not pretty  
 ‘She is not good-looking.’

(24) *jinnian dongtian bu leng.*

this year winter not cold  
 ‘It is not cold this winter.’

In (22) the speaker forms a normal height of adults by observing the body features of people in general. This normal value is stored in the speaker’s cognition and will be evoked as a reference point when evaluating the height of the target person. Here the negation *bu gao* ‘not tall’ indicates that the person’s height is less than the normal height of normal adults. Similarly, in (23) the speaker generalizes an average value of women’s looks by observing the women’s look in general. This normal value is evoked as a reference point for assessing the lady’s look. The adjectival negation *bu piaoliang* ‘not pretty’ here implies that the lady’s look, according to the speaker, is lower than the normal value. That is, it is low in terms of prettiness. In (24) the speaker forms a normal

temperature value of the winter by perceiving the regular temperature in the winter season. The normal value is evoked as a reference point when the speaker evaluates the temperature of this winter. The adjectival negation *bu leng* ‘not cold’ means that the coldness in this winter is lower than the winter’s normal value of coldness. In other words, this winter is warmer than usual.

Moreover, the low-degree meaning of adjectival negation may be derived from a comparison with the speaker’s expectation. That is, the actual property value of the evaluated entities or events is lower than the speaker’s expectation value. People tend to hold expectations for the quality or property of entities or events, predicting or anticipating a certain degree of the property. The adjectival negation may denote that the actual property value of the object is lower than the speaker’s expectation value. For instance,

- (25) *xianzai shengyi bu hao, meitian zhi neng mai 30 gongjin zuoyou.*  
 now business not good every day only can sell 30 KG or so  
 ‘Now business is not good; I can only sell 30 kg every day.’
- (26) *qian suiran bu duo, dan dajia dou hen gaoping.*  
 money though not much but everyone all very happy  
 ‘Though the pay is meagre, everyone is happy.’
- (27) *wenti bing bu name jiandan.*  
 problem rather not that simple  
 ‘The problem is not that simple.’

In (25) the speaker has an expectation of the everyday sales, and the negation *bu hao* ‘not good’ suggests that the actual sales fall short of the expectation. In (26) people have an expectation of the pay, and the negation form *bu duo* ‘not much’ means that the actual pay is less than the expected amount. In (27) people tend to believe that the problem involved is a simple one; the negation implies that the problem is more serious

than expected.

In summary, the negation of scalar adjectives in Mandarin often designates a low degree of the property, and this quantitative meaning is conceptualized by referring to the normal value or the expectation value in the cognition of the speakers (or the cognition of others in some occasions). Therefore, they manifest subjectivity in use.

### 7.5 Discursive-Pragmatic Functions of Adjectival Negation

In the everyday use of adjectives, the negation of antonymous adjectives may indicate a different semantic bias in Mandarin. For instance, the negative form *bu gao* ‘not tall’ in (28) tends to denote *ai* ‘short’, while *bu ai* ‘not short’ in (29), instead of designating the contrary concept *gao* ‘tall’, usually indicates that the subject has a mean height, neither tall nor short.

(28) *ta gezi bu gao.*

3s height not tall

‘He is not tall.’

(29) *ta gezi bu ai.*

3s height not short

‘He is not short.’

In addition, it can be seen that some adjectival negation forms can be modified by degree adverbs like *hen* ‘very’, while others cannot. For instance, the expressions *hen bu limao* ‘very impolite’, *hen bu chengshi* ‘very dishonest’ are well-formed; in contrast, the modified negative forms like *\*hen bu da* ‘very small’ and *\*hen bu xiao* ‘very big’ are not acceptable in any contexts. These linguistic phenomena are closely related to the discursive-pragmatic features of adjectival negation in Mandarin.

### 7.5.1 Communicative Pragmatics of Adjectival Negation

It is clear that negation is closely related to assertion. While it is natural and unmarked for speakers to make positive assertions, the speaker makes a negative assertion “on the tacit assumption that the hearer either has heard about, believes in, is likely to take granted, or is at least familiar with the corresponding affirmative” (Givón, 2001: 370-371). According to Givón (2001), in doing so the speaker denies and corrects the misguided beliefs presumably held by the hearer.

For the adjectival negation in Mandarin, the speaker assumes that the hearer wrongly asserts the property designated by the affirmative adjective, and the negation is made as a speech act to deny or correct the hearer’s wrong belief. In spoken Mandarin, the negative construction *bu A* is often preceded by an adverb *bing* ‘rather’, which implies that the assertion is assumed by others. For instance,

- (30) *ta de naozi fanying bing bu man.*  
3s DE brain reflection rather not slow  
‘He is not slow-minded at all.’
- (31) *youqian de ren, tongchang bing bu kuai.*  
rich DE person usually rather not happy  
‘The rich are usually not happy.’
- (32) *Changchun you zheme duo chuzuche shi hao shi, duo fangbian a, jiage you bu gui.*  
Changchun have so many taxi be good thing how convenient EM price also  
not costly  
‘It is good for Changchun to have so many taxies on the street, convenient and economical.’

The adjectival negation *bu man* ‘not slow’ in (30) is to deny the view that the subject is slow-witted, an opinion presumably held or known to the hearers. In (31) it is generally believed wealth is the source of happiness and the rich people tend to be happy. The

speaker here uses the negative form *bu kuaile* ‘not happy’ to deny such a common, yet wrong belief. In (32) people may assume that the taxis in Changchun is costly compared to other means of transport; the negation *bu gui* ‘not costly’ is used by the speaker to deny such a wrong belief.

However, in many cases the speaker uses adjectival negation not for a refutation of the misguided beliefs, but simply for the registration of his/her evaluation to the property of the objects. For instance,

- (33) *nande zhishao you siwushi sui le , aiaipangpang, yanjing bu da zui dao*  
 man at least have forty-to-fifty age LE short-and-stout eyes not big mouth instead  
*bu xiao.*  
 not small  
 ‘The man is about forty-to-fifty-years old, short and stout, with small eyes and a big mouth.’
- (34) *jieshang de xingren bu duo.*  
 street DE pedestrians not many  
 ‘there are not many pedestrians on the street.’
- (35) *zhege feiji moxing ji bu piaoliang, ye bu jingzhi.*  
 this plane model not-only not beautiful, also not elegant  
 ‘The aeroplane model is neither beautiful, nor elegant.’

In these examples, the speakers use negated adjectives to make direct evaluations to the property, without referring to the audience’s beliefs. In (33) for example, the speaker evaluates the size of the man’s eyes and mouth as *bu da* ‘not big’ and *bu xiao* ‘not small’ respectively. Here it is unlikely that the audience has such a belief that the man has big eyes and a small mouth, since the speaker is introducing the person into the discourse as new information to the audience. The same is true for the negated adjectives in (34) and (35). That is, the negated adjectives are used by the speaker to evaluate the property of the objects, rather than to object a presumed belief. Such evaluations are conceptualized

by referring to the normal value or expectation value stored in the speaker's cognition.

In many cases the adjectival negation shows a dual function of refutation and evaluation. A close examination of the examples in (30)-(32) reveals that the speaker not only denies the beliefs presumably held by the hearers, but also showing his/her own evaluation to the property of the entities/events. For another instance,

(36) *ta bu pang.*

3s not fat

'He is not fat.'

Here the speaker not only refutes the viewpoint that the man is fat, but also implies his/her evaluation that the man is thin, or at least in medium shape.

### 7.5.2 Adjectival Negation and Politeness Principle

In many situations, people use adjectival negation for the purpose of politeness. It is well-known that in Mandarin, when a qualitative adjective is predicated, the degree adverb *hen* 'very' is often required, forming a modified adjectival construction '*hen A*'. The non-modified adjective, in contrast, is grammatical as predicative, but involves a meaning of contrast or comparison (see Chapter 8). Therefore, when the speaker expresses a negative evaluation towards the hearer or some object associated with the hearer, the *hen A<sub>neg</sub>* construction as predicate suggests that the hearer or the object is in a rather unfavourable condition. Obviously, the utterances containing negative adjectives are speech acts threatening the hearer's face, thus rendering the speaker impolite (Brown and Levinson, 1987). On such occasions, the *bu A<sub>pos</sub>* construction can be an alternative for the speaker to advance his negative evaluation in a more polite manner. This is due to the fact that the negation form of a scalar adjective indicates a low degree

of the property, implying that the property of the person or object is still within the range of the positive dimension. In other words, the hearer-related property is a low degree of goodness (rather than any degree of badness). Taking the hearer's face need into account, such an evaluation is definitely more euphemistic than the utterance with *hen A<sub>neg</sub>* construction. For instance,

(37) *bianjiao renyuan suzhi bu gao, zeren xin bu qiang.*

editing personnel quality not high responsibility heart not strong

'The editing staff are neither of a high calibre, nor responsible.'

(38) *wo zhidao wo de lihun shi bu diode de, ye shi bu congming de, dan wo weile*

I know I know DE divorce be not moral DE also be not clever DE but I know in-order-to  
*dedao Wu-Yue wo zhi neng ruci.*

get Wu-Yue I know only can like-this

'I know my divorce is not a moral or clever decision, but I have to do so in order to be together with Wu-Yue'.

(39) *zhe ge xiao qingnian zhang de bu haokan, dan renpin man hao.*

This CL young youth grow DE not good-looking but character very good

'This young man is not good-looking, but has a good character.'

In these examples, the speakers use adjectival negation to attenuate the negative evaluations articulated. If the *bu A<sub>pos</sub>* construction in each sentence were replaced with their semantically-equivalent negative adjectives, the discursive effect would be significantly different. For instance, when the negation forms *bu gao* 'not high' and *bu qiang* 'not strong' in (37) are replaced with negative adjectives *di* 'low' and *cha* 'poor', as shown in (40), the evaluation to the editing staff would be totally negative.

(40) *bianjiao renyuan suzhi di, zeren xin cha.*

editing personnel quality low responsibility heart poor

'The editing staff has low quality and poor responsibility.'

Here the speaker launches a fierce criticism to the editing staff, without any consideration for the evaluatee's face needs.

Moreover, the speaker may make his/her negative evaluation even more polite by using *bu hen/tai A<sub>pos</sub>* construction. Here both the adverbs *hen* ‘very’ and *tai* ‘too’ indicate a high degree. The politeness of the expression is also rooted in the low-degree meaning of negation: *bu hen/tai A<sub>pos</sub>* indicates that the value of property is on the positive pole, only lower than the range of *very A<sub>pos</sub>*. Therefore, the utterances containing *bu hen/tai A<sub>pos</sub>* construction are frequently used to express polite negative evaluations. For instance,

- (41) *ta zheci zuo de bu tai hao.*  
 3s this-time do DE not too good  
 ‘He did not do very well this time.’
- (42) *ni shuo de bu hen qingchu.*  
 2s say DE not very clear  
 ‘What you say is not very clear.’

The negative forms *bu tai hao* ‘not too good’ in (41) and *bu hen qingchu* ‘not very clear’ in (42) are more polite expressions than *bu hao* ‘not good’ and *bu qingchu* ‘not clear’, not to mention the negative adjectives *cha* ‘bad’ and *hanhu* ‘vague’.

Now let’s turn to the modification of adjectival negation. It can be seen that some instances of the *bu A* construction can be modified by degree adverbs like *hen*, forming the construction *hen bu A*, while others cannot. For instance,

- (43) a. \* *hen bu-chang* ‘very not-long’      \* *hen bu-da* ‘very not-big’  
           \* *hen bu-re* ‘very not-cold’        \* *hen bu-xiang* ‘very not-fragrant’  
           \* *hen bu-renao* ‘very not-lively’
- b. \* *hen bu-duan* ‘very not-short’      \* *hen bu-xiao* ‘very not-small’  
           \* *hen bu-leng* ‘very not-cold’      \* *hen bu-chou* ‘very not-smelly’  
           \* *hen bu lengqing* ‘very not-dull’
- (44) a. \* *hen bu-jiao ao* ‘very not-arrogant’    \* *hen bu-nan guo* ‘very not-sad’  
           \* *hen bu ben* ‘very not-stupid’        \* *hen bu-chou* ‘very not-ugly’  
           \* *hen bu-weixian* ‘very not-dangerous’



- b. *hen bu qianxu* ‘very not-modest’    *hen bu kaixin* ‘very unhappy’  
*hen bu congming* ‘very not-clever’    *hen bu haokan* ‘very not-pretty’  
*hen bu anquan* ‘very not-safe’

It can be seen that in (43) neither the negated adjectives nor their antonyms in negation can be modified by *hen* ‘very’. In contrast, the adjectival negation in (44a) cannot be modified by *hen*, while their negated antonyms in (44b) can. This selective collocation is constrained by politeness principle in evaluation expressions.

When people evaluate the entities or events in their everyday encounters, since these things have little to do with the face need of the audience, the evaluators tend to express their opinions in a direct way. Therefore, people will say *chang* ‘long’ when the rope is long, and say *duan* ‘short’ when it is not long; they will evaluate it as *hao* ‘good’ when it is good, and *cha* ‘bad’ when it is not good. Their evaluations are advanced straightforwardly without having to adjust to the hearers’ face need. Therefore, the adjectival negation in (43) should be substituted by their equivalent adjectives before they undergo modification by *hen* ‘very’, since such properties are almost irrelevant to people’s face needs.

However, when people evaluate human behaviour or objects related to other people, the face needs of others should always be taken into account. Based on the politeness phenomena discussed in Brown and Levinson (1987), Shen (1999:126) proposes that the politeness principle in evaluating others’ behaviour is to speak euphemistically for a negative evaluation, and speak adequately for a positive evaluation. This principle is crucial for the collocation capacity of *hen* ‘very’ with negated adjectives as in (44). Since the *bu A* construction indicates a low degree of the property, the negation of a

negative adjective indicates a degraded compliment. For instance, *bu landuo* ‘not lazy’ means kind of diligent, which is a reserved positive evaluation. The degradation sense of *bu* ‘not’ is incompatible with the amplifying effect of *hen* ‘very’, resulting in the ungrammatical collocation in (44a). Conversely, the negation of a positive adjective is often used as a negative evaluation or a mitigated criticism. People may sometimes find that this negative evaluation falls short of the actual level of the actor’s behaviour. Therefore, the upgrading adverbs like *hen* can be used to enhance the negative degree of the behaviour. This is why the collocations in (44b) are acceptable.

In general, some discursive-pragmatic functions of negation may determine the grammatical behaviours of adjectives.

## 7.6 Summary

In this chapter I have examined the meaning and functions of adjectival negation in Mandarin. It is shown that when an adjective *A* activates a binary taxonomy of a conceptual domain, its negated form *bu A* refers to the property that is complementary to the property indicated by the adjective itself, namely its opposite  $\bar{A}$ . When an adjective *A* activates a property scale, its negative form *bu A* may designate a low degree or a mean degree of the property. The low degree meaning of adjectival negation is conceptualized by a reference to the normal or expectative value in the speaker’s cognition. In some situations, whether the negation of an adjective is well-formed is determined by some discursive-pragmatic principles (e.g., politeness principles) constraining people’s evaluations. The discussion demonstrates that adjectival negation

reflects the speaker's subjectivity to a large extent, marking off the speaker's construal to the evaluated property as well as his/her attitude.

## Chapter 8

### Intensification of Mandarin Adjectives

#### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the adjectival intensification in Mandarin, with the purpose of disclosing the subjectivity underlying quantified evaluations. As Bolinger (1972), Quirk *et al.* (1985), Paradis (1997), Martin and White (2005) and many others indicate, intensification is a general term for the use of linguistic signals to amplify or downgrade the meaning or force of the utterances. Intensification may apply not only to adjectives and adverbs, but also to nouns, negative words, question words, etc. The lexical or grammatical forms for intensification, mostly adverbs, can be called *intensifiers*, though quite a number of other labels have been used in the literature. For instance, the intensifiers reflecting an upscaling effect have been termed *amplifiers*, *reinforcers*, *boosters* or *maximizers*, while those having a downscaling effect are termed *downtoners*, *hedges*, etc. No matter what terms are employed in research, it is generally acknowledged that intensifiers function to scale a property upwards, downwards or somewhere between the two (Bolinger, 1972). It is noteworthy that intensification may be achieved through verbal or non-verbal devices. In interactive communication, for instance, the speakers may use phonetic or phonological means as additional resources for amplification, such as pitch, rate, loudness, vowel length and even aspiration (Martin, 1992:534).

Since adjectives are often used to register the speaker's evaluation, the intensifiers of adjectives serve to reinforce or downgrade the evaluations. According to Martin and

White (2005), the speaker's construal of degrees operates across two axes: a force system and a focus system. The former relates to intensity or amount, while the latter is concerned with prototypicality and the preciseness. To be specific, in the focus system, the speaker can upscale/sharpen the specification to indicate prototypicality (e.g., a *real* father, a *true* friend), or downscale/soften the specification to indicate marginal membership (e.g., *kind of* lazy, an apology *of sorts*). In the force system, the speaker can raise/upscale the intensity or amount via boosters such as *very*, *extremely*, etc., or lower/downscale the intensity or amount via downtoners like *slightly* and *just*.

Although evaluations can be upgraded or downgraded, the amplifiers are far more common than downtoners in language. This quantitative difference is reflected in two aspects in Mandarin. First, the number of amplifiers is much more than downtoners. Ma's (2006) study shows that the tokens of upgrading adverbs in Mandarin are nearly three times that of the downgrading adverbs. Second, the amplifiers are more frequently used in daily communication than downtoners. This demonstrates that in everyday interaction there is a much higher demand for augmenting the evaluation than playing it down. Partington (1993:178) argues that intensification directly indicates the speaker's desire to use and exploit the expression of hyperbole, and it seems to be a natural tendency for human beings to exaggerate. Benzinger (1984) also mentions people's desire to augment the evaluations in communication. As he puts it,

Under the influence of strong feelings or emotions, one searches for words strong enough to communicate his feelings and often settles on words which may be stronger than a literal description of the situation would demand. [...] A "screamingly funny person", for example, is not necessarily a person who is shouting. The tendency to exaggerate reinforces the lack of discrimination which marks many intensifying words. In an effort to avoid tame expressions

and expressions with limited referents, speakers turn to vague, general qualifiers with scant concern for their literal meanings, and we hear the familiar wonderfully, marvellously, awfully, terribly, and others of the kind. Such exaggeration seems to be a basic human characteristic. (Benzinger, 1984: 9-10, underlines original)

This shows that intensification, especially amplification, is a significant channel for venting the speaker's strong feelings.

Intensification fulfils a myriad of pragmatic or discursive functions. The upscaling intensifiers show that the speaker is maximally committed to the value position being advanced, namely the evaluation is sincerely vouched for by the speaker. At the same time he/she strongly aligns the audience into that value position. The downscaling intensifiers, in contrast, frequently have the effect of construing the speaker as having only a partial or an attenuated affiliation with the value position being referenced (Martin and White, 2005:152-153). Moreover, intensification is a significant device for rendering speaker/writer's subjectivity. Via intensification, 'interpersonal' messages are expressed in statements which might otherwise be taken to be purely 'ideational' (Lorenz, 1999:24). Basically, the importance of using intensification is to impress, praise, persuade, insult, and generally influence the hearers' perception of the message (Partington, 1993: 178).

In this chapter, I will investigate some typical intensifiers in Mandarin Chinese, in order to examine how evaluative intensification is coloured by speaker subjectivity. Before I proceed to that issue, it might be helpful to take a broad view of the speaker's intensification strategy in Mandarin.

## 8.2 Encoding Principle for Adjectival Evaluation

It is clear that most adjectives in English can function as predicative adjectives following by the copula *be*, and adjectival intensifiers are often not compulsory in the sentences. In the following examples, the predicative adjectives ‘tall’ and ‘long’ do not have to be bound with intensifiers like ‘very’.

- (1) He is tall.
- (2) The river is long.

In Mandarin, however, the usage of predicative adjectives is strikingly distinct from their English equivalents. This difference may be reflected in two aspects. First, no copula *shi* ‘be’ is required for adjectival predicates in Mandarin; second, intensifiers are nearly obligatory when bare qualitative adjectives function predicatively (and complementarily as well) in spoken Mandarin. The most frequently used intensifier in Mandarin spoken discourse is definitely *hen* ‘very’. For instance,

- (3) *ta gezi hen gao*<sup>®</sup>.  
3s height very tall  
‘He is very tall.’
- (4) *ta jintian hen gaoxing*.  
3s today very happy  
‘She is very happy today.’
- (5) *mali pao de hen kuai*.  
Mary run DE very fast  
‘Mary runs very fast.’

In these examples, if the intensifier *hen* ‘very’ is omitted, the sentence would sound less natural, or imply a contrast or comparison in its context (see illustrations below). In this respect, it seems that Mandarin speakers nearly cannot make an evaluation without

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<sup>®</sup> In this chapter the degree adverbs in the sentences will be underlined.

resorting to intensifications.

Many scholars have noticed that it is highly constrained for bare qualitative adjectives to act as predicative in Mandarin (Chao, 1968; Zhu, 1982; Li, 1986; Liu, et al., 2001; Lu, 2006). Zhu (1982:104), for instance, points out that the bare adjectival predicates imply a comparison or contrast in meaning, and only when such meanings are reflected in contexts can the adjectival predicates occur in bare forms. The following examples are cited from Zhu (1982).

- (6) - *na ben hao?*  
which CL good  
'Which one is better?'  
- *zhe ben hao.*  
this CL good  
'This one (is better).'
- (7) - *litou nuanhuo haishi waitou nuanhuo ?*  
inside warm or outside warm  
'Which place is warmer, inside or outside?'  
- *waitou nuanhuo.*  
outside warm  
'The outside is warmer.'
- (8) *beifang ganzao, nanfang chaoshi.*  
north dry south wet  
'The north is dry, while the south is wet.'

Each of these examples contains a bare qualitative adjective functioning predicatively, and the contrast or comparison involved can be readily recognized. In (6), for instance, the hearer is asked to compare the quality of the entities. The entity evaluated as *hao* 'good' is essentially considered to be better than the others. Similarly in (7), the hearer is asked to compare the temperature of two places, namely the inside and the outside. Thus the hearer is supposed to pick out the warmer place from the two. In (8) the speaker contrasts the climate between the north and the south. It can be seen from these



examples that in the linguistic contexts where a contrast or comparison is involved, the bare adjectival predicates are licensed in the utterances.

However, the implication of contrast or comparison is not the only constraint for bare adjectival predicates in Mandarin. In many sentences failing such a condition, the bare adjectival predicates are still applicable. For instance,

- (9) *wo bu yao xiaozi, xiaozi taoqi.*  
1s not want boy boy naughty  
'I don't want a boy, for boys are naughty'
- (10) *wo gen nin diandeng, waiwu hei.*  
1s give 2s(h) light a lamp living-room dark  
'I'll light a lamp for you, for the living room is dark.'
- (11) *ni de zui ben, shuihua meiyou fencun.*  
2s DE mouth clumsy speak not-have limits  
'You are clumsy in speech, often saying something improper.'
- (12) *banye li leng, duo gai zhe dian bei.*  
midnight in cold much cover ZHE a bit quilt  
'It is cold in the midnight. Cover yourself well in quilts'

One of the striking similarities in these examples is that there is an antecedent or following clause connected to the clause with bare adjectival predicates. These clauses provide a reason or result for the speaker's primary evaluation. For instance, in (9) the speaker evaluates the boys as *taoqi* 'naughty', which leads to the result that he/she does not like sons. Therefore, the qualitative adjectives may appear as bare predicative when a clause of reason or result is accompanied.

The illustration above makes it clear that the occurrence of predicative adjectives without intensifiers is a marked case in spoken Mandarin. It is far more natural for the qualitative adjectives to be modified by intensifiers when they function predicatively. In the previous chapters I have shown that predicative adjectives are usually used to

express a primary evaluation, namely an evaluation articulated for an assessment purpose, which is in contrast to the secondary evaluations, namely an evaluation concomitant to the major purpose. In other words, predicating the adjectives is preferred when the speaker articulates his/her evaluations straightforwardly. In the light of the characteristics of adjectival predicates, a degree-encoding principle for adjectival evaluation in Mandarin can be posited as follows.

**Degree-Encoding principle for adjectival evaluation in Mandarin:**

When making primary evaluations with adjectives, always specify the degree of the evaluation, unless:

- i) a contrast or comparison is made; or
- ii) a reason or result of the evaluation is provided.

This principle is generated on the basis that intensified evaluations in Mandarin are more common and natural than non-intensified ones. That is, the intensification choice between amplification and attenuation is always there for the speaker to make in order to advance an adjectival evaluation. Therefore, intensification is vital in evaluation articulation in Mandarin. In many cases intensification is nearly obligatory when an adjectival evaluation is made by the speaker. Following this evaluation encoding principle, the qualitative adjectives in predicative positions are often seen modified by various intensifiers.

### **8.3 Intensification of Adjectival Evaluations**

In Mandarin Chinese, the adverbs such as *hen* ‘very’, *feichang* ‘very’, *zhen* ‘really’,

tai ‘too’, *tebie* ‘particularly’, *ting* ‘very’, *gou* ‘enough’, etc., demonstrate a high frequency in spoken discourse, serving as evaluation amplifiers, while the adverbs *you dian* ‘a bit, a bit’ and *shaowei* ‘slightly’ are often used to lower the evaluation. On the property scale evoked by the adjectives, these intensifiers serve to position the evaluated quality or property on a certain range of the scale. The relatively strong intensifiers mark a range far off the reference point than the relatively weak ones. For instance, on the property scale evoked by an adjective *A*, *jiqui A* represents a range farther from the reference point than *hen A*, which in turn is farther than *you dian A*. Martin and Rose (2003) suggest that one of the criteria in the identification of explicit attitude is that the value can be graded upwards or downwards. In the subsequent discussion I will examine some typical adjectival intensifiers and see how the adjectival evaluations are graded in Mandarin.

### 8.3.1 *hen* ‘very’

As illustrated in the previous sections, qualitative adjectives are usually predicated with the addition of degree adverbs. The adverb *hen* is typically used to modify gradable adjectives, denoting an intensified degree of the property. Pragmatically, the degree adverbs preceding the predicative adjectives overtly mark off the evaluative functions of the clause. That is, the presence of the adverb *hen* upscales the quality, thus conveying the speaker’s assessment to the quality or property. For example,

- (13) *ta ren hen hao.*  
 3s person very good  
 ‘He is a very good person.’
- (14) *fangzi hen da, ye hen leng.*  
 house very big also very cold

‘The house is big and cold.’

(15) *wo gang dao Taiwan shi hai hen nianqing.*

Is just arrive Taiwan time still very young

‘I was still very young when I arrived in Taiwan.’

(16) *hua yi ge yuan hen jian dan.*

draw one CL circle very simple

‘To draw a circle is very simple.’

In these examples, the adjectives mark off the speakers’ evaluations to the entities, and the intensifier *hen* ‘very’ serves to upgrade the evaluations. In (13) for instance, the speaker is advancing a positive evaluation to the subject’s character, and the adverb *hen* implies that the degree of his goodness is high. In other words, the expression *hen hao* ‘very good’ signifies an evaluation better than *hao* ‘good’. Similar account can be made for the rest examples above. The subjectivity of the intensifier *hen* lies in that the conceptualization of the property evokes the speaker’s normal value or expectative value as reference point. To illustrate with (14), the speaker has established normal values about the size and the temperature of the houses in general. The evaluation indicates by *hen da* ‘very big’ suggests that the size of the house is bigger than the normal size of similar houses; similarly, *hen leng* ‘very cold’ means that the temperature of the house has negatively deviated from the normal temperature of similar houses.

In fact, the upgrading effect of *hen* ‘very’ is not striking in many cases. Many scholars observe that due to its high-frequency in use, the full-fledged degree adverb *hen* is semantically attenuated (i.e., it has lost much of its high-degree meaning); it is added in front of the predicative adjectives primarily for prosodic reasons (cf. Chao, 1968; Li and Thompson, 1981; Zhu, 1982; Sybesma, 1992, 1997; Liu et al., 2001; Lu, 2006). As indicated by Li and Thompson (1981:143), when *hen* is not heavily stressed,

its high-degree meaning is bleached. If it is removed from the predicate, the sentence left, though still grammatical, would not sound so natural. Pustet (2001) argues that the *hen* in such circumstances is grammaticalizing into a copula. These arguments sound plausible, yet they fail to explain why the adverb *hen*, rather than other modifiers, is semantically bleached and has become a prosodic element.

It might be more proper to interpret the adjectival intensifier *hen* ‘very’ in an alternative way. I propose that the adverb *hen* serves two general functions: a degree booster and universal filler in the evaluation-encoding scheme. The primary function of the adjectival modifier *hen* is to amplify the evaluations made by the speaker, though its upscaling effect is sometimes rather vacuous. Its role as an amplifier can be attested by the fact that on the property scale, *hen A* represents a range more distant from the reference point than *A*. It is indubitable that the adverb *hen* ‘very’ contributes to the deviation of property value on the property scale. In addition, as explicated in the previous section, Mandarin Chinese is characterized by degree-specification when an evaluation is advanced. We have known that speakers naturally amplify their evaluations in order to manipulate the audience in a more effective manner. This makes it possible that one of the amplifiers stands out as optimal filler for the evaluation-intensification slot. The adverb *hen* is qualified for such a status primarily due to its versatility. For instance, it is applicable in both written and spoken genres; it can modify any lexical items as long as a gradable meaning is involved; it may appear as adverbial or complement of the same head (e.g., *hen hao* vs. *hao de hen* ‘very good’; *hen xihuan* vs. *xihuan de hen* ‘like (something) very much’); it can be used to substitute

other amplifiers without affecting the semantic meanings. It seems that no other intensifiers can be so versatile as the adverb *hen*. Therefore, it wins its way into the evaluation expression as a permanent or default filler. In brief, the adverb *hen* ‘very’ is both an amplifier and a universal filler of the evaluation-intensification slot. Therefore, though there is a loss of the intensification effect, it maintains its function of evaluation booster.

In addition, it can be found that in spoken Mandarin, the state adjectives, which generally resist modification by adverbs, sometimes are intensified by the adverb *hen* ‘very’ (Li, 2007; Zhang, 2010). The following utterances are taken from internet.

- (17) *xifu*                    *hen*    *biting*.  
 western-style clothes very straight-as-a-brush  
 ‘The suit is well-ironed.’
- (18) *weishenme wode jiao yizhi*    *hen bingleng?*  
 why        my    foot all-along very ice-cold  
 ‘Why are my feet always so cold?’
- (19) *beidan*    *chuangdan dou hen qingjie, hen xuebai*, ...  
 Quilt-cover bed-sheet    all    very clean    very snow-white  
 ‘Both the cover and sheet are very clean, as white as snow.’

Such usages indicate that people tend to construe some state adjectives in a gradable manner, though some may regard such usages as ungrammatical. It is evident that many state adjectives involve qualitative-adjective morphemes in their lexicon. Therefore, such state adjectives are generally used for a vivid depiction of the entities or state of affairs based on a property evaluation (see Chapter 9). However, people sometimes feel that they are not satisfied with the concomitant evaluation in the depiction. They may wish to upgrade the evaluation in order to adequately characterize the high degree of quality, and to persuade the audience more effectively. Consequently, the state

adjectives are sometimes intensified in Mandarin spoken discourse.

Apart from *hen*, there are many other degree adverbs indicating a high-degree meaning such as *feichang* ‘very’, *ting* ‘very’, *shifen* ‘very’, *xiangdang* ‘very’, *ji/jiqi* ‘extremely’, *tebie* ‘particularly’, etc. Such intensifiers provide alternative means for the amplification of evaluations. Some of them are much similar in meaning, and they differ only in terms of syntactic or stylistic terms. For instance, *shifen* and *ji/jiqi* mostly occur in written language, indicating a degree higher than that of *hen* ‘very’. By contrast, *ting* ‘very’ is a highly colloquial intensifier, which is often exchangeable with *hen* ‘very’ to indicate a high degree. However, it cannot combine with the negative marker *bu* ‘not’ to form \**bu ting A*; when it occurs predicatively, it is often accompanied by the particle *de* at the end of the clause. For instance,

- (20) *jiali ren dou ting hao de.*  
family people all very good DE  
‘All my family are in sound condition.’
- (21) *lu shang ting hei de.*  
road on very dark DE  
‘It is very dark on the road.’

The adverb *hen* ‘very’ seldom requires the particle *de* at the end of the expression.

To sum up, the adverb *hen* ‘very’ is the most frequently used adjectival intensifier in spoken Mandarin. It serves as a degree amplifier and the optimal filler for the evaluation-modification slot. Its upscaling function is attenuated due to frequent use. People may turn to other amplifiers for stronger evaluations.

### 8.3.2 *zhen* ‘really’

The part of speech of *zhen* in Mandarin can be an adjective or an adverb. For the

adjectival usage of *zhen*, it is an absolute qualitative adjective, meaning ‘real or genuine’. Therefore, it is an opposite of *jia* ‘unreal; fake’. For instance, *zhen hua* ‘real flowers’ is opposite to *jia hua* ‘unreal flowers’; *zhen pi* ‘genuine leather’ is opposite to *renzao pi* ‘manmade leather’. For the adverbial usage of *zhen*, it often modifies adjectives or verb phrases, expressing a meaning of ‘really or indeed’ (Lü, 1999: 668), such as *zhen hao* ‘really good’, *zhen keai* ‘really adorable’ and *zhen xiang chuqu* ‘really want to go out’. In this section, I concentrate on the adjectival intensification with the adverb *zhen* ‘really’.

It can be seen that Mandarin speakers use the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ to upgrade the evaluation, be it positive or negative. More importantly, the use of *zhen* entitles the speaker to express a strong affect to the entity/event. The affect tends to be twofold. Firstly, the speaker is highly certain of his/her evaluation; secondly, the speaker shows a feeling of liking or disliking for the evaluated entity or event. For instance,

- (22) *jintian tianqi zhen hao.*  
today weather really good  
‘The weather is really good today.’
- (23) *ta zhang de zhen piaoliang.*  
3s grow DE really pretty  
‘She looks really beautiful.’
- (24) *mama zhen xiaoqi.*  
mother really stingy  
‘Mum is so stingy!’

In (22) the speaker evaluates the weather positively, and the intensifier *zhen* ‘really’ serves to make two points clear: first, the speaker believes for sure that the weather is good; second, the speaker likes the weather condition. Therefore, the speaker conveys his/her affect towards the weather by intensifying the evaluation with *zhen*. Similarly, in



(23) the speaker intensifies his/her positive evaluation to the look of the lady by the adverb *zhen* ‘really’, which conveys the speaker’s liking or admirable attitude. In (24) the speaker evaluates his/her mother’s character negatively; the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ suggests that her stinginess is very high, and the speaker is highly sure of his/her evaluation.

I have mentioned that the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ has an intensifying effect to the evaluated property. Given this stance, one may assume it to be a degree modifier parallel to *hen* ‘very’. In the previous examples, the adverb *zhen* can be replaced with the adverb *hen* ‘very’ to indicate the high-degree meaning. However, the speaker’s subjective attitudes would disappear with the intensifier *hen*. For instance, the utterance *jintian tianqi hen hao* ‘the weather today is very good’ is merely a positive evaluation of the weather, without showing a high certainty or any emotional feeling on the part of the speaker. Moreover, the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ is more restricted in syntactic functions than *hen*. One proof is that the construction *zhen A* normally functions as predicative or verb complement, and rarely, if not never, occurs as attributive or adverbial. For instance,

(25) a. \**zhe shi yi jia zhen da de gongchang.*

this be one CL really big DE company

‘This is a really big company.’

b. *zhe jia gongchang zhen da.*

this CL company really big

‘This company is really big.’

(26) a. \**ta zhen yonggong de xuexi.*

3s really diligent DE study

‘He studies diligently indeed.’

b. *ta xuexi zhen yonggong.*

3s study really diligent

‘He studies diligently indeed.’

It can be seen that in (25a) where the adjective phrase *zhen da* ‘really big’ functions attributively, the sentence is ungrammatical. It would be acceptable when the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ is substituted by *hen* ‘very’, or when the construction *zhen A* is placed at predicative position as (25b). In (26a) the sentence is ungrammatical due to the fact that *zhen yonggong* ‘really diligent’ functions as adverbial. It would be grammatical when the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ is replaced by *hen* ‘very’, or when *zhen yonggong* is placed as a verb complement as in (26b). These facts show that when an adjective is intensified with *zhen* ‘really’, the *zhen A* construction is normally used for predication rather than modification.

Discursively, since the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ demonstrates the speaker’s high certainty about the evaluation, it is often stressed in the utterance in order to persuade the hearers into the value position maintained by the speaker. Moreover, the evaluation intensified by *zhen* ‘really’ can not be negated or interrogated in that the attitude of high certainty is incompatible to the stance of refutation or doubt<sup>11</sup>. In addition, due to the fact that the utterances with *zhen* ‘really’ are charged with the speaker’s intense emotion, *zhen* occurs far more frequently in exclamatory sentences than in declarative sentences.

In brief, the adverb *zhen* ‘really’ often appears as an adjectival intensifier. By virtue of the construction *zhen A*, the speaker upgrades his/her evaluation, and simultaneously conveys an attitude of high certainty as well as an intense emotion such as fondness or dislikes.

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<sup>11</sup> The word *zhen* may occur in negative or interrogative sentences, wherein it is an adjective rather than an adverb. In such cases, *zhen* is often immediately followed by the particle *de*. For instance, *Ta zhen de piaoliang ma?* ‘Is she really pretty?’ and *zhaopian bushi zhen de* ‘the photo is not genuine’.

### 8.3.3 *tai* ‘too’

The adverb *tai* ‘too’ can be used to modify adjectives, psychological verbs and even verb phrases, signifying a high degree. This section only focuses on its usage as an adjectival modifier. According to Lü (1999:526), the adverb *tai* ‘too’ semantically means 1) a high degree, which is often accompanied with an exclamation mood; or 2) an excess degree, which is usually associated with something undesirable. For instance,

(27) *tamen tai keai le.*

3p too lovely LE

‘They are so lovely.’

(28) *ni xie de tai duan le.*

2s write DE too short LE

‘Your writing is too short.’

In (27) the speaker uses the adverb *tai* ‘too’ to reinforce the positive evaluation designated by *keai* ‘lovely’. Through the adjectival intensification, the speaker presents a strong compliment to the subjects. In (28) the adverb *tai* ‘too’ intensifies the meaning of *duan* ‘short’, implying that the length of the hearer’s writing, in the speaker’s viewpoint, is short to an excessive degree.

It can be recognized from the two examples that the intensifier *tai* ‘too’, apart from the emotions charged, reflects the speaker’s subjectivity. That is, when the speaker conceptualizes a property with the construction *tai* A, he/she implicitly refers to the normal value or expectative value in his/her cognition. To be exact, the actual property value of the evaluated entities or events is, in the speaker’s viewpoint, enormously deviated from the normal range of the normal or expectative value. For instance, in (27) the speaker has established a normal value for the loveliness of the children in general.

The expression with *tai* ‘too’ implies that the actual loveliness of the subjects substantially exceeds the normal value. In (28) the speaker may have an expectation about the length of the hearer’s writing. The actual length of the hearer’s writing, however, falls short of the speaker’s expectation. Therefore, the adverb *tai* ‘too’ indicates the speaker’s subjectivity, namely a deviation from the speaker’s construed normality or expectation.

There are two types of deviation associated with the construction *tai A*: a positive deviation and a negative deviation. The former usually requires the construction to be accompanied with the particle LE, forming the *tai A le* construction, while the latter does not have such a restriction. Next I will discuss the two types of deviation in detail.

### **8.3.3.1 *tai A le*: A positive deviation**

In many cases, the entities characterized with normal or expectative property are usually short of people’s ideal; in other words, something beyond the average or expected level might be more desirable for the conceptualizers. For instance, people generally prefer a pretty look to an average look, and prefer more wealth than an average level of wealth. Since the property deviant from the subjective standards usually represents something more welcome for people, this deviation is a positive one. A natural presumption stands that the more deviant from the range of normal or expectative value, the more desirable the entity/event is for the speaker.

The construction *tai A le* can be used to conceptualize those entities whose property value is positively deviant from the subjective standard. Since this deviation is a pleasant thing for the speaker, it is often accompanied with the speaker’s positive

emotion. For instance,

- (29) *zhe chang qiu tai jingcai le!*  
this CL football-match too spectacular LE  
'This match is so amazing!'
- (30) *yu lai de tai jishi le.*  
rain come DE too timely LE  
'What a timely rain it is!'

In (29) the speaker has established a normal value for the attractiveness of the normal football matches, or he/she may hold an expectation for the degree of attractiveness in this very game. The more deviant from the normal value or expectative value a match is, the more desirable it is for the speaker. The adverb *tai* 'too' indicates that the actual attractiveness is greatly deviant from the normal or expected level, which naturally provokes the speaker's pleasant emotion. Likewise, in (30) the speaker presumably predicts a time for the rain to come. The shorter the waiting time is, the better it is for the speaker. The expression with *tai* shows that the rainfall is positively deviant from the speaker's expectation, thus a pleasant feeling of the speaker is conveyed.

In brief, when the adverb *tai* 'too' is used to modify positive adjectives, it normally indicates that the actual property value of the entities is positively deviant from the speaker's subjective standards. Therefore, the construction *tai A le* is often charged with the speaker's pleasant emotion.

### 8.3.3.2 *tai A*: A negative deviation

In contrast to positive deviation, a property value negatively deviated from the subjective standards means that the property is undesirable for the speaker. A concept that is crucial for the property with a negative deviation is the *tolerance limit*, which is

the maximal or minimal boundary for the speaker or the subject to allow for the deviation. It is normal that people show a tolerance for the negative deviation from the standard or expectation. However, once a limit is overridden, the deviation turns to be intolerable for the speaker or the experiencer. Suppose there is someone who normally drinks two bottles of beer. If he is served two and a half bottles, it might still be tolerable for him. However, if four bottles or more are served, it would be intolerable for him since the amount of beer would probably make him drunk. The *tai A* construction can be used to indicate that the actual property value of entities has deviated from the standard value to an intolerable degree. For instance,

(31) *jinnian dongtian tai leng le.*

this-year winter too cold LE

‘This winter is too cold.’

(32) *zhe dao ti tai nan le.*

this CL problem too difficult LE

‘This problem is too difficult.’

In (31) the speaker has established a normal value for the coldness in winter. For the actual temperature in a specific winter, the speaker may deem it tolerable even if it deviates from the normal value within a certain limit. The expression *tai leng* ‘too cold’ means that the negative deviation is beyond the speaker’s tolerance limit. Therefore the adverb *tai* designates an excessive meaning. In a similar vein, in (32) the speaker has an expectation for the difficulty in the exam. Some deviation from the expectation would be still within the speaker’s tolerance limit. The expression *tai nan* ‘too difficult’ means that the actual difficulty of the problem is deviant from the expectation to an extent that the speaker feels intolerable. Therefore, the adverb *tai* ‘too’ designates an excessive

degree vis-à-vis the speaker's tolerance limit.

It should be noted that the positive property of the entities may also have a limit. To be specific, if the positive deviation from the normal or expectative value exceeds a proper limit, it might incur some unexpected consequences. In this respect, the positive deviation may turn to be negative once a limit is overridden. This is why the construction *tai A* may sometimes indicate a negative meaning when the adjective is positive. For instance,

- (33) *ta tai shanliang le, laoshi bei ren qifu.*  
3s too kind-hearted LE always BEI people bully  
'He is too kind-hearted, and others always take advantage of him.'
- (34) *zhe ge nuhaizi tai piaoliang le, henduo ren dou jidu ta.*  
this CL girl too pretty LE many people all envy her  
'This girl is so pretty that many people envy her.'

In (33) the property *shanliang* 'kindness' represents a positive character. People tend to believe that the more deviant from the normal level of kindness, the better it is for the subject. However, the utterance in (33) shows that when the positive deviation exceeds a proper limit, the originally positive aspect of kindness becomes a weakness for the person. The adverb *tai* 'too' indicates the proper limit for the kindness is overridden. Now let's turn to (34). Generally, the beautiful look is a desirable property for people, and exceeding the normal level is normally a pleasant thing for the owner. However, the utterance in (34) indicates that her beauty has become a hindrance for the girl since the positive deviation has exceeded a proper limit. That is, the adverb *tai* 'too' in this context signifies a transcendence of the proper limit for the beautifulness of human look.

In brief, when neutral or negative adjectives are modified by the adverb *tai* ‘too’, the *tai A* construction means that the property value has, in the speaker or experiencer’s viewpoint, exceeded the tolerance limit for the deviation. In addition, when the positive deviation exceeds a proper limit, it may turn negative and bring about some unexpected consequences for the owner.

### 8.3.4 *gou* ‘enough’

The qualitative adjectives in Mandarin can be modified by *gou* ‘enough’, forming the *gou A* construction. It is well-known that the adverb *enough* in English normally occurs immediately behind the modified adjectives. Its equivalent *gou* in Mandarin, by contrast, always precedes the modified adjectives. For instance, the counterpart expression of ‘good enough’ is *gou hao* in Mandarin, namely ‘enough good’ in a literal gloss. In addition, the adverb *enough* in English is usually followed by a complement ‘to be’, while *gou* in Mandarin does not require a complement.

There are actually two types of *gou A* construction in spoken Mandarin. The first type indicates a meaning that the needs for quantity, standard or extent are fulfilled (Lü, 1999). For instance,

- (35) *shengzi gou chang le.*  
 rope enough long LE  
 ‘The rope is long enough.’
- (36) *gou tian le.*  
 enough sweet LE  
 ‘It is sweet enough.’
- (37) *ta chuan de gou nuanhuo le.*  
 3s wear DE enough warm LE  
 ‘What she wears is warm enough.’

It can be seen in these examples that the construction *gou A* is usually followed by the



particle *le* at the end <sup>12</sup>.

The motivation for using the *gou A* construction is that the property of the target entity fulfils an objective standard or the speaker's expectation. Both the objective standard and the subjective expectation pertain to a need for the target entity. When the speaker evaluates the world by referring to the standard of need, his/her evaluation can be either objective or subjective. The utterance in (35) for instance, implies that a certain length of the rope is required for the occasion, and the expression *gou chang* 'long enough' shows that the actual length of the rope has fulfilled the requirement. Since the necessary length serves as an objective standard, the speaker's evaluation in reference to it is objective. The utterance in (36), however, implies that the speaker has a subjective requirement for the sweetness of the object, and the expression *gou tian* 'sweet enough' means that the requirement for sweetness is satisfied. Thus, by referring to this subjective standard, the speaker makes a subjective evaluation to the actual sweetness of the object. In (37) the speaker empathizes with the subject, assuming that the subject *ta* 'she' has a need for warmth, which should be satisfied by certain amount of clothing. The expression *gou nuanhuo* 'warm enough' implies that the speaker believes that the clothing on her has fulfilled the need for warmth. Therefore, the *gou A* construction conveys the speaker's subjectivity by referring to the inner standard, namely the subjective needs arising in various contexts.

A strong tendency for the adjectives occurring in this *gou A* construction should be

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<sup>12</sup> With regard to the part of speech of *gou* in the construction, Lü (1999) holds that it is an adverb, modifying adjectives. Zhou (1996), however, argues that *gou* here is a verb rather than an adverb. The evidence includes that *gou* can be negated by *bu* 'not' (as in *bu gou gao* 'not tall enough'), occurs in *X bu X* construction (as in *gou bu gou gao* 'tall enough or not'), and may appear solely as a reply to a yes-no question (as in the interaction: - *gou gao ma?* 'Is he tall enough?' - *gou.* 'Yes, he is.'). These grammatical behaviours conform to the typical characteristics of verbs rather than adverbs. Here I will not explore in detail the part of speech of *gou*.

noted. That is, the adjectives featuring in this construction tend to be positive or unmarked neutral adjectives, rather than negative or marked neutral adjectives. As we have seen, the adjective *chang* ‘long’ in (35) is an unmarked measure adjective vis-à-vis the marked antonym *duan* ‘short’, and *nuanhuo* ‘warm in (37) is a positive adjective vis-à-vis *leng* ‘cold’. To illustrate with more instances,

- (38) a. *zhe ge fangjian gou ganjing le.*  
 this CL room enough clean LE  
 ‘This room is clean enough.’  
 b. ? *zhe ge fangjian gou zang le.*  
 this CL room enough dirty LE  
 ‘This room is dirty enough.’
- (39) a. *ta gou jianzhuang le.*  
 3s enough strong LE  
 ‘He is strong enough.’  
 b. ? *ta gou shouruo le.*  
 3s enough weak LE  
 ‘He is weak enough.’
- (40) a. *ta gezi gou gao le.*  
 3s body-height enough tall LE  
 ‘He is tall enough.’  
 b. ? *ta gezi gou ai le.*  
 3s height enough short LE  
 ‘He is short enough.’
- (41) a. *ta pao de gou kuai.*  
 3s run DE enough fast  
 ‘He runs fast enough.’  
 b. ? *ta pao de gou man.*  
 3s run DE enough slow  
 ‘He runs slow enough.’

It can be seen from these examples that the utterances with positive and unmarked qualitative adjectives in the “*gou A*” construction are more natural than those with negative and marked adjectives. To be specific, the expressions *gou ganjing* ‘clean enough’ and *gou jianzhuang* ‘strong enough’ in (38) and (39) respectively are more

acceptable than the antonymous expressions *gou zang* ‘dirty enough’ and *gou shouruo* ‘weak enough’. In (40) and (41), the expressions *gou gao* ‘tall enough’ and *gou kui* ‘fast enough’ are more natural than the antonymous expression *gou ai* ‘short enough’ and *gou man* ‘slow enough’.

Such a tendency can be accounted for from the perspective of psychological and mental normality. It is natural that people seek for good things, which cater to their needs in a broad sense. It is only idiosyncratic for people to give priority to bad things over good ones. In other words, people generally would not seek for negative things unless a peculiar need arises for the occasion. Moreover, the objects that meet certain needs may fulfil or help the conceptualizers to fulfil certain purposes, while those objects short of the standards are likely to hinder the fulfilment of certain purposes. For the *gou A* construction discussed above, the speaker evaluates the objects according to the subjective or objective needs, which are normally in line with the speaker’s expectation for positive aspects of the objects. Unless specified elsewhere, there is no reason for the speaker to refer to the needs counter to general expectations. To illustrate with (38), the speaker has a need for the cleanness of the room, and the expression *gou ganjing* ‘clean enough’ means that the actual degree of cleanness of the room satisfies the speaker’s need. Normally, the speaker does not demonstrate a need for dirtiness, which explains the oddness of the utterance in (38b). However, if a particular need arises (e.g., in the virtual context such as the film shooting scene, wherein the ideal site for the episode is that the dirtier the room is, the better), *gou zang* ‘dirty enough’ is also acceptable since the dirtiness satisfies the speaker’s special need.

The second type of *gou A* construction is always accompanied by the particle DE or LE at the end, forming a “*gou A de/le*” construction. According to Lü (1999) and Zhou (1996), the word *gou* here is an adverb, meaning a high degree. It is used to amplify the adjectival evaluation. The construction ‘*gou A de/le*’, according to my interpretation, means that 1) the typical conditions for the property *A* are met, or 2) the extreme or tolerance limit is reached. The first meaning often requires the particle DE in the construction, while the second meaning often requires the particle LE. The following examples are utterances with the *gou A de* construction.

- (42) *zhe santian queshi gou mang de.*  
 this three-days indeed enough busy DE  
 ‘It was busy indeed in the last three days.’
- (43) *zhe ge jia ke gou gao de.*  
 this CL price certainly enough high DE  
 ‘The price is high indeed.’
- (44) *tianqi gou re de.*  
 weather enough hot DE  
 ‘The weather is hot indeed.’

As exemplified above, the adjectives in this construction may be positive or negative in meaning. The adjectives in the construction may be combined with the subject NP, generating an expression “*A (de) NP*”, which designates a subcategorization of the objects (NP) characterized with the property *A*. For instance, the expression *gao jia* ‘high price’ can be derived from (43), designating a subcategory of price featuring the property of highness, and *re tianqi* ‘hot weather’ can be derived from (44), denoting a subcategory of weather characterized by hotness. This suggests that an NP conceptualizes a category of objects, and *A (de) NP* conceptualizes a subcategory of objects characterized by the property of *A*.

The motivation for this “*gou A de*” construction is as follows. The speaker evaluates the qualities of entities, and regards their property value as belonging to the range of A. In this way, the speaker formulates a subcategorization of *A (de) NP* through his evaluation. The adverb *gou* ‘enough’ here expresses a ‘sufficient’ meaning, indicating that the quality of the entity fulfils the typical requirement/condition for A-ness. For instance, in (42) the speaker establishes a category of ‘a busy day’ in his/her cognition, and the expression *gou mang de* denotes that the activities of the last three days, in the speaker’s perspective, are sufficient to be conceptualized with the property *mang* ‘busy’. Similarly, in (43) the speaker has stored in his/her cognition a category of high price for certain commodities, and the expression *gou gao de* indicates that the actual price of the product is sufficient to be conceptualized with *gao* ‘high’. In (44) the speaker has established a category of hot weather in his cognition, and the expression “*gou re de*” suggests that the actual temperature of the day is, in the speaker’s opinion, sufficient to be conceptualized with *re* ‘hot’.

The construction ‘*gou A le*’, in contrast, indicates a meaning that the property of the target has reached the extreme or the speaker/the subject’s tolerance limit. It is usually accompanied by a clause which shows the reason, the expected or unexpected results, etc. For instance,

(45) *tamen yijing gou mang le, bie zai gei tamen jia renwu le.* (Lü, 1999)

3p already enough busy LE, not still for them add task LE

‘They are already very busy, so don’t assign more tasks to them.’

(46) *wo bu yao le, chi de gou bao le.*

1s not want LE eat DE enough full LE

‘I don’t want any more. I am very full.’

(47) *ni chi ku gou duo le. Lai Beijing ba, shouxu wo lai ban.*

2s eat bitterness enough much LE come Beijing EM, procedure 1s come deal-with  
 ‘You have had enough hardships. Come to Beijing please, and I will do the procedures for you.’

- (48) *ni buyao zai jiaohuo jinlai le. xianzai yijing gou luan le.*  
 2s not again entangle come-in LE now already enough messy LE  
 ‘Don’t step in any more. The situation is messy enough.’

In the speaker’s cognition, there is a limit for some entities to endure the situation featuring the property *A*, which constitutes the tolerance limit for them. Any property value beyond *A* tends to make the entity lose out or suffer more. Therefore, the property is conceptualized as *gou A* when the speaker refers to his/her construed extreme or tolerance limit for the entities. In (45) the expression *gou mang le* suggests that the degree of busyness is so high for the subjects that it has reached their tolerance limits. The following clause serves as a request for reducing workload. In the same vein, the expression *gou bao le* in (46) indicates that the speaker’s food intake has reached an extreme point; *gou duo le* in (47) means that the hardships the hearer has suffered have reached his/her tolerance limit; *gou luan le* in (48) shows that the current situation is messy to so high a degree that the experiencer can hardly bear it any more.

Sometimes the two particles *de* and *le* may simultaneously occur in the *gou A* construction, forming a construction *gou A de le*. This construction designates a meaning that the actual quality of the entity not only belongs to *A*, but also demonstrates a high degree of *A*. For instance,

- (49) *wo yijing gou nuli de le, dan haishi mei chenggong.*  
 1s already enough hardworking DE LE but still not succeed  
 ‘I worked hard enough, but still failed.’
- (50) *baba, buyao zheyang qifu gugu, ta yijing gou shangxin de le.*  
 dad don’t so bully aunt 3s already enough sad DE LE  
 ‘Don’t bully aunt like that, Dad. She is already very sad.’

Here in (49) the speaker conceptualizes his/her behaviour not simply as *nuli* ‘hardworking’, but as hardworking to a great degree. Likewise, in (50) the expression *gou shangxin de le* means that the emotional behaviour of the speaker’s aunt not only belongs to the category of sadness, but also is a high degree of sadness.

In summary, the adjectival modifier *gou* ‘enough’ can be two types. The first *gou A* construction designates a meaning that the actual property value of the entity has fulfilled the speaker’s subjective or objective need. The second *gou A* construction may mean that the actual property of the entity can be categorized as *A*, or that the construed extreme or tolerance limit for the speaker or the subject is reached. It is through the fulfilment of a certain standard that the speaker’s evaluation for the entities is intensified.

### **8.3.5 *shao/shaowei* ‘slightly’ and *youdian* ‘a bit’**

In the above sections I have illustrated the adjectival intensification with some typical amplifiers in Mandarin. In this section I will turn to the downtoners in spoken Mandarin. In Chinese, the adverbs *shao/shaowei* ‘slightly’ and *youdian* ‘a bit, a bit’ are often used to modify adjectives for the purpose of downgrading the evaluation. Although their meanings are similar, their grammatical behaviours and motivations vary widely. I will deal with them separately in the following discussion.

#### **8.3.5.1 *shaowei* ‘slightly’**

The adverbs *shao/shaowei* ‘slightly’, according to Lü (1999), signify a low quantity or degree. Since they are mostly exchangeable when modifying adjectives, for the sake of convenience I just use *shaowei* to designate the two expressions. Syntactically, the

construction *shaowei* A often requires elements such as *dian*, *yidian* or *yixie* (all literally meaning ‘a bit’) to appear at the end, thus forming a construction of *shaowei* A *dian/yidian/yixie*. This construction is often used when there is an explicit, and usually objective, reference point for comparison. For instance,

- (51) *ta shaowei gao yidian.*  
 3s slightly tall a bit  
 ‘He is a bit taller.’
- (52) *xiangbi laishuo, zhe ben shu shaowei gui dian.*  
 comparatively speaking this CL book slightly expensive a bit  
 ‘Comparatively speaking, this book is slightly more expensive.’
- (53) *zhe jian chenyi shaowei duan le dian.*  
 this CL shirt slightly short LE a bit  
 ‘This shirt is slightly short (for me).’
- (54) *jiejie bi meimei shaowei piaolian dian.*  
 elder-sister compare younger-sister slightly pretty a bit  
 ‘The elder sister is slightly prettier than the younger sister.’

In (51) the speaker evaluates the subject’s height after a comparison between the height of the subject and some other person(s), and the adverb *shaowei* ‘slightly’ indicates that the height difference is slight. Although the reference point for comparison is not given in the sentence, it is definitely referred to when the speaker makes the evaluation, and it can be reflected in the sentence via, say, the BI ‘compare’ construction. In (52) the initial element *xiangbi laishuo* ‘comparatively speaking’ makes it clear that the subsequent evaluation is derived from a comparison. The adverb *shaowei* indicates that the price difference between this book and some other book(s) is slight. In (53) the speaker has a size demand for the shirts in order to be fit for him/her. This size range is relative objective. Compared to this standard size, the actual size of the shirt is shorter, and the adverb *shaowei* shows that the difference is slight. In (54) the two sisters are



compared in terms of prettiness, and the speaker believes that the elder sister is slightly prettier than the reference point, namely (the look of) the younger sister. Since the prettiness of a person is highly subjective, the evaluation here is subjective accordingly.

These examples show that the construction *shaowei* A is employed to express the speaker's evaluation, which is derived from a comparison with an explicit reference point. In other words, the adverb *shaowei* 'slightly', when modifying adjectives, is always associated with a comparison construction. In these examples, all of the reference points, namely the height of other person(s), the price of other book(s), the standard size of the outfit for the speaker and the look of the younger sisters, are explicit for comparison. Even when they are absent in the surface structure, it is always possible for them to be restored via certain expressions or constructions. The subjectivity or objectivity of the overall evaluation associated with *shaowei* is determined by the nature of the reference points. To be specific, when the reference point is objective, as in (51) - (53), the overall evaluation is accordingly objective; when the reference point is subjective, as in (54), the evaluation is subjective accordingly. Finally, it should be noted that the slight difference evaluated by the speaker is subjective in nature, since opinions may vary with regard to the quantification of the difference. For instance, suppose the height difference between A and B is 5cm. Some may consider this difference as a slight one, while others may regard it as a big difference.

#### 8.3.5.2 *youdian* 'a bit'

The adverb *youdian* 'a bit' is usually used to modify neutral or negative adjectives rather than positive adjectives. For instance, the expressions like *youdian cu* 'a bit thick',

*you dian xi* ‘a bit thin’, *you dian lan* ‘a bit lazy’ and *you dian nankan* ‘a bit ugly’ are grammatical, while *you dian piaoliang* ‘a bit pretty’ and *you dian laoshi* ‘a bit honest’ are hardly acceptable in Mandarin. The positive adjectives have to be negated before they are intensified by *you dian*, such as *you dian bu gaoxing* ‘a bit unhappy’ and *you dian bu qingchu* ‘a bit unclear’. It has been shown in the last section that the adverb *shaowei* ‘slightly’ is always associated with a comparison construction. The adverb *you dian* ‘a bit’, however, rarely appears in comparative constructions. For instance,

- (55) a. *zhe ge fangjian youdian zang.*  
           this CL room a bit dirty  
           ‘This room is a bit dirty.’  
       b. \**zhe ge fangjian bi nage fangjian youdian zang.*  
           this CL room compare that room a bit dirty  
           ‘This room is a bit dirtier than that room.’
- (56) *changdi youdian ying.*  
       site a bit hard  
       ‘The site is a bit hard.’
- (57) *ta xianran youdian shiwang.*  
       3s obviously a bit disappointed  
       ‘Obviously, she feels a bit disappointed.’

It can be seen that the adverb *you dian* is often used to modify negative adjectives, and it is incompatible with the comparative construction.

In contrast to *shaowei* ‘slightly’, the evaluation intensified by the adverb *you dian* ‘a bit’ is usually related to implicit subjective reference points, i.e., referring to the normal value or expectative value, rather than explicit and objective reference points. For instance, in (55a) the speaker has established a normal value for the sanitary conditions of similar rooms, or holds an expectation of the cleanness in the very room; the evaluation *you dian zang* ‘a bit dirty’ indicates that the actual sanitary condition in the

room is slightly deviant from the normal sanitary level, or slightly short of the speaker's expectation. Likewise, in (56) the speaker has an established normal value of hardness for the ground of the sites, or has an expectation of the degree of hardness of the very site. The evaluation *youdian ying* 'a bit hard' indicates that the actual hardness of the site is slightly deviant from the normal value or the speaker's expectative value. In (57), the speaker makes the judgement that the subject is disappointed, and the adverb *youdian* suggests that the subject's disappointment is at a low level. In these examples, the adjectival modifier *youdian* 'a bit' designates a low-degree meaning, which is often used to downgrade the speaker's negative evaluation.

In many cases, the speaker chooses the adverb *youdian* 'a bit' for the purpose of politeness. It is obvious that the speaker's negative evaluation constitutes a face-threatening speech act for the evaluatee. Therefore, in order to maintain the evaluatee's (especially the hearer's) negative face, the speaker may employ *youdian* 'slightly' to downgrade the negative evaluation, a strategy to mediate the evaluatee's face loss. Compare the following utterances,

- (58) a. *ta youdian lan*.  
3s a bit lazy  
'He is a bit lazy'  
b. *ta hen lan*  
3s very lazy  
'He is very lazy.'

We can see that the evaluation intensified by *youdian* 'a bit' marks off a softer criticism in (58a) than the evaluation with *hen* 'very' in (58b).

In general, the adverbs *shaowei* 'slightly' and *youdian* 'a bit' in Mandarin serve as

downtoners to downgrade the speaker's evaluation. The former usually requires an explicit reference point, thus is compatible with comparative construction, whereas the latter evokes some subjective standards or values stored in the speaker's cognition, and is incompatible for positive adjectives and comparative construction. In addition, *youdian* is often used as a means for politeness when a negative evaluation is articulated by the speaker.

#### **8.4 Summary**

In this chapter I have provided a detailed illustration of the characteristics as well as the motivations for the intensification of adjectival evaluations in Mandarin. The Mandarin speakers normally specify the degree of the evaluation when they use qualitative adjectives to articulate evaluations. This can be generalized as an encoding principle for adjectival evaluation in Mandarin. Degree adverbs such as *hen* 'very', *zhen* 'really', *tai* 'too', *gou* 'enough' and many others are often used to amplify the evaluation, whereas *youdian* 'a bit' and *shaowei* 'slightly' are often used to downgrade the evaluation. The intensification designated by these intensifiers are mostly subjective in that the speaker's established standards or expectations are evoked as reference point in the conceptualization of the degree of the evaluations. No matter what intensifiers are employed, the speaker regulates his/her evaluations in order to convince the audience of the value position maintained, or to establish a rapport with the audience.

## Chapter 9

### Meanings and Functions of Adjectival Reduplication

#### 9.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4 I have demonstrated that the state adjectives in Mandarin are normally used to fulfil the depiction function, vividly describing the quality or property of entities/events. Such adjectives in communication are subjective in that the speaker's personal attitudes regarding the quality or property are encoded. In addition, many state adjectives such as *xuebai* 'snow-white', *huore* 'burning hot', *kongdangdang* 'empty', *piaopiaoliangliang* 'pretty' incorporate qualitative adjective components in their morphology. These qualitative adjective forms usually serve an evaluation function, indicating the speakers' construal to the quality or property of the targeted entities/events. In other words, these state adjectives may serve dual functions of depiction and evaluation, with depiction as the primary pragmatic function intended by the speakers. In this Chapter I will focus on a special type of state adjectives in Mandarin--- the reduplicated adjectives, investigating their meanings and functions.

Reduplication is a grammatical phenomenon prevalent in many natural languages. It refers to a morphological process "whereby a whole construction in question or part of the construction in question is reiterated to form a new construction" (Lai, 2006: 483). Many lexical items such as noun, verb, adjective, adverb, numeral, and classifier, may be reduplicated to form new lexical items or phrases. Among them, the reduplication of adjectives has drawn considerable academic interests. In Mandarin lexicon,

reduplicative adjectives account for quite a large proportion in the adjectival category. Wang (1996), for instance, illustrates altogether 1,575 reduplicative adjectives in Mandarin Chinese, most of which are collected from Chinese literary works. Zhu's (2003:10) investigation shows that 35% of the adjectives in Modern Chinese are reduplicable. The large quantity of reduplicative adjectives demonstrates, at least partly, their vital role in linguistic expressions. Any systematic study of Mandarin adjectives cannot afford to neglect the characteristics of adjectival reduplication. This chapter will examine the uses of reduplicative adjectives, and analyze their grammatical meanings as well as functions in Mandarin.

According to their internal relations, reduplicative adjectives can be divided into two broad types. The first type encompasses reduplicative adjectives which are constructed by base adjectives undergoing a reduplication process. The base adjectives may be a qualitative adjective (either monosyllabic or disyllabic) or a state adjective (disyllabic). For a monosyllabic adjective A, its reduplicated form is obviously AA. For instance,

- (1) *changchang* 'very long' <= *chang* 'long'  
*duanduan* 'very short' <= *duan* 'short'  
*honghong* 'very red' <= *hong* 'red'  
*dada* 'very big' <= *da* 'big'

For a disyllabic adjective AB, the reduplication process may generate several different forms: AABB or ABAB for a full reduplication, and ABB or A *li* AB for a partial reduplication. For example,

- (2) AABB: *mingmingbaibai* 'very clear' <= *mingbai* 'clear'

- jianjiandandan* ‘very simple’ <=*jiandan* ‘simple’
- ABAB: *zhanxinzhanxin* ‘brand new’ <=*zhanxin* ‘brand new’  
*xuebaixuebai* ‘snow-white’ <=*xuebai* ‘snow-white’
- ABB: *nianqingqing* ‘very young’ <=*nianqing* ‘young’  
*gudandan* ‘very lonely’ <=*gudan* ‘lonely’
- A li AB: *hulihutu* ‘muddle-headed’ <=*hutu* ‘confused’  
*tulituqi* ‘very countrified’ <=*tuqi* ‘countrified’

The double-shafted arrows in the examples above represent the reduplication process.

The formula above can be read as follows<sup>13</sup>: the adjective *changchang*, for instance, is reduplicated from the qualitative adjective *chang*.

Most of the reduplicated forms are the same as their base in terms of part of speech, namely adjectives. In other words, the reduplication of an adjective normally generates a new adjective<sup>14</sup>. However, there are cases where the reduplicated forms belong to a different part of speech from their base<sup>15</sup>. For instance, *hao* ‘good’ is a typical qualitative adjective, whereas its reduplicated form *haohao* is often used as an adverb, as in *haohao xuexi* ‘study hard’ and *haohao jihua yixia* ‘make a detailed plan’. Similarly, *da* ‘big’ is a qualitative adjective, whereas its reduplicated form *dada (de)* can be an adjective, as in *dada de yanjing* ‘big eyes’, or an adverb, as in *dada zengjia* ‘to increase enormously’. In this chapter, the reduplication forms in other parts of speech will not be considered.

The second type of reduplicative adjectives consists of adjectives that are not formed by their components undergoing a reduplication process. That is, the adjectives per se are in reduplication forms, which cannot be decomposed and retrieve any base adjectives. The following reduplicative adjectives are of this type.

<sup>13</sup> The symbol ‘=>’ in the ensuing discussion can be read similarly except for the opposite direction of the derivation.

<sup>14</sup> Some scholars, such as Shi (2000), argue that the reduplicated forms are phrases rather than lexical words.

<sup>15</sup> Some may argue that the adverbs in the following examples are not derived from a reduplication process.

- (3) AA: *congcong* ‘hastily’ <= \* *cong*  
       *cangcang* ‘ashy, pale’ <= \* *cang*  
 ABB: *heiyouyou* ‘jet-black’ <= \* *heiyou*  
       *liangsousou* ‘chilly’ <= \* *liangsou*  
 AABB: *honghonglieli* ‘dynamically’ <= \* *honglie*  
       *xiuxiudada* ‘bashful’ <= \* *xiuda*

It can be seen that these reduplicative adjectives are not formed from any base adjectives. Therefore, they are distinct from the reduplicated adjectives in the first category. For the sake of convenience, in the following discussion, the first type is termed *reduplicated adjectives*, and the second type is termed *duplicate adjectives*. Moreover, the notion *reduplicative adjective* is used as a general term for all of the adjectives in reduplication forms.

Not all adjectives in Mandarin have corresponding reduplication forms. Many studies have shown that those gradable, commendatory adjectives that are frequently used in spoken discourse and appeal to human sensations are more likely to have reduplication forms (cf. Zhu, 1980, 1982; Tang, 1988; Shi, 2003; Paul, 2004; Zhang, 2006). In the following discussion, the meanings and functions of reduplicative adjectives will be explored, yet the conditions for adjectival reduplication will not be discussed in detail.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 9.1 gives a general introduction to adjectival reduplication in Mandarin. Section 9.2 overviews the grammatical meanings of reduplicative adjectives in previous studies. Section 9.3 talks about the quantificational features of reduplicative adjectives. Sections 9.4 and 9.5 explicate the subjectivity as well as intersubjectivity features of reduplicative adjectives, and section



9.6 concludes the discussion.

## **9.2 Grammatical Meanings of Adjectival Reduplication: An Overview**

What are the grammatical meanings the reduplicative adjectives are used to express in Mandarin? It is generally agreed that the reduplication process brings about some semantic change to the base adjectives. However, the semantic change is often too subtle to be sensed. Numerous attempts have so far been made to explore the grammatical meanings of Mandarin adjectival reduplication. An overview of these studies shows that reduplicative adjectives may express three types of semantic meanings: vividness, evoking affect and quantification. However, the discussions to each meaning involve some problems or controversies that require further explorations. I will examine these views in turn.

### **9.2.1 Vividness**

Many scholars hold that reduplicative adjectives are used for the purpose of vivid description, making the described property as lively as an image perceptible by the hearers. Thus, the grammatical meaning of adjectival reduplication is claimed to be expressing vividness (Chao, 1968; Li and Thompson, 1981; Cheng, 1987; Tsao, 2004; Lü, 1999; Wu, 2006, among others). In Chinese linguistics it is almost unanimously agreed that reduplicative adjectives are more vivid in description than their base adjectives. Chao (1968: 205-210), for instance, regards the adjectival reduplication in Mandarin as “vivid reduplication”. Wang (1985:410) notes that adjectival reduplication serves to make the description (of the situations) as vivid as a picture. It is natural that

reduplicative adjectives abound in descriptive paragraphs or essays as the authors often aim to evoke lively images in the audience's mind. For instance,

- (4) *feng, shi qingqing de; cao, shi lülü de; tai, shi rourou de; tanshui, shi youyou de; wu, shi dandan de.*  
 wind be tender DE grass be green-green DE moss be soft-soft DE water-in-the-pool be quiet-quiet DE fog be light-light DE  
 'The wind is tender; the grass is green; the moss is soft; the water in the pool is quiet; and the fog is light.'
- (5) *zai zhe ge tiandi li, na lürongrong de xicao, na biyingying de taixian, sihu ye dou sanfa chu qingxiang.* (Wang, 1996:1)  
 at this CL world inside that green DE thin-grass that green DE moss as if too all shed out fragrance  
 'In this world, the grass and the moss, nice and green, seem to be shedding fragrance.'

In the two examples, the reduplicative adjectives serve to add vividness to the properties in question. If the reduplicative adjectives were changed to their base forms, the picturesque images created in the sentences would totally disappear. Suppose the expression in (4) goes as *feng, shi qing de; cao, shi lü de* [...], though its semantic meaning maintains, its expressiveness is far weaker than the original sentence. It would present nothing more than some plain facts: the force of the wind and the colour of the grass. Therefore, adjectival reduplication adds expressiveness to the text.

However, the meaning of vividness is hardly applicable when accounting for the reduplicative adjectives in imperative sentences. For instance,

- (6) *manman chi.*  
 slow eat  
 'Eat slowly.'
- (7) *yongyuan yao jizhu: laolaoshishi de zuoren, renrenzhengzhen de xuexi.*  
 forever need remember honest DE be-a-man serious DE study  
 'Always remember: be an honest person, and study in earnest.'

It is almost certain that the speaker uses reduplicated adjectives in the two imperatives

not for vividness, since creating a picture-like image in the hearers' mind is by no means the speaker's intention. Since both sentences have the illocutionary force of suggestion or advice, the reduplicated adjectives designate the speaker's subjective expectation to the hearers regarding their acts.

Moreover, the vividness meaning for adjectival reduplication ignores the contrast between reduplicated adjective and the base adjective in terms of degree or quantity meaning. It is known that the typical characteristic of adjectives is to designate a certain degree of the property. That is, prototypical adjectives are always related to some quantity features. Thus, the quantity feature derived from reduplication should be considered (cf. section 9.2.3).

I propose that reduplicative adjectives are basically used to depict the properties of the objects or state of affairs. If the objects or state of affairs exist in reality, the speaker depicts what the property is like by creating a lively image on the hearers' mind. Otherwise, if the state of affairs in question is yet to occur in reality, the reduplicated adjectives are used to describe the expected state so that the hearers may act accordingly. In this case, the speaker intends no vividness, and the quantificational feature is highlighted. These points will be made clear through the analysis to come.

### **9.2.2 Expressing Emotive Attitudes**

Reduplicative adjectives are often used to convey the speaker's affect. Tang (1988:36) points out that in terms of semantic functions, the qualitative adjectives designate pure property of objects or states of affairs, while reduplicative adjectives not only designate the intensity of the property, but also imply the speaker's subjective

evaluation or affect to the targeted objects or state of affairs. Zhu (1982:27) argues that when occurring in attributive or predicative position, the reduplication of monosyllabic adjectives tends to imply the speaker's fondness to the object. For instance,

- (8) *changchang de bianzi* 'long braid'  
*liandaner honghong de* 'The face is red'  
*yanjing dada de* 'The eyes are big'

The reduplicative adjectives in the expressions above demonstrate the speakers' fondness to the objects. However, the reduplication of disyllabic adjectives usually does not have such emotive implications (cf. Chao, 1968; Zhu, 1982; Lü, 1999). For example, in the expressions *momohuhu de yinxiang* 'a vague impression' and *jiaju popolanlan de* 'the furniture is shabby', the speaker clearly shows no fondness via the reduplicative adjectives.

Other reduplicative adjectives may convey the speaker's emotions as well. For instance, the partial reduplication form A *li* AB always indicates the speaker's loathing or contempt irrespective of its syntactic positions (Zhu, 1980:36). Only pejorative disyllabic adjectives may undergo this type of reduplication. For example,

- (9) *mahu* => *malimahu* 'skimpy'  
*lata* => *lalilata* 'slovenly'  
*luosuo* => *luolilusuo* 'verbose'  
*xiaoqi* => *xiaolixiaoqi* 'stingy'

The reduplicative adjectives in ABB type may indicate the speaker's affects by various forms of BB. In other words, the BB form in the adjectives largely determines the speaker's emotional attitude towards the described objects or state of affairs. For instance, the ABB adjectives *liyouyou* in *liyouyou de caodi* 'the green grassland', and

*lüyingying* in *yi chuan lüyingying de putao* ‘a cluster of green grapes’ show the speaker’s fondness due to the BB forms (i.e., *youyou* and *yingying*), whereas *lühuhu* in *lühuhu de yezi* ‘green leaves’ implies the speaker’s dislike to the leaves due to the BB form *huhu* affixed to the qualitative adjective *lü* ‘green’.

The analysis above suggests that the speakers’ affects can often be inferred from their choice of reduplicative adjectives. It is commonplace that the speaker has developed a certain emotional attitude towards the object or state of affairs before he/she talks about it, and the reduplicative adjectives in his/her utterances or texts can be used as clues to infer the speaker’s affects. However, conveying affects is not the major function of reduplication, since many reduplicative adjectives in use do not involve any emotional attitudes. For instance, the reduplicative adjectives in ABAB form such as *bizhibizhi* ‘very straight’ and *zhanxinzhanxin* ‘brand new’ indicate a high degree rather than marking any emotional attitude. Moreover, for those affect-evoking reduplicative adjectives, what affect is actually triggered often depends on contexts. For example, the reduplicative adjective *dada* in *dada de yanjing* ‘big eyes’ normally manifests the speaker’s fondness to the eyes, or to the overall look of the person in question. This is because in Chinese culture, people usually deem ‘big eyes’ as one of the criteria for a beautiful face. However, in the expression *yizhi dada de zhanglang* ‘a big cockroach’, the reduplicated adjective *dada* is not likely to evoke a feeling of fondness. Rather, the vivid description of the size of the cockroach may indicate the speaker’s fear or discomfort. Therefore, the same reduplicative adjective may evoke quite different affects in various contexts. In a word, the affect-evoking function can be

seen as a supplemented meaning of some reduplicative adjectives.

### 9.2.3 Quantification

Zhu (1982:27) indicates that quantification is involved in the grammatical meaning of adjectival reduplication. For instance, the degree of straightness in *bizhibizhi* is higher than that indicated by the base adjective *bizhi* ‘very straight’. Likewise, the degree of carefulness in the expression *renrenzhenzhen de kan yibian* ‘read it very carefully’ is higher than that in the expression *renzhen de kan yibian* ‘read it carefully’. Therefore, the quantity feature should be taken into consideration in the grammatical meaning of adjectival reduplication. However, no consensus has been reached upon what type of quantificational meaning adjectival reduplication is used to designate. There are two different opinions regarding this issue.

The first opinion is that adjectival reduplication in Mandarin signifies emphasis and augmentation of the property indicated by the base adjective. For instance, Yu (1984: 48) argues that reduplicated adjectives add a high-degree meaning, namely *hen* ‘very’ to the base adjectives, e.g., *honghong* = *hen hong* ‘very red’, *dada* = *hen da* ‘very big’, *yuanyuan* = *hen yuan* ‘very round’, *duanduan* = *hen duan* ‘very short’, etc. Lu (1996:33) mentions that reduplicated adjectives have the function of intensifying the degree and enhancing the description compared to the base adjectives. Tsao (2004) and Lai (2006) draw similar conclusions after investigating the reduplicated adjectives in Taiwan Mandarin. In Haiman’s (1985) terms, such adjectival reduplication is iconic since more linguistic form corresponds to more linguistic meaning.

The iconic correspondence between reduplication and augmentation can be found

in many languages. Moravcsik (1978:317) states that the most outstanding meaning “that reduplicative constructions recurrently express in various languages is the concept of increased quantity”. In Estonian, for instance, *vana mees* means ‘old man’ in English, and the reduplicated expression *vana-vana mees* literally means ‘very old man’ (Erelt, 2008). In Southern Min and Hakka, many monosyllabic adjectives can be reduplicated as AA and AAA. According to iconic principles, the triple reduplication AAA represents a higher property than the double reduplication form AA. This prediction is testified to be true by Tsao (2004) and Lai (2006).

However, the iconic principle does not always hold for the meanings of adjectival reduplication. Studies have shown that in many languages, adjectival reduplication may indicate diminution, i.e., the opposite meaning to argumentation. For instance, in Hausa, *ja* means ‘red’, while its reduplication *jaja* means ‘a bit red’, namely a lower degree of redness (Jurafsky, 1996). Therefore, there is a possibility that adjectival reduplication in Mandarin indicates diminution meaning as well.

The second opinion is that adjectival reduplication in Mandarin expresses both augmentation and diminution. For instance, Lu (2000) states that there are two types of reduplication: one is iconic reduplication, namely more form corresponds to more content; the other is non-iconic reduplication, namely more form indicates a weaker mood. He argues that both of the two types are reflected in the adjectival reduplication in Mandarin. By exploring the quantity property of Mandarin adjectives, Li (2000) and Shi (2003) show that reduplication may represent two types of meanings: reinforcement or attenuation.

Of the proponents for this perspective, Zhu (1980, 1982) argues that the quantification expressed by reduplicated adjectives is determined by their syntactic positions in a sentence. To be specific, when occurring at adverbial or complement positions, the reduplicated adjectives express emphasis or augmentation; in contrast, when occurring at attributive or predicative positions, they express an attenuated degree. Take the adjective *da* ‘big’ and *gao* ‘tall’ for examples; their reduplication forms may occur at four syntactic positions: attributive as in (10), predicative as in (11), adverbial as in (12) and complement as in (13).

- (10) *dada de yanjing* ‘big eyes’  
*gaogao de gezi* ‘(being) tall’  
(11) *ta yanjing dada de* ‘He has big eyes’  
*ta gezi gaogao de* ‘he is tall’  
(12) *dada de zengjia* ‘increase tremendously’  
*gaogao guaqlai* ‘hang high’  
(13) *xie de dada de* ‘write in big letters’  
*gua de gaogao de* ‘hang high’

According to Zhu (1980), the reduplicated adjectives *dada* and *gaogao* in attributive and predicative positions designate an attenuated degree, i.e., ‘a bit big’ and ‘a bit tall’ respectively. In contrast, the reduplicated adjectives *dada* and *gaogao* in adverbial and complement positions designate a reinforced degree, i.e., ‘very big’ and ‘very high’ respectively.

Zhu’s claims on reduplicated adjectives have far-reaching influences on Chinese linguistics, and many textbooks adopt his views to explicate the adjectival reduplication in Mandarin. For example, Hu (1995:288) states that reduplicated adjectives modifying verbs designate a reinforced degree, whereas those modifying nouns denote an



attenuated degree. Liu, et al. (2001:201) indicate that the reduplicated forms of monosyllabic adjectives express a higher degree when they function as adverbials or complements; for those reduplicated adjectives in attributive positions, they normally do not represent a higher degree, but express a vivid description and an affectionate sense. For instance, the reduplicated adjective *wanwan* in *wanwan de meimao* ‘curly eyebrow’ means that the eyebrow is “beautifully curly”, rather than “very curly”.

However, it seems odd that the same reduplicated adjective expresses two opposite meanings on different syntactic positions. In the following sentences, for instance, though the reduplicated adjective *dada* occurs at different positions, their semantic difference is hard to be recognized.

(14) *ta you shuang dada de yanjing*. ‘she has a pair of big eyes.’

(15) *ta de yanjing dada de*. ‘Her eyes are big.’

(16) *tade yanjing zhang de dada de*. ‘Her eyes are big.’

The adjectives *dada* in (14) - (16) function as attributive, predicative and complement adjectives respectively. According to Zhu (1980, 1982), the complement *dada* means ‘very big’, while the attributive and predicative uses of *dada* mean ‘not very big, but a little big’. That is, the three sentences should be clearly distinct from each other in meaning. However, this claim runs counter to the intuition of many Mandarin speakers<sup>16</sup>. In fact, all of the three sentences literally mean ‘his eyes are big’, and the reduplicated adjectives in the three sentences express nearly the same semantic meaning. Therefore,

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<sup>16</sup> Ten Mandarin speakers, including five students doing Chinese language studies in NUS and five Chinese nationals without linguistic knowledge, were asked to compare the semantic meanings of the three sentences. All of the informants state that there is no difference in their meaning. In addition, Li (2003) conducted a similar survey in Beijing, China, asking 20 Mandarin speakers to compare the degree of adjectives and their reduplications. The result shows that approximately 54.7% of the informants believe that the reduplicated adjectives in attributive and predicative positions express a higher degree than their corresponding base adjectives. This demonstrates that Zhu’s (1980, 1982) generalization about the quantity meaning of reduplicated adjectives runs counter to most Mandarin speaker’s intuition.

Zhu's generalization of the semantic meaning of reduplicated adjectives is problematic.

In summary, the previous studies demonstrate that reduplicative adjectives are principally used to express three types of meaning: vividness, affect and high or low quantity. However, it seems that these studies did not differentiate the grammatical meaning and the expressive functions of adjectival reduplication. In my perspective, the expression of vividness and affects are the communicative functions of adjectival reduplication, whereas quantification consists in the grammatical meaning of reduplication. With regard to the quantification meaning of reduplicated adjectives, the Chinese scholars stand up for either a view of high-degree, or a view of both high- and low- degrees. However, the shared shortcoming for the two views lies in the fact that they are generalized according to the scholars' intuition, without providing concrete evidence to justify their arguments. Most studies give merely a passing mention of the degree meaning of reduplicative adjectives. Therefore, more work needs to be done in order to verify or falsify their conclusions. This issue will be analyzed in section 9.3.

### **9.3 Quantification of Adjectival Reduplication in Mandarin**

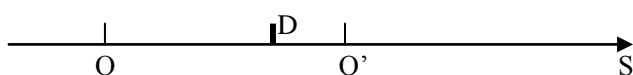
I propose that the basic grammatical meaning of reduplicative adjectives is to express a quantity of high degree. Let's start with the quantity representation for adjectives before we explore the meaning of reduplicative adjectives.

#### **9.3.1 Adjectives and Property Scale**

It is clear that the qualitative adjectives can normally designate various degrees when modified by different adverbs, whereas the state adjectives usually encapsulate a

particular degree in their internal structure. The various degrees can be seen as different quantities located on a property scale. It is known that on a line, two basic units can be identified: segments and dots. The dots are specific points on the scale. Numerous continuous dots constitute a segment. Since a scale is essentially a line with defined direction(s), we can correspondingly identify two quantity units on the scale, namely segments and dots. Quantity segments are bounded sections on the scale. That is, both ends of the segment are closed. The relationship between the quantity units on the scale is shown in Figure 9.1.

**Fig. 9.1 State adjectives projected on the property scale**



Here S represents a scale. The segment OO' represents a segment on the scale, with both ends defined. The point D is a dot on the scale. It can be seen that both the segment and the dot designate bounded quantities.

I have shown in previous chapters that the majority of qualitative adjectives are gradable adjectives, whose prototypical syntactic behaviour is to allow modification by various degree adverbs, resulting in intensification or attenuation of the property. State adjectives, in contrast, normally do not allow modification by any degree adverbs. Theoretically speaking, the property value of all individual objects (of the same category) constitutes a property scale. Conversely, since the scale is formed by numerous continuous points, the value designated by each point is realized by some object(s) in reality. A particular object's property at a particular moment can be

interpreted as a state of the property, realizing a specific property value. For instance, the heights of numerous Chinese adults constitute a height scale; the height of a particular person, say, 175cm, corresponds to a specific dot on the scale. However, the segment on which the dot is positioned is a matter of construal. One may conceptualize this height value on any segment of the height scale (e.g., very-short, short, tall, very-tall) based on his/her cognitive reference points.

As shown in Chapter 7, qualitative adjectives activate property scales which extend mono-directionally or bi-directionally. A modified qualitative adjective represents a bounded section on the scale, and a state adjective specifies a point on the scale. To illustrate their relationship, let's take a concrete adjective *bai* for instance. The qualitative adjective *bai* 'white' activates a scale of whiteness, which extends indefinitely from the base point. The scale can be divided into numerous segments, like slightly-white, quite-white, to very-white, extremely-white, etc. The modified adjective *hen bai* 'very white' in *hen bai de bu* 'a very white cloth' can be interpreted as a bounded concept since the degree of whiteness is relatively defined. On the whiteness scale, *hen bai* corresponds to a bounded range between 'slightly white' and 'extremely white'. In other words, the quantity designated by the phrase can be mapped to a specific segment on the whiteness scale, though the exact position of the boundary is hard to be identified. For the state adjectives like *xuebai* 'snow-white' and *rubai* 'milky white', they are specific points on the whiteness scale, marking particular states of whiteness. However, for the qualitative adjective *bai* in the phrase *bai bu* 'white cloth', it functions to categorize the noun in terms of colour, thus specifying no particular

degree of whiteness. That is, it does not correspond to anything on the whiteness scale. In general, *hen bai* ‘very white’ and *xuebai* ‘snowwhite’ respectively designate a segment and a dot on the whiteness scale activated by the qualitative adjective *bai*; while for the attributive adjective *bai*, it functions to subcategorize the object, and has no mapping on the scale.

The quantity denoted by modified adjectives can be divided into four levels: tiny quantity, medium quantity, high quantity, and extreme quantity. In Mandarin, these quantity forms are roughly denoted by degree modifiers *youdianer* ‘slightly’, *jiao* ‘quite’, *hen* ‘very’ and *jiqu* ‘extremely’ respectively. The most typical adverbs expressing high quantity is *hen* ‘very’; other similar adverbs include *feichang*, *tebie*, *shifen* and so forth (see Chapter 8). In the following discussion, the adverb *hen* is used as a representative for the high quantity adverbs.

State adjectives are chiefly used to describe the state of an object’s property. Lexically, most of the state adjectives have a modifier-head internal structure, with the head being adjectival, and the modifier designating a high degree. Therefore, state adjectives usually indicate a high quantity, marking off a dot on the high-quantity segment on the scale. For instance, on the straightness scale activated by the adjective *zhi* ‘straight’, the state adjective *bizhi* ‘straight as a brush’ designates a specific point on the segment of *hen zhi* ‘very straight’. Likewise, on the scale activated by the adjective *re* ‘hot’, the state adjective *huore* ‘burning hot’ is a point on the segment of *hen re* ‘very hot’. In a phrase or sentence, state adjectives can usually be replaced by the modified adjective *hen-A* to represent the quantity of degree. For instance,

- (17) *xuebai de chenyi* ‘a snow-white shirt’ ≈ *hen bai de chenyi* ‘a very white shirt’  
 (18) *qihei de fangjian* ‘a pitch-dark room’ ≈ *hen hei de fangjian* ‘a very dark room’  
 (19) *yali shi juda de* ‘The pressure is huge.’ ≈ *yali shi hen da de* ‘The pressure is very big.’

Semantically, the state adjectives in these examples can be replaced by modified adjectives with little quantificational change.

Having defined the various mappings on the property scale, we now turn to reduplicative adjectives and look at their quantificational features.

### 9.3.2 Quantification of Reduplicative Adjectives

It has been shown in 9.2.3 that the quantification of reduplicated adjectives in Mandarin involves considerable controversy. This thesis proposes that the quantification meaning of reduplicative adjectives should be investigated by resorting to property scales. Zhu (1980, 1982) categorizes reduplicated adjectives as state adjectives, whose syntactic behaviours are quite different from qualitative adjectives. Zhu (2003) points out that one of the grammatical meanings of adjectival reduplication is to convert a quality or property to a state, thus reduplicated adjectives are actually state adjectives. Based on these views, it is justifiable to state that reduplicative adjectives mark off specific states of the conceptualized objects, mapping onto the property scale as specific points.

#### 9.3.2.1 Syntactic Behaviours of Reduplicative Adjectives

Syntactically, reduplicative adjectives may fulfil the attributive, predicative, adverbial or complement function in a sentence. With regard to the attributively used adjectives, the auxiliary *de* is always a compulsory structural element between reduplicative adjectives and the head nouns. For example,

- (20) a. *houhou de huichen* ‘thick ashes’  
 b. *yuanyuan de naodai* ‘a round head’  
 d. *dididaodao de jiaxiang cai* ‘truly local dishes’  
 d. *ziziranran de biaoqing* ‘natural facial expressions’

For other syntactic functions, the auxiliary *de* is mostly a necessary element following the reduplicative adjectives, though sometimes it is optional. For instance,

- (21) a. *shenzi pangpang de* ‘Her body is fat.’  
 b. *tian lanlan de* ‘The sky is blue’  
 c. *lianer tonghong tonghong de = lianer tonghong tonghong* ‘My face is very red’  
 d. *manman de zou = manman zou* ‘walk slowly’  
 e. *bai de zhengzhengqiqi de = bai de zhengzhengqiqi* ‘lay out in orderly condition’

In these examples, the reduplicative adjectives function predicatively in (a), (b) and (c), adverbially in (d) and as verb-complement in (e). For the auxiliary *de* in c, d and e, the omission does not cause any visible semantic loss. In this thesis, the presence or absence of the auxiliary *de* will not be examined in detail<sup>17</sup>. Instead, the grammatical meaning of reduplicative adjectives will be focused in the following discussion.

Since reduplicative adjectives are state adjectives by nature, they designate specific points on the property scale as other typical state adjectives do. Given the quantificational features, reduplicated adjectives usually resist modification by any adverbs. For instance,

- (22) a. *ta de shouzhang hen hou.*  
 b. *ta de shouzhang houhou de.*  
 c. *\*ta de shouzhang hen houhou de.*  
 ‘His hand-palm is very fat.’
- (23) a. *paobu pao de tui hen suan.*  
 b. *paobu pao de tui suansuan de.*  
 c. *\*paobu pao de tui hen suansuan de.*  
 ‘My legs are sore because of running.’

<sup>17</sup> Paul (2005) has thoroughly investigated the presence or absence of *de* in various constructions.

The basic semantic function of degree adverbs modifying adjectives is to set up boundaries for the quality or property denoted by adjectives, turning the property into bounded concepts (Paradis, 2001; Shi, 2001). In other words, a degree modifier serves to identify a bounded section on the property scale. The reduplicated adjectives, in contrast, designate specific points on the property scale. Since the points mark bounded concepts, the boundary-setting function of degree adverbs would be redundant vis-à-vis the reduplicated adjectives. That is why the modified reduplicative adjectives like (22c) and (23c) are unacceptable in Mandarin Chinese.

Moreover, reduplicated adjectives cannot be modified by negative marker *bu* ‘not’, while their corresponding qualitative adjectives can. The negative marker *bu* are usually used to negate the truthfulness of the property. However, it often expresses a low degree of the property when it is used to negate adjectives (Shi, 2001; Zhang, 2006; also seen in Chapter 7). For instance, the sentence *yezzi bu hong* ‘the leaf is not red’ presumably means that the leaf is red in colour, yet the degree of redness is low. The expression *bu gongping de daiyu* ‘unfair treatment’ can be understood as a treatment featuring a low degree of fairness. This function of the negative marker *bu* can be interpreted as identifying a quantity segment on the property scale, locating the property of the object into the category of tiny quantity. Since reduplicated adjectives are already definite points on the scale, they do not need negative marker to position the property. This is why reduplicated adjectives cannot be negated while the corresponding base adjectives can. For instance,

(24) a. *zhe dao cai bu la*.



- b. \**zhe dao cai bu lala de*.  
 ‘This dish is not spicy.’
- (25) a. *chizi li de shui bu liang*.  
 b. \**chizi li de shui bu liangliang de*.  
 ‘The water in the pool is not cool.’
- (26) a. *wu li bu zhengqi*.  
 b. \**wu li bu zhengzhengqiqi de*.  
 ‘The room is not tidy.’

The discussion above shows that reduplicative adjectives designate bounded quantity on the property scale, and this boundedness determines that they cannot be modified by degree adverbs or negative markers.

### 9.3.2.2 High-Degree Meaning of Reduplicative Adjectives

I contend that the adjectival reduplication in Mandarin is iconic in meaning, indicating a high degree despite its syntactic position. On the property scale, the specific points designated by reduplicative adjectives are on the segment of ‘*hen A*’. This can be testified from the following aspects.

First, in most cases, reduplicated adjective can be replaced by the phrase “*hen A*” without changing their quantificational meaning. For instance,

(27) *ta di gei wo yi ge houhou de xinfeng* ≈ *ta di gei wo yi ge hen hou de xinfeng*  
 ‘He passed me a thick envelope.’

(28) *ta duzi gugu de* ≈ *ta duzi hen gu*  
 ‘His tummy is bulgy.’

(29) *women qingqingsongsong wancheng le renwu* ≈ *women hen qingsong wancheng le renwu*.  
 ‘We breezed through the task.’

(30) *rizi guo de shushufufu de* ≈ *rizi guo de hen shufu*  
 ‘Life is comfortable.’

Why are the substitutions above feasible? I contend that it is the metonymic principle that licenses the operation. State adjectives designate specific dots on the segment of

‘*hen A*’; the dots and the segment form a whole-part relationship. According to the studies in Cognitive Linguistics, since the whole is usually more prominent than the part, the whole concept is often used to stand for the part concept (Lakoff, 1987; Radden and Kövecses, 1999). The metonymic principle is widely applicable in human cognition and language. For instance, when a guy stretched out his hand and closed the door, we normally would say ‘he closed the door’ instead of ‘his hand closed the door’. This is largely because the person as a whole is more prominent than his part—the hand. For the examples in (27) - (30), the reduplicated adjectives, designating dots on the *hen-A* property segment, are successfully substituted by the ‘*hen A*’ construction due to their immanent part-whole relationship, which forms the basis for metonymic expressions.

Second, in many cases, the high-quantity meaning of reduplicated adjectives can be easily recognized from the contextual information. There are quite a few examples which clearly show that the reduplicated adjectives in attributive and predicative positions have an augmentation connotation. The following are some instances retrieved from the CCL corpus.

- (31) *ta xiang yi tiao changchang de woniu, cong xibei dao dongnan, hengwo zai*  
 3s like one CL long-long DE snail from northwest to southeast lie at  
*yazhou de alabo bandao he feizhou dalu zhijian.*  
 Asia DE Arab peninsula and Africa mainland in between  
 ‘From Northwest to Southeast, it (The Red Sea) looks like a very long snail, lying between the Arabian Peninsula in Asia and the African Continent.’
- (32) *yi dao xiatian, na dada de shuguan neng zheqi xiao bange yuanzi*  
 once arrive summer that big-big DE crown-of-the-tree can cover small half yard  
*de yinliang.*  
 DE shade  
 ‘In summer, the big crown of the tree gives shade to a small half of the yard.’
- (33) *ye heihei de, shen shou bujian wuzhi.*  
 night dark DE stretch out hand cannot see five fingers

‘It was pitch dark, and I couldn’t even see my hand.’

(34) *yanjing deng de dada de, lian yanjiao dou yao liekai le.*  
eye stare DE big-big DE even canthus also will tear-apart LE

‘His eyes opened so wide that even the canthi were about to tear apart.’

(35) *(ta) jiushi na yi tou heihei de toufa, tebie xianyan, bieren wen ta,*  
(3s) just-be that one head black-black DE hair especially eye-catching others ask 3s  
“*nin toufa ran le ba?*”  
you hair dye LE QM

‘His black hair on the head was very eye-catching, and some people asked him, “You have your hair dyed, don’t you?”’

In these examples, we can judge from the context that the reduplicated adjectives indicate a higher degree than the corresponding qualitative adjectives. In (34), for instance, the reduplicated adjective *dada (de)* functions as verb complement, describing the extent to which his eyes opened. The subsequent sentence provides supplementary information for this extent, which implies that the reduplicated adjective *dada* means ‘exceedingly wide’. Likewise, in (35) the question at the end of the sentence suggests that the darkness of the hair is remarkable. Therefore, the reduplicated adjective *heihei (de)* in the sentence designates a high degree.

Some may argue that the reduplicative adjectives in the foregoing examples can even be substituted by *jiqi A* ‘extremely A’. Then is it possible that reduplicative adjectives represent extreme quantity rather than high quantity? It is true that the substitution by extreme quantity expressions in the above examples is acceptable both syntactically and semantically. However, reduplicative adjectives cannot designate extreme quantity. In other words, if the property of the object falls into the segment of extreme degree, it cannot be expressed with reduplicated adjectives. For instance,

(36) a. \* *Yao Ming zhang de gaogao de.*

b. *Yao Ming zhang de jiqi gao.*

- ‘Yao Ming [a famous basketball player in NBA] is extremely tall.’
- (37) a. \* *huanghe **changchang** de.*  
 b. *huanghe jiqi **chang**.*  
 ‘The Yellow River is extremely long.’
- (38) a. \* *taipingyang **dada** de.*  
 b. *taipingjiang jiqi **da**.*  
 ‘The Pacific Ocean is extremely broad.’

In these examples, the height of Yao Ming, the length of the Yellow River, and the size of the Pacific Ocean are all extreme values acknowledged by most people, and such properties cannot be expressed by reduplicated adjectives. In other words, reduplicated adjectives cannot be used to describe the property of objects with extreme values. However, since the quantity designated by reduplicated adjectives falls in the high-degree segment on the property scale, and extreme value can be seen as a special point in the high-degree segment, the extreme degree adverb *jiqi* ‘extremely’ in the sentences above can be replaced with high-degree adverb *hen* or *feichang* ‘very’.

Third, the distribution of reduplicated adjectives over different modes of discourse favours a high degree reading. A retrieval of the CCL corpus shows that reduplicative adjectives primarily occur in dialogues or the descriptive sections of written discourse. When people talk about something, they tend to exaggerate the property of the objects or state of affairs in order to convince the hearer or persuade the hearer to act in certain ways. In literary works, the authors tend to vivify the expressions via various linguistic devices in order to capture the readers’ interests. Of these linguistic devices, figures of speech such as parallelism and hyperbole, which have the effects of augmentation, are more suitable for description than those for attenuation (e.g., euphemism). Therefore, the mode distribution tends to suggest that reduplicated adjectives are more likely to

designate augmentation than attenuation.

Is it possible for reduplicated adjectives to designate attenuation? The answer is affirmative if other factors in spoken discourse are considered. In the Beijing Dialect, the base dialect for Mandarin, *erhua* ‘retroflex suffixation’ is a process that is applicable to many parts of speech, including reduplicated adjectives, e.g., *honghong* (*de*) ‘red’, *xiaoxiao* (*de*) ‘small’. Zhu (1980, 1982) even takes *-er* as a component for reduplicative forms, claiming that “for the monosyllabic adjective A, its reduplication form is AA-er” (1982:26). It is known that the basic function of *er* is diminution. When the suffix *-er* is added to the reduplicated adjectives, it may not only reflect a sense of fondness and handiness, but also play down the degree of the base adjective (Li, 2000:243). If the effect of *erhua* is excluded, reduplicated adjectives is rarely, if not totally impossible, to be used to express attenuation.

By and large, reduplicated adjectives designate specific points on the property scale activated by the base adjectives, and such points fall into the high-degree segment. Therefore, reduplicated adjectives express a quantity of high degree, and can usually be replaced by “*hen A*” construction without causing radical change to their semantic meanings.

In this thesis I argue that reduplicative adjectives in Mandarin can be used to convey the speaker’s subjectivity, and achieve intersubjectivity by manipulating the hearers’ behaviour. In the subsequent discussion, I will explore how the reduplicative adjectives reflect the speaker’s subjectivity and intersubjectivity in spoken Mandarin.

## 9.4 The Subjectivity of Reduplicated Adjectives

It has been shown that many reduplicative adjectives are used to represent the speaker's affect towards the object such as fondness, dislike or contempt. For many reduplicated adjectives, whether they convey the speaker's affect as well as what affect is encoded is determined by discursive contexts. The evoked affects can be understood as a manifestation of the speaker's subjectivity by Mandarin reduplicative adjectives. In addition, reduplicative adjectives demonstrate some other subjective features, which are closely related to their descriptive function and quantificational meaning.

### 9.4.1 Reduplicated Adjectives and Evaluation

As is recurrently shown in previous chapters, the category of adjectives is the most typical and direct linguistic device to represent the speaker's evaluations. However, I propose that reduplicative adjectives are used mainly for a depictive purpose; they are not a linguistic device for overt evaluation.

It is clear that adjectives modified by various degree adverbs are mapped onto the property scale as bounded segments. Since modified adjectives pragmatically function to represent the speaker's evaluation, a corresponding relationship can be identified between the speaker's evaluation and the property scale, that is, locating an object's quality or property against the bounded segments on the property scale designates the speaker's evaluation towards the object. When people evaluate an object's property, what they actually do is to position the object's property value in a segment of the property scale. For instance, on the size scale, there are a series of continuous segments, such as *extremely small*, *very small*, *quite small*, *a bit small*, *a little big*, *quite big*, *very*

*big*, and *extremely big*, etc. When a speaker evaluates the size of an apple, what he/she needs to do is to figure out the appropriate segment on the scale to position the apple's state of bigness or smallness. Suppose the speaker's evaluation to the apple is "very small", it shows that the size of the apple is mapped onto the 'very-small' segment by the speaker. This positioning process reflects the speaker's personal construal to the apple's size, thus manifesting the speaker's subjectivity.

In spoken interactions, if the speaker wants to know the hearer's attitude or evaluation to certain aspect of the object or state of affairs, he/she may pose an enquiry via interrogative sentences involving adjectives. The basic interrogative patterns include "A *ma*" and "A *bu* A". For instance,

- (39) a. *sheng de fan duo ma ?*  
left DE rice much QM  
'Is there much rice left?'  
b. *sheng de fan duo bu duo ?*  
left DE rice much not much  
'Is there much rice left or not?'
- (40) a. *na ge fangjian ganjing ma?*  
that CL room clean QM  
'Is that room clean?'
- b. *na ge fangjian gan bu ganjing ?*  
that CL room clean not clean  
'Is that room clean or not?'

In order to answer to such enquires, the hearer usually evaluates the objects by comparing to the normal values of the objects in the same category or the hearer's personal expectation to the object's property value (cf. Chapter 5). Take (39) for instance; the evaluator probably has possessed an expectation to the amount of rice left, and this amount exists as a reference point for evaluation. If the actual amount of rice

left is, say, less than the expected value, the evaluator would respond to the question as *bu duo* ‘not much’. This expression serves to position the amount value on the *shao* ‘little’ end of the quantity scale. Otherwise, if the actual amount of rice left exceeds the expected value, the evaluator might respond with *hen duo* ‘quite a lot’, which corresponds to the high quantity segment on the *duo* ‘much’ end of the scale. Therefore, people cognitively position the property value of the object on a segment of the scale; pragmatically, modified adjectives are used to represent the speaker’s evaluation.

Reduplicated adjectives, however, are quite different from modified adjectives in that they designate specific dots rather than segments on the property scale. When people position the property state as specific dots on the scale, what they can do is to make the dots prominent on the scale by delineating the referred property. In other words, reduplicative adjectives function to describe the state of the object’s property, and the description often makes the property prominent or vivid on the hearers’ mind. Since depiction is not mainly used to demonstrate the speaker’s evaluative attitude, reduplicative adjectives normally are not used as overt evaluation. In the following examples, when the speaker asks the hearer to evaluate certain aspect of the object, the hearer cannot use reduplicated adjectives as a response.

(41) - *ta zhang de piaoliang ma?*

‘Is she beautiful?’

- *haisuan piaoliang/hen piaoliang /jiqu piaoliang /\* piaopiaoliangliang de.*

‘A little / very beautiful/ extremely beautiful / \* very beautiful.’

(42) - *zuotian re bu re ?*

‘Was yesterday hot (or not)?’

- *bu re / hen re /feichang re / \*rere de.*

‘Not hot/very hot / very hot / \* very hot’

(43) - *qu de ren duo ma?*



- ‘Did many people go there?’  
 - *duo* / \* *duoduo de*.  
 ‘Yes, they did.’
- (44) - *na ge nühai piao bu piaoliang?*  
 ‘Is that girl beautiful or not?’  
 - *piaoliang* / \* *piaopiaoliangliang de*.  
 ‘Yes, she is.’

The questions in these examples can be construed as the speakers’ enquiry about the hearers’ evaluation to the property of the objects. In (41) the speaker asks the hearer to evaluate the lady’s look, and the hearer may respond with various degrees of beauty. However, the reduplicated adjective *piaopiaoliangliang (de)* is not acceptable. In (42) the speaker asks the hearer to evaluate yesterday’s weather, and the hearer may respond with various degrees of warmth, yet the reduplicated adjective *rere (de)* is not acceptable. The similar is true for the last two examples. These examples make it clear that reduplicative adjectives cannot be used to express overt evaluation. In contrast, qualitative adjectives can be used to respond to such enquiries, since their modified forms correspond to segments of the property scale, and the speaker’s positioning to certain scale segment marks off his/her evaluation to the object.

The examples above seem to suggest that modified adjectives are more active than reduplicative adjectives in terms of syntactic behaviours. However, there are cases where reduplicative adjectives are more suitable than modified adjectives. When one conveys his wishes to others, one may use reduplicated adjectives or their corresponding base adjectives. Modified adjectives, in contrast, cannot occur in such situations. For example,

- (45) a. *yuan ni meitian dou kaixin.*

- b. *yuan ni meitian dou kaikaixin de.*  
 c. \**yuan ni meitian dou hen kaixin.*  
 ‘May you be happy every day!’
- (46) a. *zhu nimen jiankang ping’an.*  
 b. *zhu nimen jianjiankangkang, pingping’an’an.*  
 c. \**zhu nimen feichang jiankang, hen ping’an.*  
 ‘May you have a safe and healthy life!’

These imperative sentences are used to express good wishes. It can be seen that the modified adjectives in (45c) and (46c) are incompatible with such sentence patterns. It has been shown that modified adjectives are normally used to express the speaker’s evaluations, and they are mapped onto the property scale as segments. Reduplicated adjectives and the base adjectives, designating specific points on the scale, can be used to describe the temporal property state of objects. It is clear that the speaker’s wishes are concerned with the expected states of the hearers in a future time, and they have little to do with the speaker’s evaluations. Therefore, the modified adjectives are incompatible with wish expressions, whereas base and reduplicated adjectives can occur in such sentences to describe the expected states.

However, reduplicated adjectives are not totally irrelevant to evaluation. Since reduplicative adjectives often evoke the speaker’s certain attitude towards the object, the enquirer may use this correlation as a clue to infer the answerer’s evaluation. Therefore, reduplicated adjectives can be seen as a linguistic device for covert evaluation. Turn to the evaluative questions again. It can be seen that when the enquiry does not define the dimension of evaluation, the hearer may use reduplicated adjectives to describe the property of the objects. For instance,

- (47) - *na ge xiaohuozhi zenmeyang a?*

- that CL guy    how    EM  
 ‘What do you think of that man?’  
 - *gezi gaogao de, yanjing dada de.*  
 height tall-tall DE eyes    big-big DE  
 ‘He is very tall, and eyes are very big.’  
 (48) - *lingyige fangjian de qingkuang zenmeyang?*  
 the other room    DE situation    how  
 ‘How is the other room?’  
 - *ye shi luanluan de.*  
 also is messy-messy DE  
 ‘It’s also very messy.’

In these two examples, the speaker asks about the hearer’s evaluation to the guy and the room. However, unlike the questions in (40) - (44), here the dimension of the hearer’s evaluation is open. Instead of providing overt evaluation, the hearer chooses to depict the guy’s look and the status of the room. The interactions are successful in that the enquirer can obtain necessary information by inferring from the hearer’s answer. In (47) for instance, suppose the speaker knows that the hearer likes a tall guy with big eyes, he may soon infer that the hearer’s depiction implies a positive evaluation. Similarly, the speaker can infer that the hearer’s depiction imply a negative evaluation to the room in (48). Therefore, the answerer’s evaluation towards the object is inferable from the reduplicative adjectives used, provided the interrogative does not define evaluation dimensions.

In addition, qualitative adjectives can occur in the progression construction “A, *hen* A” in spoken discourse, while reduplicated adjectives cannot. For instance,

- (49) -*tade yanjing da bu da?*  
 ‘Are her eyes big or not?’  
 - *da, xiangdang da. / \*da, dada de.*  
 ‘Yes, very big.’  
 (50) - *laoshi hua de piaoliang ma?*

‘Is your teacher’s painting beautiful?’  
- *piaoliang, feichang feichang piaoliang./ \*piaoliang, piaopiaoliangliang de.*  
‘Yes, very very beautiful.’

(51) - *zhe haizi kao de hai hao ba?*  
‘The boy did well in the exam, didn’t he?’  
- *hao, tebie tebie hao./ \*hao, haohao de.*  
‘Yes, very well.’

In these examples, the progression constructions containing reduplicated adjectives are not well-formed sentences. It can be seen that the speaker poses the questions in order to elicit the hearer’s evaluation to the object or state of affairs. To evaluate the property of the object is essentially to position the quantity of the property into a certain segment on the scale. In the answerer’s turn, the first part identifies the broad segment on the scale, while the second part zooms in and highlights a more specific segment. The second part cannot be replaced by reduplicated adjectives simply because reduplicated adjectives designate dots rather than a segment on the scale.

In a similar vein, qualitative adjectives can occur in sentences involving metalinguistic negation, while reduplicated adjectives cannot. Metalinguistic negation introduces the speaker’s evaluation via denying an evaluation made or implied earlier, and relocates the objects’ property on the scale since he/she believes that the previous evaluation is not sufficient to reflect the actual property quantity of the object. For instance,

- (52) *ta de toufa bushi chang, ershi feichang chang.*  
3s DE hair not-be long but very long  
‘His hair is not long, but very long.’
- (53) *jinnian dongtian bushi leng, ershi jiqi leng.*  
this year winter not-be cold but extremely cold  
‘This winter is not cold, but extremely cold’
- (54) *zhe ben xiaoshuo bushi changxiao, ershi changxiao de budeliao.*

this CL novel not-be popular but popular DE exceedingly  
'This novel is not popular, but exceedingly popular.'

We can see that the sentences all have a *bushi...ershi* 'not...but' construction. Here the metalinguistic negation construction (i.e., the *bushi...ershi* construction) is mainly used to revise other's evaluations because the speaker believes that those evaluations are inadequate. The sentences would be unacceptable if the modified adjectives were replaced by reduplicated adjectives. For instance,

- (55) \* *tade toufa bushi chang, ershi changchang de.*  
\* *jinnian dongtian bushi leng, ershi lengleng de.*  
\* *ta bushi hen piaoliang, ershi piaopiaoliangliang de.*

To recapitulate, the metalinguistic negation construction enables the speaker to deny an evaluation first and then to demonstrate his/her own evaluation. I have shown that reduplicated adjectives are mainly used by the speaker to depict the object's property state, and this depiction function is incompatible with the evaluation function expected by the speaker when using the metalinguistic negation construction. That's why the sentences in (55) are not acceptable.

#### 9.4.2 Reduplicative Adjectives and Speaker's Certainty

Since reduplicated adjectives are projected on the property scale as specific points, the definiteness of their positions reflects the speaker's certainty to the object's property. One of the prerequisites for the speaker's depiction of the property is that the speaker holds a firm belief towards the property. For example, the speaker must be sure enough that the object is black before he/she depicts the state of blackness. This certainty determines that reduplicative adjectives do not co-occur with modal adverbs.

Qualitative adjectives, in contrast, can freely collocate with various modal adverbs. For instance,

- (56) a. *\*ta xianzai keneng shoushou de.*  
b. *ta xianzai keneng hen shou.*  
'He is probably very thin now.'  
(57) a. *\*tade lian dique honghong de.*  
b. *tade lian dique henhong.*  
'Her face is really very red.'  
(58) a. *\*kongtiao kai le, wu li yiding liangliangkuaikuai de.*  
b. *kongtiao kai le, wu li yiding hen liangkuai.*  
'The air-conditioner is on. It must be cool inside.'

In these examples, the modal adverbs *keneng* 'possibly, probably', *dique* 'indeed' and *yiding* 'surely' manifest the speaker's epistemic judgment on the state of affairs, ranging from low certainty to a very high certainty. Since reduplicated adjectives demonstrate the speakers' certainty towards the property, the epistemic judgments expressed by modal adverbs in these examples are either contradictory or redundant to the speakers' definite attitude. That is why reduplicative adjectives do not collocate with modal adverbs. The modified adjectives, in contrast, mark off the speaker's evaluation to the objects, and these evaluations can be further modified by various modal adverbs to show the speaker's high or low certainty to the evaluations. Hence these adjectives expressing evaluation can occur in different epistemic domains.

Moreover, Mandarin reduplicative adjectives do not occur in interrogative sentences which question the property per se. This syntactic behaviour has much to do with the attitude implied by reduplicated adjectives. For instance,

- (59) a. *\*tade bianzi changchang de ma?*  
b. *tade bianzi henchang ma?*

- ‘Is her braid very long?’  
 (60) a. \**jintian de fan xianxian de ma?*  
       b. *jintian de fan henxian ma?*  
 ‘Is today’s meal very salty?’

In the two examples, the interrogatives indicate that the speakers do not know or are not sure about the property of the objects, thus the hearers are expected to respond to the speakers with relevant information. The reduplicated adjectives, however, imply the speakers’ certainty about the object’s property. This certainty is obviously incompatible with the uncertainty implied by the interrogatives, thus leading to the unacceptability of (59a) and (60a).

However, if the content of the question is not concerned with the object’s property, reduplicated adjectives can occur in interrogatives. For instance,

- (61) *shuide bianzi changchang de?*  
       whose braid long-long DE  
       ‘Whose braid is very long?’  
 (62) *weishenme jintian de fan xianxian de a?*  
       why today DE meal salty-salty DE QM  
       ‘Why is today’s meal very salty?’

In these two sentences, the propositions ‘Somebody’s braid is very long’ and ‘today’s meal is very salty’ constitute the presuppositions for (61) and (62) respectively. Here the definitive property (namely ‘long’ and ‘salty’) denoted by the reduplicated adjectives keeps intact; what the speakers are enquiring is the owner of the property in (61) and the reason leading to the property in (62). Therefore, the interrogative sentences with reduplicative adjectives are well-formed in these examples.

#### 9.4.3 Reduplicated Adjectives and Speaker’s Expectation

The discussion above is mainly concerned with reduplicative adjectives describing

the property of objects or state of affairs at present or in the past. However, reduplicative adjectives can be used to designate the property of things that is yet to exist. In such case, the speaker's expectation to the object is denoted by reduplicative adjectives.

Reduplicated adjectives often function as adverbials, indicating the mode or state of actions (Zhu, 1980:18). When the action takes place in a future time, the reduplicated adjectives in the adverbial position mark off the speaker's expectation. To be specific, they manifest the speaker's expected property state to occur. The following spoken examples are taken from Zhu (1980).

- (63) *nin xingxinghao, nin zai zhongzhong de gei wo yi quan.*  
 2s(h) do-someone-a-favour 2s(h) again heavy DE give 1s one fist  
 'Please do me a favour, and thump me with your fist once gain.'
- (64) *ye zheme gei guniang rereer de dao wan cha lai.*  
 also this way give lady hot DE pour a cup tea come  
 'Go and pour a cup of hot tea for the lady too.'
- (65) *na ni weishenme bu zhengzhengdangdang de jiang chulai?*  
 then 2s why not justly DE speak out  
 'Then why don't you speak it out justly?'
- (66) *ye gai piaopiaoliangliang de wan ji tian.*  
 also should gorgeously DE play several days  
 'He should enjoy himself for a few days.'

The reduplicated adjectives in these sentences involve the speakers' expectations to the prospective actions. In (63) the reduplicative adjective *zhongzhong (de)* is not only a depiction to the upcoming hit by fist, but also indicates the speaker's expectation to the force, namely a very heavy hit. Similar remarks can be made for the adverbially-used reduplicative adjectives in the rest examples. In brief, the speaker's depiction to future actions by reduplicative adverbials encapsulates his/her expectation to the mode or state



of the actions.

Reduplicative adjectives in verb-complement positions sometimes designate the speaker's expectation as well. Similar to adverbial uses, this subjective feature is also attributed to actions that occur in a future time. For instance,

(67) *wo yao zou de yuanyuan de.*

1s will go DE far-far DE

'I want to go far far away.'

(68) *gan de xiliuliu de xia dao guo li.*

roll DE thin DE put in to pot inside

'Roll it thin, and then put it into the pot.'

Here the reduplicative adjectives function as verb complements. They describe the upcoming property state due to the actions, and indicate the speaker's expectation to the state as well.

In 9.4.1 I have shown that the reduplicative adjectives usually do not occur in sentences with metalinguistic negation. However, the reduplicated adjectives are compatible with metalinguistic negation sentences which have the illocutionary force of request or advice. For instance,

(69) *women bushi yao chedi cha qingchu, ershi yao chechedidi cha qingchu.*

1p not-be need thoroughly check clearly but need thoroughly check clearly

'We are not to check it through, but to check it thoroughly.'

(70) *-women yiding yao duo kai zhe lei kecheng*

1p surely shall much open this type course

'We must open many courses of such type.'

*-bushi duo kai, ershi duoduo de kai.*

not-be much open but much-much DE open

'It is not to offer MANY, but to offer as many as possible.'

The reduplicated adjectives in such sentences function as adverbial, indicating the speaker's requirement or expectation. The metalinguistic negation in these sentences

indicates that, the speaker assumes that the previously defined requirement or expectation is insufficient, thus raising a higher requirement to the hearer.

By and large, the subjectivity of reduplicative adjectives reflects in three aspects: indicating the speaker's covert evaluation; showing the speaker's certainty to the designated property; and marking off the speaker's high expectation.

### **9.5 The Intersubjectivity of Reduplicated Adjectives**

The previous section has presented the ways reduplicative adjectives are used to convey the speaker's subjectivity. In this section focus will be placed on an issue concerning interactions: to what extent the speaker's choice of reduplicative adjectives exerts influence on the hearer. It is natural that in interactive communication, the interlocutors intend to achieve certain purposes via their language. To be specific, speakers choose linguistic expressions in order to persuade or 'manipulate' the hearers (Thompson and Hunston, 2000), making them to think or act in certain expected ways. Research of this type is usually referred to as the study of *intersubjectivity*, a notion which crucially involves speaker/writer's attention to the audience as a participant in the speech event (Traugott and Dasher, 2003; Verhagen, 2005).

It has been shown that reduplicative adjectives are mainly used by the speaker to make a depiction to the property of the object or state of affairs. Interactively, the speaker aims to use reduplicative adjectives to influence the hearers' thoughts or behaviours by creating a lively image on the hearers' mind. Through the vivid depiction, the audience tends to feel as if they perceived the image on the spot. Therefore, they are

likely to be channelled to think or feel in certain expected ways. For a brief illustration, let's look at the following example, which is repeated from (4).

(71) *feng, shi qingqing de; cao, shi lülvü de; tai, shi rourou de; tanshui, shi youyou de; wu, shi dandan de.*

‘The wind is tender; the grass is green; the moss is soft; the water in the pool is quiet; and the fog is light.’

Intersubjectively speaking, the speaker seeks to engage the audience to the beautiful scene via his/her depiction. The speaker chooses a series of reduplicative adjectives which serves to create a vivid image on the audience's mind. Through the reduplicative adjectives, the audience is likely to be persuaded to think or feel as expected by the speaker, e.g., the scene is nice and beautiful.

Looking at the conditions for adjectival reduplication from this perspective, we may find that it is impossible to set out rigid constraints for reduplication. If the speaker wants to create a vivid image on the hearers' mind, he/she may use reduplication as a linguistic device to achieve this purpose. Since reduplication is a prevalent phenomenon in Chinese grammar, it is highly likely that language users apply reduplication patterns to those originally non-reduplicable adjectives, creating new reduplicative forms by analogizing the patterns of the existing reduplicative adjectives. Therefore, it is expected that the numbers of reduplicative adjectives will keep rising in the Chinese lexicon.

It has been shown that many reduplicative adjectives can be used to evoke certain feelings on the part of the audience. This is also a manifestation of intersubjectivity. The speaker presumably expects to manipulate the audience by controlling their mental

reactions. For this purpose, certain reduplicative adjectives are chosen to depict the objects, making their property as lively as if they are being perceived by the audience. In this sense it is natural that the empathized objects evoke certain emotive feelings in the hearers' mind.

It has been explicated that reduplicative adjectives usually designate a quantification meaning, namely a high degree. Intersubjectively speaking, speakers choose high-degree expressions to describe the property state in order to be more convincing for the audience. Martin and White (2005) have shown that linguistic augmentation is an effective device for persuasion. Therefore, presenting reinforced property with reduplicative adjectives tends to be more persuasive than the pure property designated by corresponding qualitative adjectives. For example,

(72) *jizhu, ni yao zizixixi de nian.*

remember 2s must carefully DE read

'Remember, you must read it carefully.'

(73) *zai zhe yi ge duo yue li, Gao Junyi zizixixi kaolii le ziji de houbansheng.*

at this one CL more month Gao Junyi carefully consider AM self DE rest-life

'Since over one month ago, Gao Junyi has given a careful thought about how to spend his rest life.'

In (72) the reduplicated adjective *zizixixi* involves the speaker's expectation or request to the hearer's reading. Compared to its qualitative adjective *zixi* 'careful', the reduplicated adjective definitely set up a higher standard. In this way, the speaker tends to believe that the hearer would take it up more seriously. In (73) the reduplicated adjective *zizixixi* marks off the subject's way of considering about his rest life. Compared to its corresponding qualitative adjective *zixi*, the reduplicative form indicates a higher degree of care. The linguistic choice may induce the reader to believe

that the subject really thought about the matter time and again.

Sometimes, the speaker may feel that the quantity indicated by modified adjectives is not persuasive enough to manipulate the audience. One way to resolve the problem is to repeat the modifier, or to repeat the modified adjective as a whole in order to augment the degree of the object's property. The repeated forms definitely sound more powerful and convincing. For instance,

- (74) *ta shi yi ge hen laoshi hen laoshi de ren.*  
3s be one CL very honest very honest DE person  
'He is a very very honest man.'
- (75) *zuotian de yu hen da hen da.*  
yesterday DE rain very big very big  
'The rain yesterday was very heavy.'
- (76) *ta zuo de feichang feichang hao.*  
3s do DE very very well  
'She did extremely well.'
- (77) *ta chuan de tebie tebie **shimao**.*  
3s wear DE particularly particularly fashionable  
'Her clothes are particularly fashionable.'

Strictly speaking, the process involved in the examples above is purely repetition rather than reduplication since the generated forms are not lexical words. Intersubjectively, the repetitive forms are more convincing than the non-reduplicated forms, and the hearers are more easily persuaded to think and act as intended by the speaker. For instance, in (74) the hearer may be persuaded to believe in the subject's honesty due to the speaker's high evaluation.

Generally speaking, reduplicated adjectives cannot be modified by degree modifiers. However, some reduplicated adjectives can be modified by *you dian* 'a bit'. This can be explained by intersubjectivity features of using reduplicative adjectives. For instance,

- (78) *jintian huichang de qifen youdian guaiguai de.*  
 today meeting-room DE atmosphere a bit odd DE  
 ‘The atmosphere in the meeting room is a bit odd.’
- (79) *zhe haizi kanqilai youdian shasha de.*  
 this child look a little foolish DE  
 ‘The child looks a bit foolish.’
- (80) *ta zuo shiqing zong youdian tuotuolala de.*  
 3s do things always a little sluggish DE  
 ‘He is always a bit sluggish when doing anything.’

Since reduplicated adjectives designate a high-degree state of property, they convey the speaker’s high certainty to the judgment. However, talking in a high certainty often sounds impolite in that the hearer may feel that they are imposed to accept the speaker’s opinion. Therefore, the modifier *youdian* ‘a bit’ is used in order to attenuate the intensity of the tone so that the speaker sounds less imposing, and leaves room for the hearers to think or act otherwise. This is also a way showing the speaker’s politeness (see Chapter 8).

In brief, the reduplicative adjectives are used by the speaker to manipulate the hearers so that they may think or act in expected ways. The high-degree meaning of reduplicated adjectives tends to make the speaker’s utterance sound more persuasive to the hearer. In this sense, the intersubjectivity of reduplicative adjectives is manifested in communications.

## 9.6 Summary

In this chapter I have examined the uses of reduplicative adjectives in Mandarin, and have given a detailed explanatory account for their meanings and functions. Adjectival reduplication in Mandarin may fulfil two functions, namely showing

vividness and evoking affect, while its basic grammatical meaning is to designate quantification. However, most of the previous studies generalized the quantitative features of reduplicative adjectives via the researchers' intuitions, without providing convincing evidence.

I have shown in this chapter that reduplicative adjectives designate specific points on the property scale, and the points fall in the region of high-quantity segment. In other words, on the property scale activated by qualitative adjectives, the reduplicated adjective designate a particular point on the segment '*hen A*'. This quantificational feature makes a huge difference in that numerous syntactic behaviours of reduplicative adjectives can be traced back to it. Moreover, because of its nature as a definitive point on the scale, its syntactic behaviours are quite different from modified adjectives, which designate segments on the scale. Subjectively, apart from evoking affects on the hearer's mind, the reduplicated adjectives are basically used for depiction, and the described things could be objects or state of affairs in reality or yet to exist. In addition, reduplicative adjectives can indicate the speaker's covert rather than overt evaluation, high certainty and high expectation. Intersubjectively, the speaker uses reduplicative adjectives to depict the property of the objects or state of affairs in order to manipulate the hearers so that they think or act in certain ways.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Conclusion**

This thesis has characterized the subjectivity underlying the adjectival uses in spoken Mandarin. In spite of its semantic complexity as well as large membership, the adjective category in Chinese has not been extensively studied and investigated as other lexical categories such as nouns and verbs. With regard to the adjective studies in Chinese linguistics, much research has concentrated on the syntactic and semantic functions of the adjective category, while little attention has been paid to the pragmatic functions fulfilled by the adjectives in actual uses. Based on the perspective that adjectives are often utilized to register the language users' attitudes or evaluations, this study has mainly explored how different types of adjectives as well as adjectival constructions in spoken Mandarin are employed to demonstrate the Mandarin speakers' subjectivity.

#### **10.1 Summary of the Major Findings**

A systematic investigation of the uses of adjectives reveals that the adjective category in Mandarin is used to fulfil five basic pragmatic functions, namely subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. Subcategorizing adjectives classify the objects into a limited number of subcategories according to their property features. Identifying adjectives single out one or some particular objects as the topic of discussion. Evaluative adjectives demonstrate the speaker's judgement or attitude regarding the quality or property of the entities/events at



issue. Specifying adjectives serve to elaborate the property characteristics of the targets, whereas depictive adjectives present a vivid description of the property state of the entities/events. Among these pragmatic functions, the adjectives realizing evaluation and depiction functions are inherently subjective since the speakers' own judgements or beliefs are embedded through the adjectival choice. The pragmatic functions of individual adjective usually can not be identified in isolation. Instead, they must be examined and interpreted in actual contexts before their exact pragmatic functions are determined. Moreover, although the pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives are closely related to their syntactic functions, no rigorous correspondence can be identified between these functions. In addition, it has been found that evaluation is the predominant pragmatic function in Chinese spoken discourse, suggesting that adjectives assume a pivotal role in everyday interactions for people to convey their attitudes and/or emotions.

With respect to the nature of evaluative expressions, this thesis has shown that the adjectival evaluations in Mandarin are essentially reference-point constructions. That is, when people use adjectives to evaluate the quality or property of entities/events, certain standards or norms are activated and compared in order to conceptualize the property values of the targets. The reference points might be explicitly presented or implicitly accessed. The implicit reference points could be realized by normality, expectations, goals or needs, or social norms. Among them, the normality is construed by the conceptualizer, yet determined by cultural or communal factors. The evaluations elicited by a comparison with such implicit reference points are subjective in nature since the

conceptualizers' personal beliefs are involved. In contrast, a reference to explicit and measurable properties renders the evaluation objective in nature due to its independence from the conceptualizers' construal. Interactively speaking, the expression of evaluation is an important device for the speaker to align or disalign the audience. Therefore, the choice of adjectives can not only mark off the speaker/writer's value position, but also construct solidarity between interlocutors. This study indicates that a complete evaluation system needs to integrate not only the evaluator and the evaluated target, but also the standards or norms for reference and the role of the hearers.

As a special type of qualitative adjectives, the affective adjectives in Mandarin are examined in order to unveil their pragmatic features. It is demonstrated that affective adjectives are mainly evaluative in function, and the subjectivity of such adjectives varies in degree when the emotions of different Emoters are evaluated. To be specific, when the speaker declares his/her own emotions, the affective adjectives are absolutely subjective. By contrast, when the emotions of other Emoters are evaluated, the affective adjectives used are relatively subjective since the stored emotion frames are activated as reference points for the conceptualization.

The thesis has investigated the meanings and functions of three typical adjectival constructions in Mandarin, namely the constructions of adjectival negation, adjectival intensification and adjectival reduplication. With respect to the adjectival negation, it has been shown that the adjectives subjected to negation are generally gradable adjectives, which can be divided into three types according to their conceptual meanings, i.e., limit adjectives, scalar adjectives and extreme adjectives. Limit adjectives are

complementaries, and the negation of a limit adjective  $A$  is equal to the meaning of its complementary adjective  $\bar{A}$ . Scalar adjectives are prototypical adjectives, and the negation of a scalar adjective may equal the meaning of its antonym  $\bar{A}$ , or indicate a mean value of the property characterizing neither  $A$  nor  $\bar{A}$ , or express a low degree of  $A$ . The negation of extreme adjectives indicates a degree lower than the extreme value. The three types of adjectival negation are conceptualized by activating either a binary taxonomy of a conceptual domain or a property scale. The ‘low-degree’ meaning expressed by negated adjectives in Mandarin is conceptualized by a reference to the normal or expectative property values in the speaker’s cognition. Thus, the adjectival negation constructions may demonstrate speaker’s subjectivity in use.

Moreover, the qualitative adjectives in Mandarin are usually modified by various degree adverbs, indicating that the adjectival evaluations can be augmented or attenuated. It is found that a degree-encoding principle is observed when an adjectival evaluation is articulated in spoken Mandarin. That is, in canonical situations, the degree of the evaluation is always specified when a primary evaluation is made in Mandarin. The choice of different intensifiers usually denotes the speaker’s construal of the deviation from the reference points, namely the normality or expectation. Therefore, the adjectival intensifications in Mandarin are characterized by subjectivity.

The reduplication of adjectives is often treated as a special type of state adjectives in Mandarin. It has been shown that those spoken, commendatory gradable adjectives appealing to human sensations are more likely to have reduplicable forms. As to the semantics of adjectival reduplication, this thesis shows that its primary semantic

function is to signify a reinforcement of the degree meaning. Pragmatically, the reduplicated adjectives are often used by Chinese speakers to make a vivid characterization of the property state (viz. fulfilling the depiction function) so that the audiences are aligned to the value positions advanced by the speakers. No matter whether the reduplication designates a pure depiction or an evaluation-associated depiction, the speaker's subjectivity is implied.

In general, all of these typical adjective constructions in Mandarin are subjective in the sense that the speaker's personal construal to the property value of entities/events is accessed.

## **10.2 Significance of the Study**

The findings in this study are of considerable significance since the subjective features of the adjectives in Mandarin are systematically investigated and justified, thus filling the gap in the adjective studies. In Chinese linguistics, the syntactic and semantic features of adjectives have been extensively examined, while the pragmatic features of adjectives remain underexplored. In this study, apart from demonstrating the basic pragmatic functions of Mandarin adjectives in use, I have also revealed how the adjective category is employed by Chinese speakers to articulate their evaluations and attitudes. These findings bring to light parts of the interpersonal function of the adjectives in spoken Mandarin, which contributes to our deeper understanding of the adjective category in the Chinese language. The subjectivity of the adjectives in spoken Mandarin should be conducive to building up an overall picture of the characterization

of adjectives in the Chinese grammar system.

Moreover, the study has revealed that the grammatical constructions are constrained, to a large extent, by the pragmatic and discursive functions they have to perform. This may serve as supporting evidence for the commitment in cognitive-functional linguistics that the linguistic expressions are not autonomous, but are motivated by a wide range of pragmatic and cognitive principles (Lakoff, 1987, Langacker, 1987, 1991a; Taylor, 2002; Evans and Green, 2006). For instance, when the adjectives designating non-human property are negated, the negative forms usually cannot be intensified by degree adverbs; in contrast, when the adjectives designating human property are negated, the negative forms may or may not be intensified by degree adverbs (see Chapter 8 for detail). It is demonstrated that the grammatical behaviours of the adjectives involved are determined by the politeness principle. That is, people need to take into consideration the face needs of others when evaluating the human-related property, whereas there are no such needs in the evaluation of non-human related property. Therefore, this pragmatic principle determines the acceptability of grammatical constructions. Many other examples can be found in the thesis, indicating that extralinguistic factors may determine the syntactic behaviours of the language.

Furthermore, the subjective reference points underlying the evaluations explored in this thesis are not only crucial for the interpretation of the mechanism as well as subjectivity of adjectival constructions, but also valuable for the explanation of a wide range of linguistic phenomena such as quantitative negation, degree adverbs and other

special constructions. The reference points of normality and expectation in particular, have considerable theoretical significance and should be enlightening for many related studies.

Lastly, the subjective features of adjectives generalized in this study are by no means unique to the Chinese language alone. Instead, many conclusions are applicable to the adjectives in other languages in the world. For instance, the adjectives in English may also fulfil five basic pragmatic functions: subcategorization, identification, evaluation, specification and depiction. The adjectival evaluations may also take the four aspects as reference points: normality, expectation, goals/needs, and social norms. In addition, the adjectival negation and adjectival intensification in English also demonstrate the speaker's subjectivity due to the fact that the speaker's construal to the quality or property of the target is referred to. Therefore, this thesis may inform on adjective studies in other languages.

### **10.3 Limitations and Further Works**

One of the potential limitations of this study is that the spoken data used for analysis are mainly extracted from the CCL corpus as well as the interview dialogues. The language used in face-to-face interviews, as an institutional discourse, is restricted due to the interactive contexts. That is, the adjectives used in other spoken genres like casual talks between friends might be different in style. Therefore, the observations in this study might not cover all of the adjective functions in Mandarin spoken discourse. In future studies, more adjective instances in diverse spoken genres can be analyzed to verify or revise the generalizations in this research. In addition, the subjectivity of

adjectives in written discourse is also an area requiring more academic efforts.

Another limitation is that the Mandarin adjectives explored in this thesis are confined to the typical qualitative and state adjectives. The nominalised adjectives and those involving state changes are excluded from this study, since they have arguably lost their identity as adjectives. As peripheral members of the adjective category, their subjectivity (or objectivity) can be explored in order to demonstrate a full landscape of the adjective category in Mandarin. Moreover, this study does not address the subjectivity of discourse adjectives as a category (Adamson, 2000; Taranto, 2008), such as *mingxian* ‘clear’ and *xianran* ‘obvious’ in the following utterances.

- (1) *hen mingxian, na fen hetong you wenti.*  
very clear that CL contract have problem  
‘It is clear that that contract is problematic.’
- (2) *hen xianran, ni jue buhui zheyang xiang.*  
very obvious 2s absolutely not this-way think  
‘It is obvious that you would never think in that way.’

The functions of such adjectives in Mandarin spoken discourse can be investigated in the future.

## Appendix

### Spoken Data for Analysis in Section 4.4

Programmes	Broadcasting time	Sessions	Word count	Tokens of Adjectives
Luyu you yue (A Date with <i>Luyu</i> )	23 Oct, 2008	1	2367	78
Tianxia nüren (Women Under the Heaven)	23 Sep, 2006	1	2990	80
Fenghuangwang feichangdao (An Interview by Phoenix web)	19 Jun, 2008	1	2903	51
Xinlang huiketing (An interview by sina.com)	18 Aug, 2008	1	3095	90
Mingren mianduimian (Face-to-face with Celebrities)	11 Jan, 2008	1	3422	76
Huaren shijie (Chinese in the World)	05 Nov, 2008	1	2261	49
Wangyi fangtan (An interview by 163.com)	14 Aug, 2008	1	3949	104
Pin wei (Casual Talk)	18 Nov, 2008	1	2800	56
Zhongguowang fangtan (An interview by China.com)	28 Jul, 2008	1	3155	76
Fengyun duihua (Fengyun Talk Show)	19 Sep, 2009	1	3108	39
Total:		10	30050	699



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