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A diachronic study of epistemic *kongpa* in Mandarin discourse

Ying YANG, Tak-Sum WONG & Foong Ha YAP
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Stance

- **Stance-taking** is an essential and pervasive activity in social interactions (Englebretson 2007; Heritage & Raymond 2005; Wu 2004; Hunston & Thompson 2000).
- The term ‘**stance**’ refers to a speaker’s expression of his/her viewpoint, judgment or evaluation, attitude, or degree of commitment to a proposition/utterance.
- The study of stance can contribute to smooth and effective communication.
- Our current research focuses on the identification of **stance marking strategies**, in particular those strategies that are realized through linguistic means.
- One of our goals is to better understand how these linguistic stance devices help to establish or refute ‘common ground’ between interlocutors.

Stance-taking in Chinese

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

■ Adverbials

他 連 這 道 題 都 不 會？

tā lián zhè dào tí dōu bù huì

3SG even DEM CL question even NEG know

'He doesn't **even** know how to answer this question?'

■ Negative interrogatives

你 (不) 能 讓 我 靜 一 下 嗎？

nǐ (bù) néng ràng wǒ jìng yī xià mā

2SG (NEG) able let 1SG quiet one CL Q

'Can't you just leave me alone?'

■ Sentence final particles

再 試 試 吧。

zài shìshì ba

again try try SFP

'Have another try (please).'

Epistemic marker *kongpa* in Mandarin Chinese

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

將來 外國 人 要起 罪魁 來，
jiānglái wàiguó rén yàoqǐ zuìkuí lái
future foreign people request.up chief.criminal come

恐怕 一 個 也 跑不掉。
kǒngpà yī gè yě pǎobudiào
fear one CL also run-NEG-RESULT

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

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

Data

Diachronic

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

Conversations

- CCTV programme *xiǎocuīshuōshì* 小崔說事 (Talk to Xiao Cui)
- CCTV programme *shíhuàshíshuō* 實話實說 (Talk the Truth)

Research Questions

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

Research Questions--contd.

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

Functions of *kongpa*

- Lexical verb
- Epistemic marker
- Inferential (evidential) marker
- Pragmatic hedger

Functions of *kongpa* (1)

Lexical verb

兩 個 王子 都 恐怕 對方 會 抑制
liǎng gè wángzǐ dōu kǒngpà duìfāng huì yìzhì
two CL prince all fear opposite.party FUT restrain

馬 速 或 用 卑鄙 的 手段 致 勝
mǎ sù huò yòng bēibì de shǒuduàn zhì shèng
horse speed or use mean ATTR way achieve victory

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

(*Hāfúguǎnlǐpéixùnxiàlièquánjí*, 哈佛管理培训系列全集,
The collection of Harvard Business Management Training)

Functions of *kongpa* (2)

Epistemic marker 2-1

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

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

恐怕 一 個 多 小時 就 可以 到 了，
kǒngpà yī gè duō xiǎoshí jiù kěyǐ dào le
fear one CL many hour just able arrive PERF

Functions of *kongpa* (2) contd.

Epistemic marker 2-2

那 該 有 多 好 。

nà gāi yǒu duō hǎo

that should EXST how good

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

(*Xīnhuázàixiàn* 新華在線 Xinhua Online News, 09-03-2004)

Functions of *kongpa* (3)

Inferential marker

但 由於 今年 比賽 競技 水平 很 高 ,
dàn yóuyú jīnnián bǐsài jìngjì shuǐpíng hěn gāo
but because this year match competition level very high

大多數 業餘 選手 恐怕 很 難 通過 資格 選拔賽 。
dàduōshù yèyú xuǎnshǒu kǒngpà hěn nán tōngguò zīgé xuǎnbásài
majority amateur contestant fear very hard pass qualify trial

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

Functions of *kongpa* (4)

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

IE: 但是 作為 戲劇 學院 , 電影 學院 ,
dànshì zuòwéi xìjù xuéyuàn diànyǐng xuéyuàn
however as drama academy film academy

每 年 就 招 五 六 十 個 人 ,
měi nián jiù zhāo wǔ liù shí gè rén
every year just recruit five six ten CL people

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

就 招 那些 形象 不 好 的 ,
jiù zhāo nàxiē xíngxiàng bù hǎo de
just recruit those appearance NEG good ATTR

Functions of *kongpa* (4) contd.

Pragmatic hedger

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

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

Pragmatic softener
– subjective &
intersubjective

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

(*Shíhuàshíshuō* 實話實說 01-04-2005)

Syntactic position of *kongpa*

- Clause-initial
- Clause-medial

Syntactic positions of *kongpa*

Utterance-initial

恐怕 飯店 的 員工 也 未必 說得清楚
kǒngpà fàndiàn de yuángōng yě wèibì shuōdeqīngchǔ
fear hotel GEN staff also not.necessary say-DEG-clear

“賓至如歸”， 是 甚麼。
bīnzhìrúguī shì shénme
guest.come.like.return COP what

‘I’m afraid that not even the staff in the hotel (let alone the guests) can clearly explain what *binzhirugui* means.’ (*binzhirugui* is a motto within the hotel industry that emphasizes the importance of making a guest feel at home)

(*Rènmín Rìbào* 人民日報 *Peoples’ Daily*, January 1994)

Syntactic positions of *kongpa*--contd.

Utterance-medial

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

這 個 外地 人 恐怕 也 不 知道。
zhè gè wàidì rén kǒngpà yě bù zhīdào
this CL non-local people fear also NEG know

‘As for the Beijing hand-pulled noodles, you know what, non-locals **probably** don’t know about it either.’

(Data from *1982 Běijīng Dialectal Survey* 1982 年北京話調查資料)

no utterance tag
tokens were attested in
our corpora

Syntactic position of *wo kongpa* in Contemporary Chinese (subjective & intersubjective readings)

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

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

*Note: Table 3 with tokens of *wo kongpa* is a subset extracted from Table 2 with tokens of *kongpa*

Syntactic position of *kongpa* in Contemporary Chinese

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

| Functions of <i>kongpa</i> | Syntactic position of <i>kongpa</i> | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---|
| | Utterance-initial | Utterance-medial | Utterance-final (tag) | Total no. of tokens of <i>kongpa</i> sampled in the present study |
| Lexical verb expressing anxiety ('I'm afraid') | 2 | 10 | 0 | 12 |
| Epistemic marker 'probably' | 428 | 512 | 0 | 940 |
| Inferential marker 'it seems to be' | 26 | 22 | 0 | 48 |
| Total no. of tokens of <i>kongpa</i> sampled in the present study (out of the total 10,554 tokens in the entire corpus) | 456 | 544 | 0 | 1000 |

Diachronic development of *kongpa*

- Tang
- Clause-medial

Diachronic findings

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

| Functions of <i>kongpa</i> | Period in which <i>kongpa</i> was attested | | | | | | Total no. of tokens of <i>kongpa</i> |
|---|--|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Tang & Five Dynasties (618 – 960) | Song (960 – 1279) | Yuan (1279-1368) | Ming (1368-1644) | Qing (1644-1911)* | Republican Era (1911-1949)* | |
| Lexical verb expressing anxiety ('I'm afraid') | 20 | 16 | 155 | 578 | 603 | 302 | 1674 |
| Epistemic marker 'probably' | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 92 | 287 | 383 |
| Inferential marker 'it seems to be' | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 15 | 61 | 78 |
| Total no. of tokens of <i>kongpa</i> sampled in the present study (out of the total 3495 tokens in the entire corpus) | 20 | 18 | 156 | 581 | 710 | 650 | 2135 |

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

Diachronic: *kongpa* as a lexical verb

Earliest attested token of *kongpa*: Tang dynasty

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

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

A strong
reading
involving
fear

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

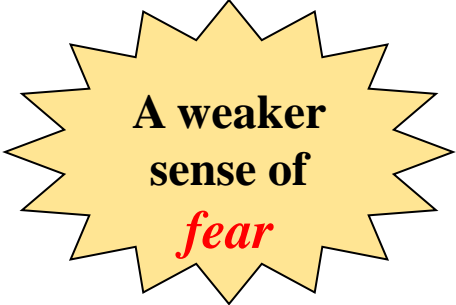
(*Guānniú* 官牛 ‘Official Cow’, a poem by Bái Jūyì, 772-846 AD,
Tang dynasty)

Diachronic: *kongpa* as a lexical verb--contd.

婆婆 听 得 , 半晌 无 言 ,
pópo tīng dé bànshǎng wú yán
mother.in.law listen get a.long.time NEG word

欲 待 要 罵 , 恐怕 人 知 笑話 ,
yù dài yào mà kǒngpà rén zhī xiàohua
about wait need scope fear people know laugh

只 得 忍氣吞聲 。
zhǐ děi rěnqìtūnshēng
only able restrain.one's.temper



A weaker
sense of
fear

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

(*Qīngpíngshāngtáng huàběn* 清平山堂話本 960-1279 AD, Song dynasty)

Diachronic: *kongpa* as a lexical verb --contd.

如 此 用 功夫 ,
rú cǐ yòng gōngfu
like this use time

恐怕 輕 費了 時月 。
kǒngpà qīng fèile shíyuè
worry frivolously waste-PFV hour.month

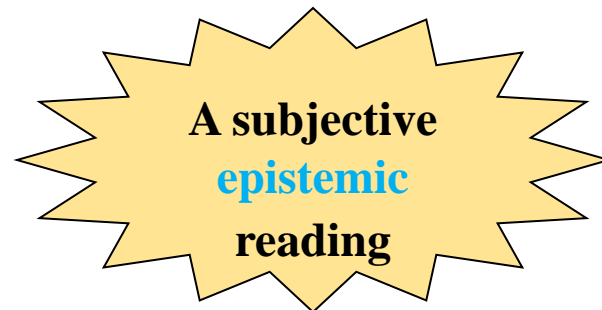


‘If (we) spend time like this, I **worry** (we will just) frivolously waste our time.’

(*Thematic Discourses of Master Zhū* 朱子語類, 1270 AD, Song dynasty)

Diachronic: *kongpa* as an epistemic marker

「 若 要 等 火 熄滅 ,
ruò yào děng huǒ xīmiè
if need wait fire extinguish



恐怕 還 要 一 周 時 哩 。 」
kǒngpà hái yào yī zhōu shí li
fear still need one week time SFP

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

Diachronic: *kongpa* as an inferential marker

朱氏 走 了 幾 步 , 放 心 不 下 ,
zhūshì zǒu le jǐ bù fàng xīn bù xià
Ms. Zhu walk PERF several step put heart NEG down

回 頭 一 看 , 見 丈 夫 手 忙 慌 腳 亂 ,
huí tóu yī kàn jiàn zhàngfu shǒu máng huāng jiǎo luàn
back head one look see husband hand busy flurried foot disorder

做 張 做 智 , 老 大 疑 惑 , 恐 怕 有 些 蹊 蹊 。
zuòzhāngzuòzhì , lǎodà yíhuò , kǒngpà yǒu xiē qīqiāo
behave.strangely very curious fear have some suspicion

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

(*Xǐngshìhéngyán* 醒世恆言 Stories to awaken the world, a story collection by Féng Mènglóng, 1574-1646 AD, Ming dynasty)

1SG+*kongpa*

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

我 恐怕 他 省悟 了 趕將 來

wǒ kǒngpà tā xǐngwù le gǎnjiāng lái

1SG fear 3SG realize PERF catch.PRT come

‘I fear he may catch up with me if he realized (that I had deceived him) ...’
(*Shuǐhǔquánzhuàn* 水滸全轉 Water Margin,
late Yuan dynasty or early Ming dynasty)

這 個 問題 我 恐怕 不 能 回答 你 ，

zhè gè wèntí wǒ kǒngpà bù néng huídá nǐ

this CL question 1SG fear NEG able answer 2SG

因為 我 自己 也 不 知道 。

yīnwèi wǒ zìjǐ yě bù zhīdào

because 1SG self also NEG know

Contemporary *wo kongpa*

‘I’m afraid I can’t answer this question, because I don’t know either.’
(*Yīngxióngwúlèi* 英雄無淚, a fiction by Gǔ Lóng, contemporary)

Kongpa in conversational interactions

IR: 給 您 提 個 意見 啊 。

gěi nín tí ge yìjiàn a

give 2SG.HON point.out CL suggestion SFP

‘A suggestion for you.’

IE: 好 的 。

hǎo de

good ATTR

‘Sure.’

IR: 這 個 是 多 好 的 知 識 啊 。

zhè ge shì duō hǎo de zhīshi a

this CL COP how good ATTR knowledge SFP

干嘛 不 把 它 做 成 什 麼 漫 畫 版 啊 ，

gànmá bù bǎ tā zuò chéng shénme mànhuà bǎn a

why NEG BA 3SG do become what comic version SFP

Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

動漫 版 , 讓 所有 的 人 都 看 ,
dòngmàn bǎn ràng suǒyǒu de rén dōu kàn
animation.and.comic version cause all ATTR people all read

所有 的 人 都 知 道 這 方 面 的 知 識 啊 ?
suǒyǒu de rén dōu zhīdào zhè fāngmiàn de zhīshì a
all ATTR people all know this factor ATTR knowledge SFP

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

IE: 如 果 說 能 夠 做 成 動 漫 版 ,
rúguǒ shuō nénggòu zuò chéng dòngmàn bǎn
if say able do become animation.and.comic version

這 個 , 呢 ... 恐 怕 , 呢 ...
zhè gè e kǒngpà e
this cl part fear part

Pragmatic hedger

Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

就 會 失去 它 很多 的 科學 內涵 。

jiù huì shīqù tā hěnduō de kēxué nèihán

just FUT lose 3SG many ATTR science connotation

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

IR: 它 說 不 準 ， 是 吧 ？

tā shuō bù zhǔn shì ba

3SG say NEG exact COP Q

呃 ... 用 漫畫 說 不 準 。

e yòng mànhuà shuō bù zhǔn

PART use comic say NEG exact

‘It can’t explain well, right? Well, using comics one can’t explain exactly (what one means).’

Kongpa in conversational interactions--contd.

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

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

Pragmatic
softener
– subjective &
intersubjective

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

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

(*Xiǎocuīshuōshì* 小崔說事 18-03-2011)

Grammaticalization process of *kongpa*

Epistemic &
Inferential marker

kongpa
'Probably'

Lexical emotion verb
(wo) kongpa
'(I) fear'

Tang

Qing

The sense of 'fear' is weakening over time

Tang dynasty

Contemporary

Lexicality tests

NEGATION TEST

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

MODAL TEST

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

DEGREE ADVERB TEST

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

Kongpa appears to be rather defective as a lexical verb even in the Tang period.

Some answers to our research questions

- How grammaticalizable are emotion verbs as stance markers? For example, emotions verbs such as Mandarin ‘fear’ verb *kongpa*?
- In general, emotion verbs in Chinese are not frequently grammaticalized into ‘stand-alone’ pragmatic markers.
- The ‘fear’ verbs appear to be more grammaticalizable than other emotion verbs, with equivalents of Mandarin *kongpa* attested in other Sinitic varieties such as Cantonese *taipaa* (< ‘see-fear’).
- Crosslinguistically, Malay has an utterance-final epistemic marker *kot*, which appears to have originated from the ‘fear’ verb *takut*.

Sentence final *Maly kot*

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

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

Matrix clause

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

Utterance-tag

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

Sentence final particle
Clausal integration – a
single intonation unit

Facilitated by elision of
subject and complement

Some answers to our research questions

- What are the **functions** of Mandarin *kongpa*?
 - Lexical verb ‘fear’ (no longer productive)
 - Epistemic marker ‘probably’
 - Inferential marker ‘probably’
- What **syntactic positions** can it occupy?
 - Utterance-initial
 - Utterance-medial
 - Utterance-final possible in colloquial speech (but not productive, and not attested in our corpus)

Some answers to our research questions

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

■ **Functions** of Mandarin *kongpa*

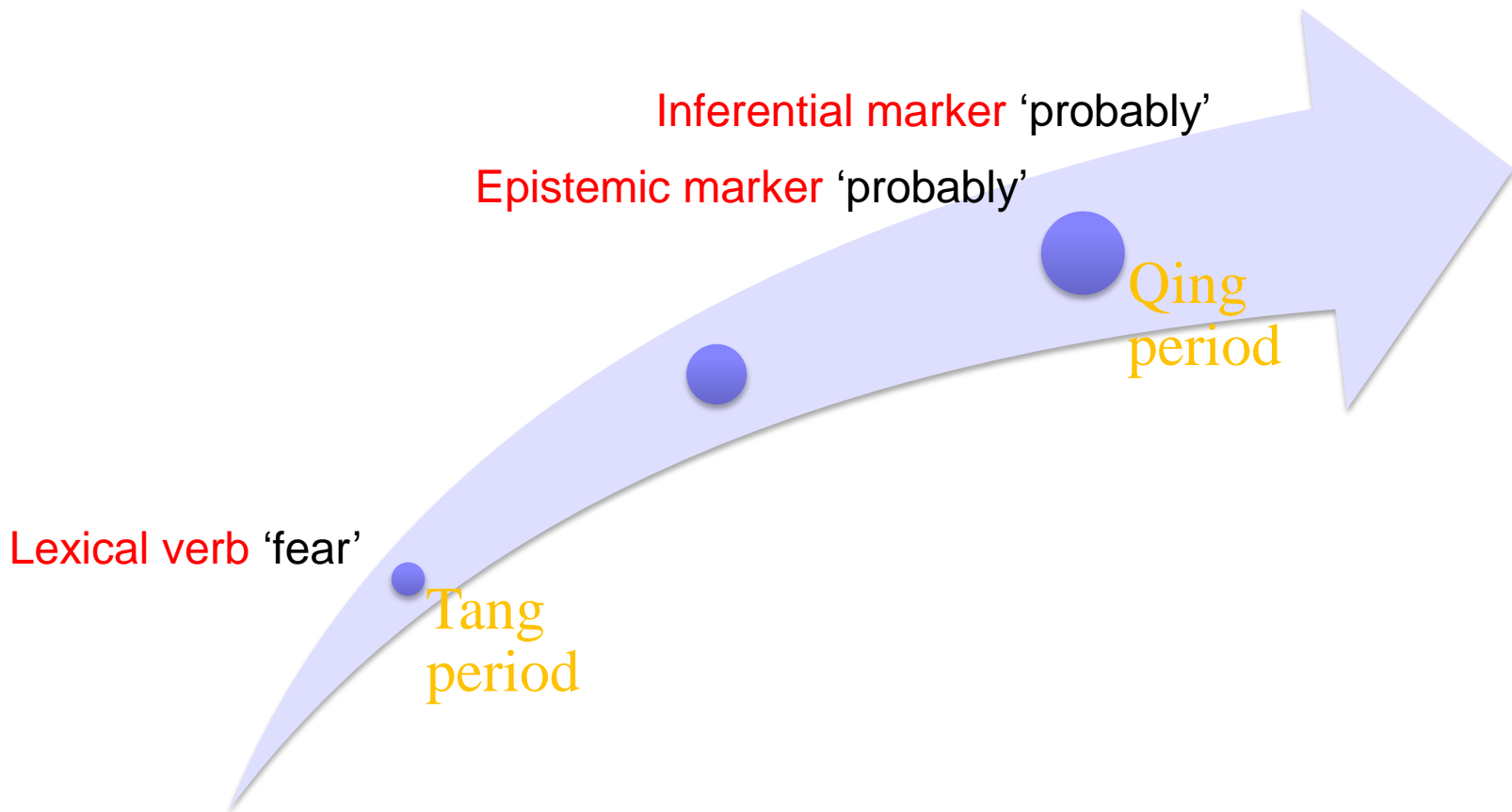
- Lexical verb ‘fear’ (no longer productive)
- Epistemic marker ‘probably’**
- Inferential marker ‘probably’

■ **Syntactic positions** of *kongpa*

- Utterance-initial**
- Utterance-medial**
- Utterance-final possible in colloquial speech
(but not productive, and not attested in our corpus)

Some answers to our research questions

- How did the different functions of *kongpa* develop over time? (Diachronic development)



Syntactic reanalysis and semantic scope expansion

Tang: [IP [VP *kongpa* [CP Complement Clause]]]

Qing: [CP-epistemic *kongpa* [IP Insubordinate Clause]]

[IP NP [epistemic adverb *kongpa*] VP]]

Qing: [CP-inferential *kongpa* [IP Insubordinate Clause]]

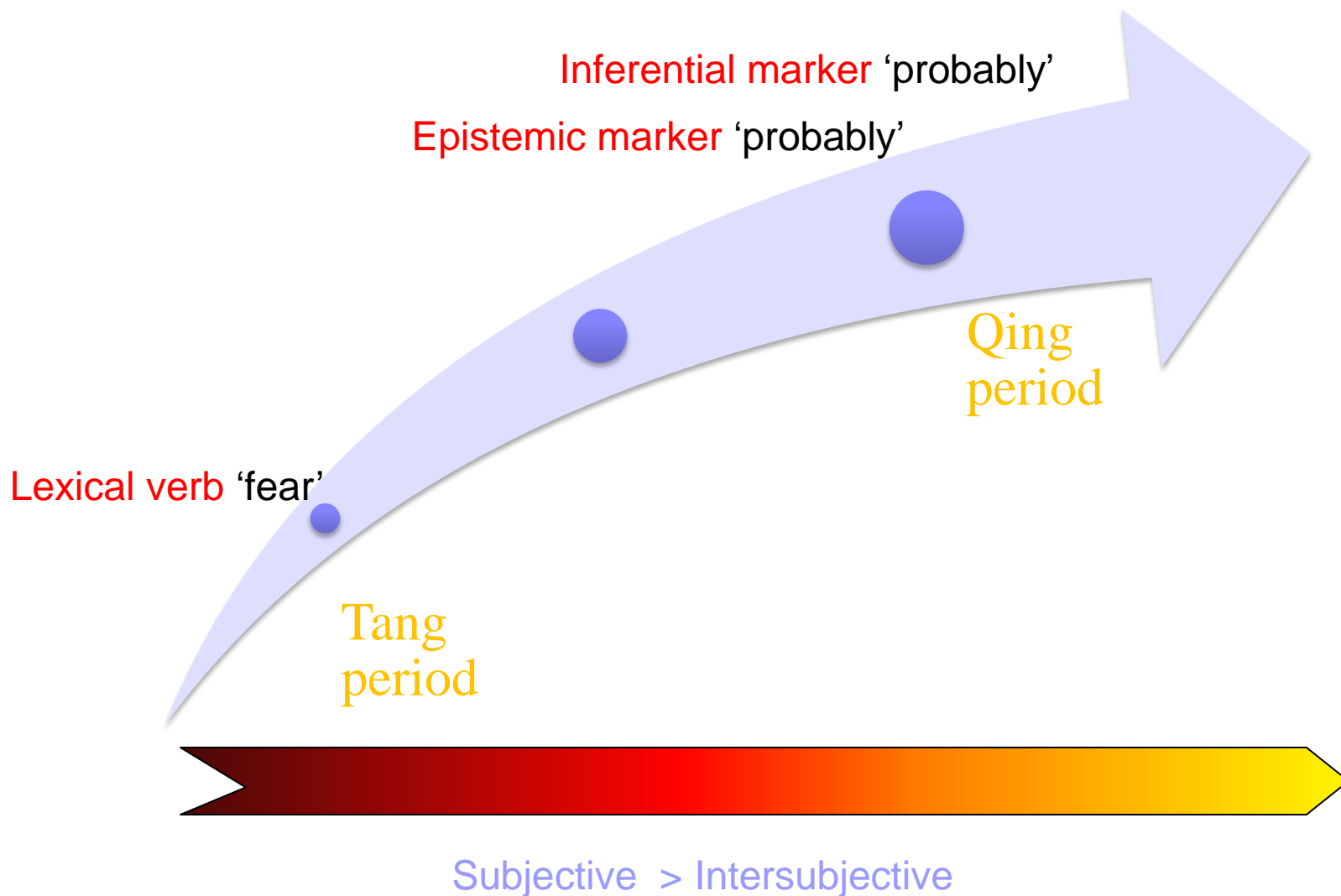
Right-Dislocation (still) not preferred

No Comp-to-Spec raising yet?

Research Questions--contd.

- What do the diachronic data on *kongpa* show concerning the sequence of development, and relationship (if any), between the emergence of subjectivity and the emergence of epistemic modality?
- Subjective readings of *kongpa* were available as early as the Tang and Song period.

Some answers to our research questions



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- PI: Foong Ha Yap (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)
- Co-I’s: Shoichi Iwasaki (UCLA)
 - Frantisek Kratochvil (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)
 - Mark Post (Bern University, Switzerland)
 - Randy LaPolla (Academia Sinica, Taiwan)
 - Seongha Rhee (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul)