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On the Semantic Extension of the Existential/Possessive Negator 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng (Sinitic)

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1.Rucheng and the Rucheng language

The Rucheng district 汝城縣

Geographic location : at the border of three provinces (Hunan, Guangdong, Jiangxi)

Administration： Chenzhou (prefecture level city), Hunan Province, China

Superficie： 2 400, 85 km^2

Population： 397 200 (by 2012）

Demographic composition :

➢Han (Major ethnic)

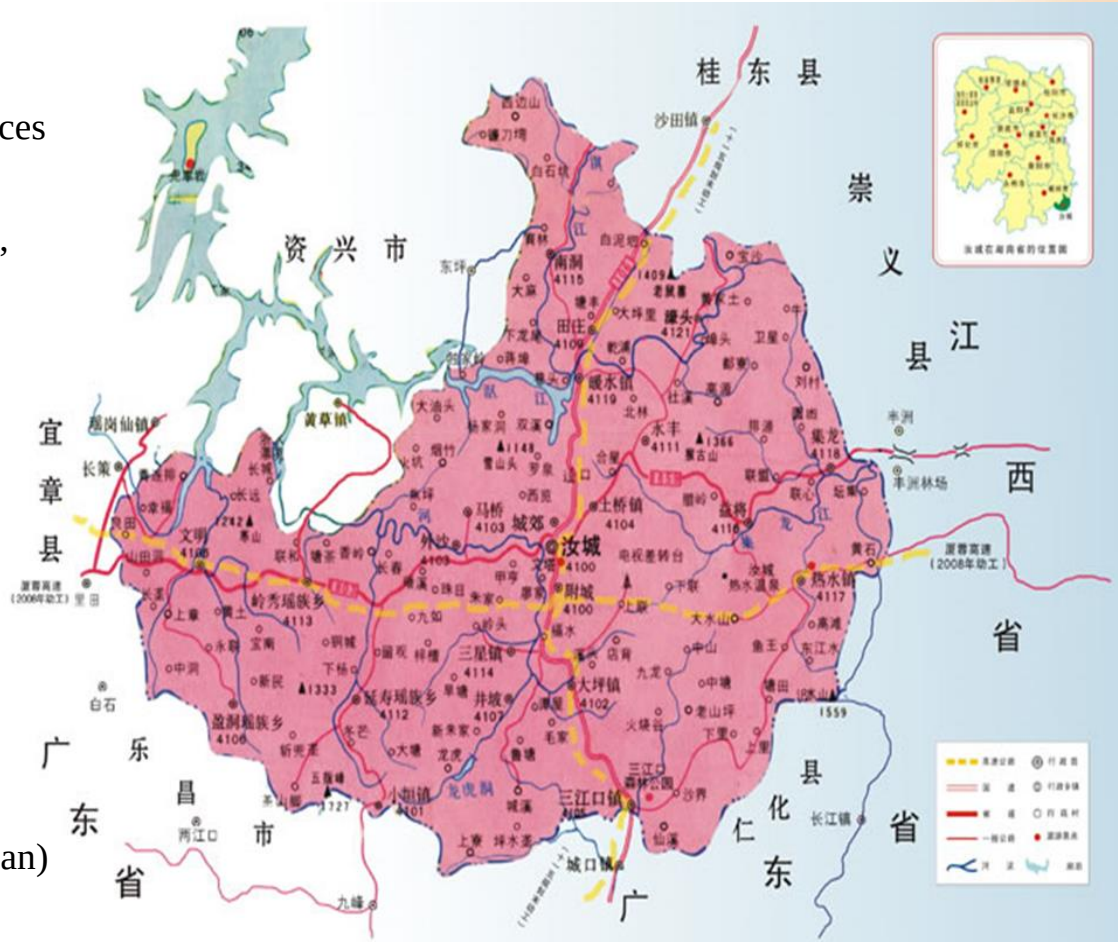
➢Ethnic minorities : Yao (15.27％), She, Dong, Zhuang, Miao, Tujia, etc.

Languages：

➢Rucheng (Lingua franca)

➢Other Sinitic dialects (Xiang,Cantonese, Hakka,Gan)

➢minority languages



The Rucheng language

Rucheng: a Sinitic language whose precise affiliation is a controversial issue.

A Hakka Dialect?

- 2012. *Zhōngguó yǔyán dìtú jí* (dì 2 bǎn): Hànyǔ fāngyán juǎn [Language Atlas of China (2nd edition): Chinese dialect volume].
- Zeng, Xianfei. 2006, *Rucheng Fangyan Yanjiu* [A Study on the Rucheng Dialect].

A Southern Hunan Dialect?

- Chen, Lizhong. 2002. Shilun Hunan Ruchenghua de Guishu [Discussions about the classification of the Rucheng dialect].
- Luo Xinru. 2004. *Xiannan Tuhua Cihui Yanjiu* [A study on the vocabulary of the dialects of Southern Hunan].

2. The Existential/Possessive Negator 冇得 [mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng

Typological studies of negation

The existing typological studies of negation in world languages tend to give their special concern to the morpho-syntactic issues (e.g. Dahl 1979, Payne 1985, Dryer 1988, Miestamo 2005).

However, a study of Chappell & Peyraube (2016) shows that Sinitic languages possess a large set of semantically distinct negative morphemes that a mere syntactic, word-order based typology is insufficient to account for Sinitic languages, and thus proposes a semantic typology of negation for Sinitic languages which comprises 8 types of negation.

Semantic typology of negation for Sinitic languages (Chappell & Peyraube 2016)

8 types of negation:

1. Existential/possessive negatives: ‘there is not’/ ‘to not have’
2. General and volitional negatives: ‘not (want to) V’
3. Perfective negatives: ‘have not Ved’
4. Imminent negatives: ‘not yet Ved’
5. Irrealis negatives: ‘unlikely/unable to V’
6. General prohibitive negatives: ‘Don’t V’
7. ‘Lack of necessity’ negatives: ‘there is no need to V’/ ‘not necessary to V’
8. Injunctive negatives: ‘It’s better not to V’/ ‘you shouldn’t V’

3 mains syntactic categories of negatives in Sinitic languages:

1. Negative existential/possessive verbs (type 1);

2.Adverbial negators of declarative main clauses (the type that Miestamo [2005] calls ‘standard negation’, types 2-5);

3. Adverbial negators of imperative clauses which is known as ‘prohibitives’(types 6-8).

Negative system in Rucheng

Types of negation	Min-nan	Rucheng
Existential/possessive negatives: ‘there is not’/ ‘to not have’	無[bo^{24}]	冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}]
General and volitional negatives: ‘not (want to) V’	伓[m^{22}]; 伓愛[mmai^{21}]; 無愛[boai^{21}]	毋[n̩^{55}]
Perfective negatives: ‘have not Ved’	無[bo^{24}]	冇[mau^{33}]
Imminent negatives: ‘not yet Ved’	未[be^{21}]	還冇 [ɦa^{55}mau^{33}]
Irrealis negatives: ‘unlikely/unable to V’	𣍐(袂) [bue^{22}~ be^{22}]	毋得[n̩^{55}tæ^{21}]
General prohibitive negatives: ‘Don’t V’	[勿爱] [mai^{21}]	毋要[n̩^{55}ɲjau^{43}]
‘Lack of necessity’ negatives: ‘there is no need to V’/ ‘not necessary to V’	[(伓)免] [(m^{22})bien^{53}]	毋□ [n̩^{55} tsən^{33}]; 毋消 [n̩^{55} ɕjau^{33}]
Injunctive negatives: ‘It’s better not to V’/ ‘you shouldn’t V’	孬[(m^{22})mo^{53}]	———

Negative system in Rucheng (2)

7 types of negatives in Rucheng (vs. 8 types of negatives in Minnan)

3 specific negators:

1. the general and volitional negative 毋[n̩^{55}]
2. the perfective negative 冇[mau^{33}]
3. the existential/possessive negative 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}]

Existential/possessive negatives

Existential negative and possessive negative:

Existential negative: negates existence of an object in a certain location.

Possessive negative: negates one’s possession/ownship of an object.

Existential/possessive negatives (2)

Typological issues:

In Asian languages, verbs that express existence can often express possession (see for example Clark 1989, Yue-Hashimoto 1993).

Chappell & Peyraube (2016):

1. Independent negative existential verbs are found in all Sinitic languages apart from standard Mandarin, and these existential negators express not only non-existence, but also non-possession.
2. Sinitic languages use a verbal negator to express non-existence and non-possession, but adverbial negators for other types of negation.

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng: A verbal existential/possessive negator

In Rucheng, the existential/possessive negator 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is composed by the adverbial perfective negator 冇[mau^{33}] 'have not Ved' and the verb 得[tæ^{21}].

Verb 得： 得1: 'obtain' (transitive verb)→ 得2： 'can' (modal vertb)

1)

你	從	渠	□子	**得**	倒	□	多	好處
ṇ^{33}	ts^{h}oŋ^{55}	tɕi^{33}	naŋ^{43}tɕi^{33}	tæ^{21}	tɔ^{21}	koŋ^{34}	tu^{33}	ħau^{21}tɕ^{h}y^{43}
2SG	from	3SG	there	obtain	PFV	so	many	benefit

還 毋 夠？
ħa^{55} ṇ^{55} kəu^{34}
still NEG enough

'Isn't it enough that you got so much benefit from him?'

2)

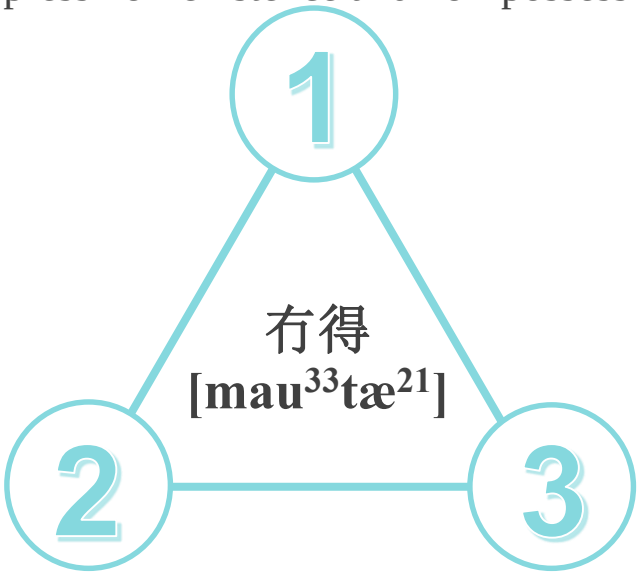
冇得	□	爹	**得**	有	你	嗎？
mau^{33}tæ^{21}	ɲjou^{21}	tjɛ^{34}	tæ^{21}	jou^{33}	ṇ^{33}	ma^{33}
NEG	your	father	can	exist	you	Q

'Without your father, how can there be you？'

The multifunctionality of the negative verb 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}]

得1: existential/possessive verbal negator ‘there is not’/ ‘to not have’

Express non-existence and non-possession



得2：negative modal verb ‘cannot’

Express that someone or some social norm do not allow an event to take place.

得3：negative causative verb ‘to not let’

express that some person with authority do not allow someone to carry out an action.

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as an existential/possession negative marker

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] + NP : express the non-existence or non-possession (opposed to *jou^{33}*有 'there be; to have'):

3) a.底□ 冇得 水。
tɛi^{33}naŋ^{43} mau^{33}tæ^{21} swɛi^{21}
inside NEG_{EXSIT} water
'There is no water inside.'

b.底□ 有 水。
tɛi^{33}naŋ^{43} jou^{33} swɛi^{21}
inside there.be water
'There is water inside.'

4) a.告訴 你 我 冇得 錢!
kau^{34}su^{43} ɳ^{33} ŋɛi^{33} mau^{33}tæ^{21} tɕ^{h}ja^{55}
tell 2SG 1SG NEG_{POSS} money
'I told you that I have no money!'

b. 告訴 你 我 有 錢!
kau^{34}su^{43} ɳ^{33} ŋɛi^{33} jou^{33} tɕ^{h}ja^{55}
tell 2SG 1SG have money
'I told you that I have money!'

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as an existential/possession negative marker (2)

Similar to the existential negator 没有*méiyǒu* in mandarin, 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng can be used before a measure phrase expressing a certain quantity or in an inferior comparative construction to express “less than” or “inferior to”.

5) 咯 檯 冇得 一 米 五。
ki^{43} twai^{55} mau^{33}tæ^{21} ji^{43} mi^{21} n̩^{21}
this table NEG_{POSS} one meter five
‘This table is less than one and half meters in diameter.’
‘這桌子（直径）沒有一米五。’

6) 你 還 是 冇得 渠 高。
n̩^{33} ɦa^{55} xɛi^{43} mau^{33}tæ^{21} tɕi^{33} kau^{33}
2SG still COP NEG_{POSS} 3SG tall
‘You are still shorter than him/she.’
‘你還是沒他/她高。’

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as an existential/possession negative marker (3)

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] can also negate some monosyllable action verbs:

7)	咯	酒	超市□	冇得	賣。
	ki^{43}	tɕjou^{21}	ts^{h}au^{33}sɻ^{34}-naŋ^{34}	mau^{33}tæ^{21}	mai^{34}
	this	wine	supermarket-inside	NEG_{EXIST}	sell

‘We can’t find this wine in the supermarket.’

‘這酒超市里買不到。’

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as an existential/possession negative marker (4)

In some contexts, 冇[mau^{33}] is used as the shorter term for 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}], in other words, sometimes 得[tæ^{21}] ‘obtain’ can be dropped.

8) 冇(得) □個 在 屋。
mau^{33}(tæ^{21}) lai^{55}kɛi^{34} ts^{h}ai^{43} wu^{34}
NEG$_{EXIST}$ anyone at house
‘Nobody is at home.’
‘沒人在家。’

9) 冇（得） 味道
mau^{33}(tæ^{21}) wɛi^{34}tau^{43}
NEG$_{EXIST}$ interest
‘boring’
‘沒意思’

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as an existential/possession negative marker (5)

However, the omission of 得[tæ^{21}] in 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is quite restricted, there is only a very limited use of 冇[mau^{33}] on its own as an existential negator.

10) a.我 冇得 钱。
ŋɛi^{33} mau^{33}tæ^{21} tɕ^{h}ja^{55}
1SG NEG$_{POSS}$ money
'I have no money.'
'我沒有錢。'

b.*我 冇 钱。
ŋɛi^{33} mau^{33} tɕ^{h}ja^{55}
1SG NEG$_{POSS}$ money
'I have no money.'
'我沒錢。'

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as a negative modal verb

In some contexts, the negator 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] can serve as a negative modal verb denoting that some person or the circumstances do not allow an event to take place, with a meaning equivalent to ‘cannot’ in English. In other words, the negative modal verb 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] negates the permission by expressing that some person with authority or some social norm respect to whom the happening of an event is impossible. In that case, 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}], which encode a deontic modality (see for example Van der Auwera & Plungian 1998; Palmer 2001) in it, is opposed to 可以[k^{h}u^{21} ji^{21}] ‘can’ and can be replaced with 毋可以[n̩^{55} k^{h}u^{21} ji^{21}] ‘cannot’.

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as a negative modal verb (2)

11) a.	冇得	票	就	冇得	入。
	mau^{33} tæ^{55}	p^{h}jau^{43}	tɕ^{h}jou^{34}	mau^{33}tæ^{21}	jɛ^{33}
	NEG$_{POSS}$	ticket	then	NEG	enter

‘No ticket, no entry.’

‘沒有票就不能進。’ (deontic possibility - permission)

b.	有	票	就	可以	入。
	jou^{33}	p^{h}jau^{43}	tɕ^{h}jou^{34}	k^{h}u^{21}ji^{21}	jɛ^{33}
	have	ticket	then	can	enter

‘You can get in if you have a ticket.’

‘有票就可以進。’

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as a negative causative verb

negative causative verb 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}]:

- opposed to 准[tswən^{21}] ‘allow’ or 許[ɕy^{21}] ‘allow’;
- used to express that some person with authority do not allow somone to carry out an action.

[冇得+NP+VP]： can be used to express a prohibition which is normally expressed by 毋准/毋許[n̩^{55}tswən^{21}/n̩^{55}ɕy^{21}] not-allow ‘to not allow; to not let; to forbid’, note that a prohibition expressed by 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is more insistent, more firm than a prohibition expressed by 毋准/毋許[n̩^{55}tswən^{21}/n̩^{55}ɕy^{21}].

冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] as a negative causative verb (2)

12) □ □ 冇得 渠 出門。

tɕjou^{21} mai^{34} mau^{33}tæ^{21} tɕi^{33} tɕʰɥɛ^{21}mwa^{55}

his/her mother NEG 3SG go.out

‘His/her mother doesn’t allow him/her to go out.’

13) a.關倒 門, 冇得 渠儂 入!

kwa^{33}-tɔ^{21} mwa^{55} mau^{33}tæ^{21} tɕi^{33}nɔ^{21} jɛ^{33}

close-off door NEG 3PL enter

‘Close the door, don’t let them in!’

b.關倒 門, 毋准/毋許 渠儂 入!

kwa^{33}-tɔ^{21} mwa^{55} ṇ^{55}tswən^{21}/ṇ^{55}ɕy^{21} tɕi^{33}nɔ^{21} jɛ^{33}

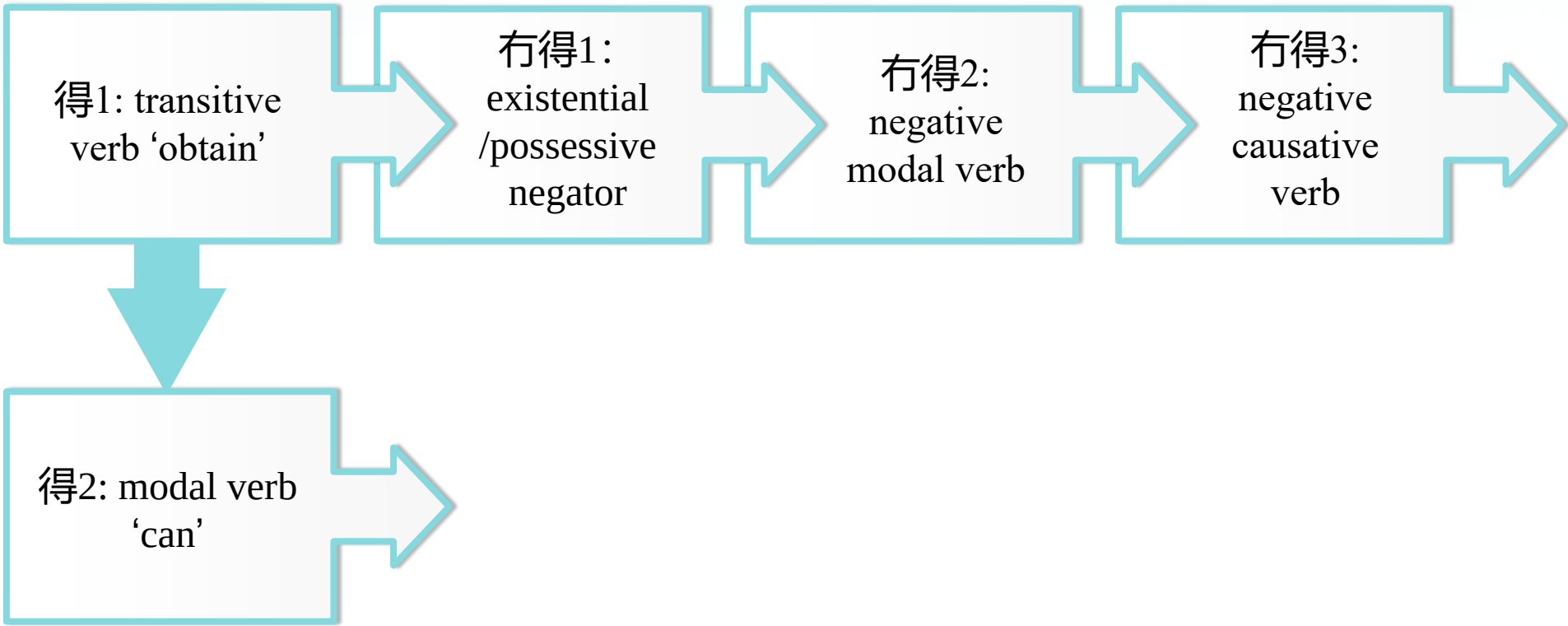
close-off door NEG 3PL enter

‘Close the door, don’t let them in!’

3. The Semantic Extension of 冇得 [mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng

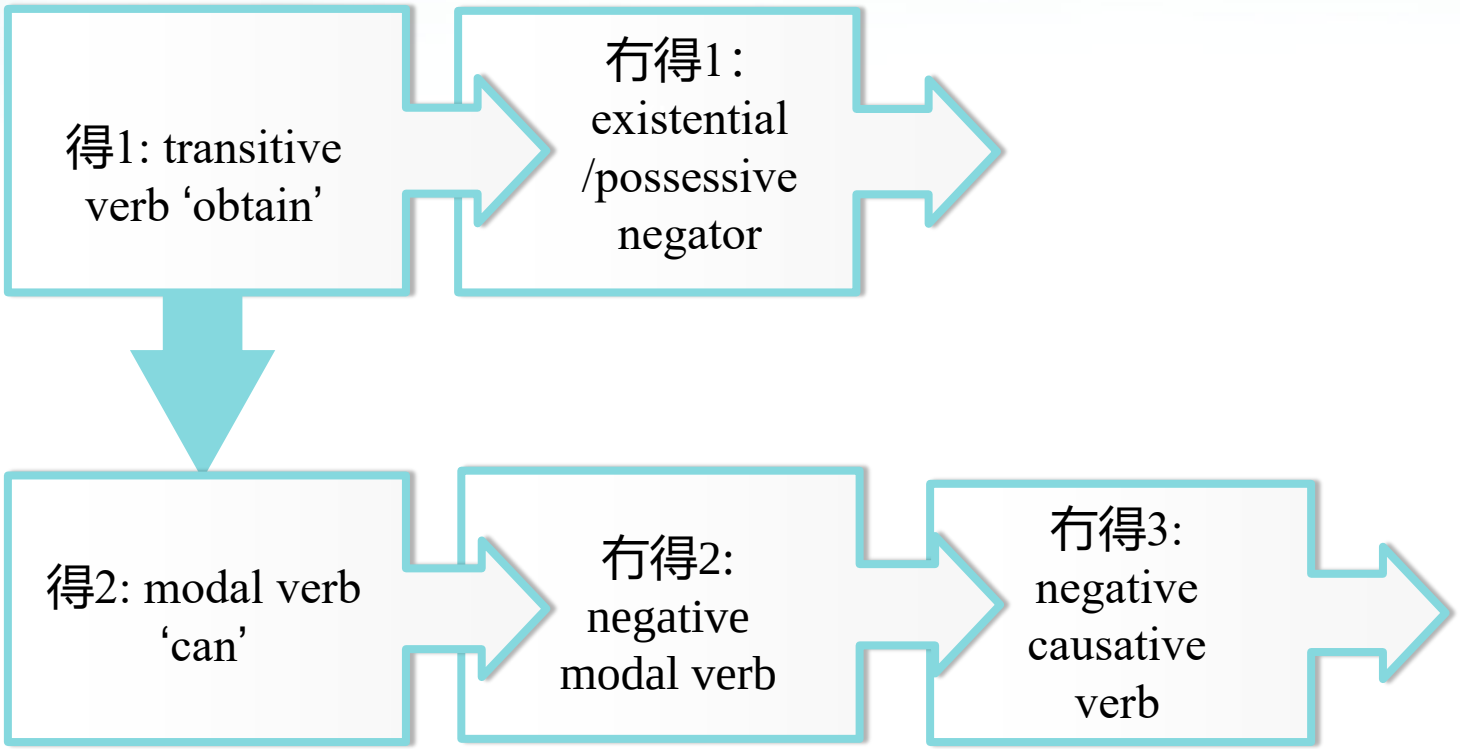
The semantic extension of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng

Hypothesis 1



The semantic extension of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng (2)

Hypothesis 2



The semantic extension of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng (3)

Some diachronic studies show that 得[tæ^{21}] is originally a transitive verb meaning “obtain”, from which its function of modal verb (expressing the possibility that an event takes place) has developed in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (see for example Wang 1957; Liu 1998). Although its of modal verb has retained in Rucheng language until nowadays, it’s highly unlikely that the function of modal negator of 冇得 [mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is derived from the modal verb 得[tæ^{21}], since in Rucheng language the negation of the modal verb 得[tæ^{21}] is realized through the addition of the general negative maker 毋[n̩^{55}].

14)	今天	毋得	落雨。
	tɕiɲ^{33}ɲjɛ^{21}	n̩^{55}-tæ^{21}	lu^{43}ɥy^{21}
	today	NEG- can	rain
	‘It won’t rain today.’		

The semantic extension of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng (4)

Instead, it seems that the function of negative modal verb of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is developed directly from its function of existential negator. Because, semantically, the meaning of ‘cannot’ can be interpreted as ‘there is no possibility that an event would take place’. Syntactically, there is an important context which allows the modal function of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] to be realized, i.e. the context in which existential negator 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] can take a verb as its complement. Only under this syntactic condition, can 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] develop into a negative modal verb.

We supposed that the causative verb use of 冇得[mau^{33}tæ^{21}] is probably derived from its modal use, since semantically these two functions are closely related to the notion of “permission”.

4. Conclusion

Conclusion

The negative verb 冇得 [mau^{33}tæ^{21}] in Rucheng can be used as a existential/possessive negator, a modal verb or quite unusually as a negative causative verb. We can find, more or less, the meaning of “non-existence” throughout all the three functions. We speculate that the semantic extension of 冇得 [mau^{33}tæ^{21}] began with expressing the non-existence of an object in a certain location (existential/possessive negator use), then its meaning became more abstract and extended to the non-existence of the possibility that an event takes place (negative modal verb use), and finally it developed to a verb expressing that someone with authority prevents an event from happening by eliminating the possibility that the event takes place (negative causative verb use).

Conclusion (2)

We find that existential/possessive negators in some other Sinitic languages possess similar functions to the one in Rucheng, for example 呒得[ɦn̩$^{24\text{-}22}$təʔ^{4}] ‘not have, there is not’ in the Haimen dialect of Wu (Wang 2011) can also be used as a modal verb, 冇得[mɑu^{22}ti^{42}] ‘not have, there is not’ in the Pingjiang dialect of Gan can be used as a causative verb as well as a modal verb. However, this phenomenon has not been well-studied in a typological perspective (Liu 2005；Chappell & Peyraube 2016) and deserves further attention.

The modal use and the causative use of the existential/possessive negator 冇得 in Rucheng are tightly related to the notion of “permission”. The functions of this negative verb corroborates the observation of Yue-Hashimoto (1993: 89-92) and Chappell & Peyraube (2016), namely that, the negation in Sinitic languages is closely related to modality.

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Thank You!