Mandarin Chinese Words and Parts of Speech

A Corpus-based Study

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8 A: Non-Predicative Adjectives

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8   A: Non-Predicative Adjectives

Non-Predicative adjectives generally modify nouns. Such "canonical" adjectives do not serve as verbs but form noun phrases —with or without the trailing 的 de0 'attributive marker'—along with nouns and other nominal modifiers.

8.1 List of Possible Subclasses

The types of non-predicative adjectives are basically an enumerable list. For now, we have not subcategorized them in our corpus and lexicon. However, according to their composition, non-predicative adjectives include the following types:

- Nominal-based
  美式 mei3shi4 'American-styled', 迴轉式 hui2zhuan3shi4 'rotary sliding'.
- Activity verb-based
  平裝 ping2zhuang1 'paperback', 野生 ye3sheng1 'wild', 新興 xin1xing1 'emerging', 縣立 xian4li4 'prefectural', 機讀 ji1du2 'machine-readable'.
- Stative intransitive adjectival-based
  正方 zheng4fang1 'square', 大紅 da4hong2 'burning red', 鵝黃 e2huang2 'duckling down yellow', 全盛 quan2sheng4 'flourishing', 上好 shang4hao3 'superior'.
- Others
  真正 zhen1zheng4 'real', 共同 gong4tong2 'common', 永久 yong3jiu3 'permanent', 有機 you3ji1 'organic', 不法 bu4fa3 'illegal', 所有 suo3you3 'all kinds of'.

8.2 Classification Guidelines

- State intransitive verbs and non-predicative adjectives serve similar functions—they both modify nouns by describing their properties and features, though only the former is capable of predication. The latter plays a verb-like role only when in the 'shi...de' construction, in which the main verb is indeed 'shi' and the non-predicative adjective can be analyzed as the modifier within a noun phrase whose nominal is ellipsized.

- Non-predicative adjectives and determiners can both serve as determinatives. In principle, words that are referential, quantity-related and combinable with determinative-measure compounds do not fall into the category of non-predicative adjectives; therefore, 其餘 qi2yu2 'remaining', 任何 ren4he2 'any', 其他 qi2ta1 'other' and 一切 yi2qie4 'every' are treated as determiners.
- When a word behaves like a non-predicative adjective as well as a manner adverb, such as 共同 gong4tong2 'common', 天生 tian1sheng1 'inborn', and 變相 bian4xiang4 'covert', we label it only as a non-predicative adjective and gives it a '+way' syntactic feature in indication of its status as a predicative modifier. When a word can be used as a non-predicative adjective and as an adverbial, other than manner verbs, we adopt both analyses. For example, 永久 yong3jiu3 'permanent' is analyzed as a non-predicative adjective and time adverb at the same time.