

INSIGHT

RESPONSE PARTICLES *HAI*⁶ IN CANTONESE

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1. INTRODUCTION

As is well known, there are two types of copular verbs in Chinese languages: the Cantonese type *hai*⁶ and the Mandarin type *shì*. These two copular verbs are quite similar in that they not only appear as copular verbs, they also appear in cleft-sentences, as well as in the so-called *shì...de* constructions. Despite their similarities, they diverge in their historical source and development. It is generally agreed that *shì* has developed from a demonstrative pronoun (based on Wang's 1958 analysis), whereas *hai*⁶ started out as a verb (Tang 2009). These two different historical sources for copular verbs are both cross-linguistically attested (i.e., from demonstrative to copula or from verb to copula) (Heine and Kuteva 2002; Hengeveld 1992; Stassen 1997).

There is one similarity between *shì* and *hai*⁶ that has escaped attention in the literature: both can be used as positive response particles (while the negative counterparts are *bú-shì* and *m⁴-hai*⁶ respectively). As Zhang and Tang (2011) point out, the use of *shì* as a response particle is quite different from the copular verb *be* in English, which cannot be used as such. On the other hand, the response particle *yes* in English, for instance, is not a copular verb. The question arises why both *shì* and *hai*⁶ can be used

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as response particles, and whether this property is connected to the fact that they are both copular verbs.

This article presents a preliminary analysis of response particles *shì* and *hai⁶*, which is compatible with their copular properties. In section 2, we first discuss *hai⁶* as a response particle, followed by *shì* as a response particle, as well as the syntax of responses. Section 3 discusses Krifka's (2013) analysis of response particles as anaphors and its application to both *shì* and *hai⁶*, as well as the historical development of copula verbs. I argue that their use as response particles is closely connected to their copular properties. Section 4 concludes the article.

2. *HAI⁶* AS RESPONSE PARTICLE

This section focuses on *hai⁶* as a response particle. All the data have similar Mandarin counterparts with *shì* as the response particle. I use the term “response” particle instead of “answer” particle here to emphasize the fact that such particles are not only used in question-answer sequences. Instead, they are used in broader contexts where responses to previous utterances are possible. That *hai⁶* can be used as a response particle in Cantonese can be seen from simple question-answer cases such as (1), as well as responses to assertions as in (2), imperatives as in (3) and exclamatives as in (4). Recent literature also emphasizes the similarity between responses to assertions and answers to polarity questions (Farkas and Bruce 2010; Liptak 2013; Wiltschko 2018).

- (1) a. Billy gam¹maan⁵ lei⁴ aa⁴?
 Billy tonight come Q
 ‘Is Billy coming tonight?’
 b. Hai⁶ aa³. Keoi⁵ bat⁶ dim² dou³.
 yes SFP 3SG eight o'clock arrive
 ‘Yes. He’ll arrive at 8 o’clock.’
- (2) a. Sam wan²-dou² tiu⁴ so²si⁴ laa³.
 Sam find-arrive CL key SFP
 ‘Sam found the key.’
 b. Hai⁶ aa³ ./M⁴-hai⁶ aak³.
 yes SFP/NEG-yes SFP
 ‘Yes.’/‘No (it is not the case).’

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粤语的应答助词“係”

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摘要

普通话系词“是”和粤语系词“係”均可用于肯定应答。从跨语言的角度看，系词同时可以充当应答成分的现象并不多见。本文首先论证“是”和“係”作肯定应答助词时应被看作回指成分，支持 Krifka (2013) 对应答助词的分析。本文进一步指出“是”和“係”可以充当回指成分并用于肯定应答，这与二者的系词性质密不可分，两种功能间的联系体现了系词语法化过程中的循环演变 (Lohndal 2009)。

关键词

粤语 系词 应答助词