

The futurity reading of *huì*: Distributional features from a corpus-based study

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This paper aims to shed light on the factors that trigger the futurity reading of the epistemic marker *huì* in Modern Standard Chinese. The literature agrees on the relevance of the Aktionsart of the verb embedded under *huì* (Lin 2003, 2006, Ren 2008, a.o.). We want to investigate the role played by other factors such as the presence of temporal anaphoric relation within the clause (intraclausal) or with the antecedent (interclausal), the cooccurrence with epistemic markers and the performative value of the utterance. To this end we have analysed 710 bilingual records with futurity *huì*, extracted from the English-Chinese Parallel Concordancer, and have annotated the relevant properties obtaining the data shown below.

Table 1: Environments of *huì* in futurity reading

<i>Temporal anaphora</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>n.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Constructions</i>	[+commissive]	
							<i>n.</i>	<i>%</i>
+	Interclausal	399	56%	228	32,1%	Main proposition of complex sentences	25	3,5%
	Intraclausal			136	19,2%	NP _{time} / PP _{time} + <i>huì</i>	37	5,2%
				35	4,9%	<i>Huì</i> + PP _{time}	27	3,8%
-	Epistemic	132	19%	55	7,8%	NP + Mod _{Epistemic} + <i>huì</i>	2	0,3%
				77	10,9%	(NP) + (<i>shì</i>) <i>huì</i> <i>de</i>	26	3,7%
	Bare Commissive	157	22%	158	22,1%	NP + <i>huì</i>	157	22,1%
	ND	22	3%	21	3,1%	NP + <i>huì</i>	0	0,0%
		710	100%	710	100%		436	38,6%

As shown above, the tokens with anaphoric time reference amount to 56% (75% of them do not contain epistemic modals or final *de*). Following Klein's (1994) terminology, intraclausal reference is observed when time phrases, adverbs and adverbials occur within a clause, while the interclausal type refers to tokens where *huì* occurs in the main clause of complex sentences, describing an event that is anaphorically related to the topic time of the preceding utterances, as in (1). This behaviour is consistent with Saillard and Chen's (2012) account and can be explained in terms of modal subordination, where a discourse antecedent provides a domain restriction and *huì* is in anaphoric relation to the antecedent (Roberts 1989).

- (1) *Jìbiàn ān tóuhuáisòngbào, tā yě huì bǎ ān tuīchūqu*
 even.if 1SG throw.onesf.into.sb.arms 3SG too FUT BA 1SG push.out.go
 'If I throw myself at him, he will only push me away.'
 (Mo Yan, *Tianxiang xing*)

The tokens without time reference are grouped into two classes; the first has an epistemic flavour and includes *huì* combined with the modal particle *de* expressing certainty (always in dialogical contexts and typically with a reassuring nuance), and/or with epistemic adverbs such as *yíding* 'certainly' (mostly non-commissive). The second group is represented by bare-*huì* tokens (no temporal anaphora and no epistemic markers) and is mostly observed in performative utterances in which the speaker promises to fulfil a task, similar to Copley's (2009) offer-future. When occurring with a temporal reference, this commissive future also instantiates as "*Huì* + PP_{time}" (27, 3,8% of the total), as in (2).

- (2) *Wǒmen huì zài 2000 niándǐ qián wánchéng dìyī qī gōngchéng.*
 1PL FUT at 2000 year.end before complete first phase project
 ‘We will complete phase 1 of the project by 2000.’ (Policy Address)

During the discussion we will also present the pragmatic contexts and the anaphoric relation to the preceding context of the remaining non-commissive bare-*huì* tokens (22, 3%), as (3).

- (3) *Wǒ bù yào nǐ de bīng, wǒ māma huì mǎi gěi wǒ chī.*
 1SG neg.want 2sg DE popsicle 1SG mom FUT buy give 1SG eat.
 ‘I do not want your popsicle; mother will buy me one.’ (Qian Zhongshu, *Weicheng*)

The data above suggest that temporal-anaphoric relation and the utterance performative value are significant factors in the making of *huì* futurity reading.

Selected references

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