

The Pragmatic Marker ‘*ya*’ in Indonesian Chinese: Perspective of Language Contact

Xiao Renfei

Central China Normal University, Wuhan Hubei, China

ABSTRACT: Indonesia is a multilingual country, and languages always have an impact on each other in the process of language contact. The present work intends to investigate the influence of Indonesian on Indonesian Chinese based on the functional variation of ‘*ya*’ in Indonesian Chinese. Different from Mandarin Putonghua, Indonesian Chinese ‘*ya*’ serves as a pragmatic marker which has the functions of positive response, as a tag question or a discourse marker. It plays a role in repairing discourse, summarizing discourse and responding to a discourse and most important function is to establish unity which can be explained from the language contact. Indonesian social and cultural values and the status of Chinese phonology and lexicology are another aspect of reasons.

1 INSTRUCTION

1.1 *Language contact*

Language contact, has been studied extensively in different languages, such as English (e.g., Alexander, 2016; Anna, 2021), Germany (Lenz, Fleißner, Kim & Newerkla, 2020), Japanese (e.g., Reinier, 2021), Hebrew (e.g., Doron, Hovav, Reshef & Taube, 2019), Chinese (Wu, 2004; Shi & Zhu, 1999) and so on. The language contact arises the situation that some new words will incorporate with each other across the languages, and sometimes the spread of new sounds and sentence structures, etc. (Thomason, 2001).

As we know, for a long while, the academic circles have always been concentrating efforts on the structuralist paradigm during the study of language contact, especially the language borrowing (see also, Andersen, 2014; Unuabonah, 2020, etc.), which mainly counts and classifies the types of loanwords according to the adaptability of the form and pronunciation (Zener & Kristiansen, 2013). The vocabulary borrowing has ever been become a pronoun in the study of language borrowing to a certain extent. However, there has been a pragmatic turn in the study of language borrowing in recent years (Andersen, Furiassi & Ilić, 2017) .

1.2 *Indonesian Chinese*

Chinese, like many other languages in the world, has produced a variety of regional variants in the process of overseas dissemination and inheritance due to the influence of economic, geographical, cultural, social environment and the development of the language itself. And in the process of long-term contact with the local language, Chinese naturally was affected by the local language, which is distributed at all levels from pronunciation to pragmatics.

Numerous studies have proved that China and Indonesia have a long history of cultural exchanges (Kong, 1999).

Studies has shown that the history of Chinese emigration to Southeast Asia can be traced back to the Han Dynasty. From the Han Dynasty to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, whenever the new and old regimes changed, the people who could not bear the war and the declining dignitaries

would emigrate one after another. Southeast Asia became the first choice for Chinese immigrants because it was easy to reach.

The arrival and rooting of Chinese immigrants not only led to the birth of a new race, but also the natural import of the language. In the process of overseas immigration, Chinese-their mother tongue, would also be brought over with the flow of immigrants and continued to pass on to their future generations.

In this significance, the Indonesian Chinese has two bedding of meanings: one is to represent an ethnic group of Indonesian Chinese, maybe better to called Chinese Indonesian, and the other is to represent a language of Indonesian Chinese. As the concept of a language, we contend that Indonesian Chinese is a regional variant of Chinese derived in Indonesia.

1.3 *Language Contact in Indonesian Chinese*

With the trade, cultural exchange and mixed residence with the local ethnics, with the increase of frequent communication between different languages, the language contact has become natural results where the most common manifestation of one language being influenced by another language is borrowing,

With the long-term cultural integrating, the language borrowing comes automatically, with the result that Chinese loanwords can be seen everywhere in Indonesian, Javanese and many local languages, such as *kucai*, *lentkeng*, *teh*, *tahu*, *bacang*, *lumpiah*, *cawan*, *kemoceng*, *barongsai*, *capgomeh*, *angpau*, and so on (Kong, 1989), and vice versa, Chinese is also being influenced by Indonesian, Javanese and other local languages. For example, *Juta* is not a monetary unit in Chinese, and it is also troublesome to change it into a Chinese monetary unit, therefore, the Chinese Indonesian people then created a unique unit of measurement *Tiao* which is equivalent to *Juta* in Indonesian. In addition, *Tempe*, *sate*, *rendang* have also entered into the system of Chinese vocabulary.

But anyhow, there is little attention has been paid to grammatical borrowing in the past studies, and the discussion of pragmatic borrowing is even rare, so is the discussion of overseas Chinese of their spoken language.

2 METHODS

Therefore, we take the functional variation of 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese as an example to explore the influence of Indonesian on Chinese.

Considering the different situations where some speakers use Chinese as their mother tongue or heritage language and some speakers speak Chinese as their second language, we collected the data from the balanced samples where 2 local Indonesian studied Chinese as a second language, 2 Chinese Indonesian studied Chinese as a second language and 2 Chinese Indonesian who speak Chinese as their mother tongue and whose age is over than 70. All of them are fluent in Chinese communication.

The corpus is collected by natural collection method, which collects the natural conversation in the process of natural conversation or phone call with them. And for the purpose of more comprehensive and effective, we also use some heuristic data and collect some data in the form of interviews and finally a corpus with a dimension of 101, 065 characters has been formed.

3 DATA

With the investigation, it is found that some usages of 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese natural spoken language are different from those in Mandarin Putonghua. In addition to the common usages, there are the following functional variation usages, which can't be explained by the mutation or the change of the pronunciations.

3.1 *Interjection*

3.1.1 *Affirmation*

As an exclamation, several usages of 'ya' are the same as Mandarin, but also have two special functions. The first function is to show promise and affirmation. For example:

- (1) A: Nǐ dào le ma?
 you arrive (tense particle) (modal particle)
 B: →ya, wǒ gāng dào!
 (interjection) I just arrive
 A: Have you arrived yet?
 B: Ah, I just arrived!
- (2) A: Wǒ yǒu jiàn shì xiǎng máfan nín,
 I have (measure) matter want disturb you
 wǒ xiǎng qǐngwèn jīnnián de
 I want ask(polite) this year (particle)
 Xīnchūnliánhuānhuì wǒmen réng
 Spring Festival's Party we still
 yìqǐ jǔbàn kěyǐ ma?
 together hold can (particle)
 B: → ya, hǎo ā! Méi wèntí ya.
 (interjection) OK (particle) no problem (particle)
 A: Can we still hold the spring festival party together?
 B: Ah, no problem.
- (3) A: Lǎoshī zùjīn hǎo ma?
 teacher recently good (particle)
 B: →Ya, chàbùduō, hái kěyǐ lā.
 (interjection) almost rather fine (particle)
 A: How are you recently, dr.?
 B: Ah, almost, it's OK.

In the above three examples, 'ya' is used in the response sentence to express an affirmative response or promise to the speaker's question.

3.1.2 Confirmation

The second type is used to confirm the speaker's views, requirements in the response turns.

- (4) A: Nǐ de Hànyǔ zhēn hǎo!
 your aux. Chinese really good
 B: →Ya, wǒ de lǎoshī yě zhème shuō.
 (interjection) my aux. teacher also so speak
 A: Your Chinese is really good!
 B: That's true. So did my teacher.
- (5) A: Nǐ zhuānlù yìxiē gēn nǐ qīzi de
 you transcribe some with your wife aux.
 duìhuà huòzhě qítā rén de dōu kěyǐ.
 dialogue or other people aux. all fine
 B: →ya...ya..., míngbai.
 (interjection) understand
 A: You can transcribe some conversations with your wife or others.
 B: Ah, ah, I see.

The above 'ya(s)' read in a descending tone, which the sound is like [ia] or [iya]. They can combined with *en*, *um*, *hmm* and other confirmative exclamations and often co-occurrence with the ones like *Ok*, *good*, *right* and *no problem* indicating positive confirmation.

3.2 Tag question

Tag question is a question (such as "isn't it" in "It's fine, isn't it?") added to a statement or command. Usually the tag question is served by the brief question in a form of short sentence which comes at the end of a statement to ask if the statement is correct, or to gain the assent of or challenge the person addressed. Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Holmes (1983), Wouk (2001), Nordenstam (1992) also regard *ya*, *yeah*, *uh-huh*, *right* and so on as tag questions, because of their additional interrogative functions.

The 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese also has the function of additional interrogation, which is located at the end of the sentence to indicate slight query. For example:

- (6) → Wōmen xiān shàngkè, ya?
 we first have class tag question
 Shall we have class first?
- (7) → Shuā le yá jiù shuìjiào ya?!
 brush (tense) teeth then sleep tag question
 Brush your teeth and go to bed.
- (8) → Wōmen míngtiān xiàwǔ qù kěyǐ ma? Peter ya?
 we tomorrow afternoon go OK (particle) (name) tag question.
 Can we go tomorrow afternoon? Peter?
- (9) A: → Dìdi huílái le ya?
 brother go back (particle) tag question
 B: Ya, zài xízǎo ne.
 (interjection) be doing take a bath (particle)
 A: is your brother back?
 B: Ah, he is taking a bath now.
- (10) A: → Nǐ xiàzhōu qù Zhōngguó ya?
 you next week go China tag question
 B: Ya.
 (interjection)
 A: Are you going to China next week?
 B: yes.

Different from the previous exclamation, the one as a tag question we read it in an ascending intonation. Secondly, ‘ya’ in this usage looks similar to the modal particle “ma” in Mandarin Putonghua, but the difference is that we can make a pause before ‘ya’, which can be separated by a commas in writing. In the sense, it is equivalent to “is it OK?”, “is it fine?”, “is it right?”, etc., and all of these are not the characteristics of the modal particle “ma”. The third, we know that “ma” is a typical modal particle to construct an yes-no interrogative sentence, comparing with this, the additional interrogative sentence which is composed of ‘ya’ is basically similar to soliciting the other party's opinions or making their own information confirmed by the other party where the degree of query isn't as intense as the yes-no interrogative sentence.

3.3 Discourse marker

Discourse markers refer to those linguistic components that do not express truth value semantic relations in discourse, but convey procedural meaning, which are syntactically optional and indispensable in communication (refers to Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1993, 1995; Blackmore, 2000; and so on).

The Indonesian Chinese ‘ya’ sometimes plays the part of a discourse marker in discourse, which helps the progress of communication go smoothly in interaction.

According to its location in the turn, the ‘ya(s)’ which plays the function of discourse marker can be divided into three categories.

3.3.1 Initial

- (11) A: Nǐ hái chī diǎnr ba?
 you still eat a little (particle)
 B: → ya, méi shìr, yǐjīng gòu le.
 no problem already enough (particle.)
 A: I think you'd better eat a little more.
 B: Yah, no problem, it is already enough.
- (12) A: èn, (qìchē) wǒ xiǎng yě shì
 (interjection) car I think also
 mài diào bǐjiào hǎo.
 sell rather better
 B: → ya, búguò, nǐ zhīdào, xiànzài Yìnní yìqíng
 however you know now Indonesia pandemic
 A: I also think we'd better sell the car.
 B: Hmmm, however, you know, the pandemic in Indonesia now...

The 'ya' in the first example is to give a positive response to the speaker's invitation which is polite and appreciative, indicating the gratitude to the other party. At the same time make the preparation for the subsequent negative reply, so that even if the hearer refuses the invitation, it won't hurt the other party's face. 'ya' in the second example is also a discourse marker, which indicates a positive response to the speaker's discourse, and simultaneously to give the speaker time to think deliberately. And it is also used in combination with other discourse markers just as *you know, however, how shall I put it* and so on.

3.3.2 Internal

- (13) Suīrán tā shì gēn wǒmen yìqǐ qù de,
 although he is with we together go (particle)
 dànshì,
 but
 →ya
 yah
 nǐ zhīdào,
 you know
 tā zhīshì yí gè sījī...
 he. is only one (measure word) driver

Although he went with us, but you know, he's just a driver.

- (14) Xiànzài qù Bromo bǐjiào wēixiǎn,
 now go (name of a volcano) rather dangerous
 huǒshān róngyì huápō,
 volcano easy slide
 suóyǐ,
 so
 →ya,
 yah
 háishì qù Batu,
 we'd better. go (name of a scenary)
 nǎlǐ huánjìng hǎo,
 there environment good
 yě bǐjiào hǎowán.
 also rather interesting

It's dangerous to go Bromo now, the volcano is easy to slide. Therefore, we'd better go Batu, where the environment is good and it's also fun.

'Ya' in the above two cases seems the same as in Mandarin Chinese for they can all be afterwards the conjunctions, but there are differences in phonetics, rhythm and intonation. First of all, 'ya' in Mandarin Chinese if connects with the previous discourse markers, it should immediately be at the heel of them, such as "*suóyǐ ya*" and "*dànshì ya*", and the discourse marker and 'ya' can't separated by a pause, while Indonesian Chinese 'ya' and the conjunction can be separated by a full pause (a comma in writing), and phonetically in a metric foot, which isn't alike with Mandarin Chinese in length, intensity, pitch and mute time in the pronunciation. Secondly, the intonation is also different, where 'ya' in Mandarin Chinese read in a descending intonation, and 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese read in an ascending intonation.

3.3.3 Final

- (15) A: Wǒ qùnián hái zài nà jiā
 I last year still in that (measure word)
 →gōngsī gōngzuò ya
 company work yah
 B: èn, nǐ gēn wǒ shuō guò...
 Ah you with me tell (particle)
 A: ya, jīnnián, nǐ kàn, méi jǐ gè yuè,
 yah. this year you see. no several (measure word) month
 jiù dàobi le...

then go bankrupt (particle)

A: You know, I worked in that company last year...

B: I see, you ever told me that...

A: Hmm, but you see this year, it went bankrupt in a few months...

In the above example, the speaker makes the application of 'ya' at the end of his turn, the goal is to intend to interact with the listener and hope that his utterances can be responded or recognized by the hearer. And occasionally the speaker will use another 'ya' in the next turn, so as to echo with the utterance he just made and confirm that the listener has correctly and completely received his information. The difference is that 'ya', the one interacting with the listener, reads in an ascending intonation, while 'ya', the one reconfirming, reads in descending way.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 *Perspective of Language Contact*

Then, is the emergence of Indonesian Chinese 'ya', function variant the result of the change of the language itself or the influence of other languages?

Searching for the sandhi of the phonetic change of 'ya', and even the grammaticalization of Mandarin 'ya', it is difficult to find the explanations of the changes of the above functions of 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese from the Chinese itself. However, the study of Indonesian 'ya' can provide enlightening ideas for our interpretations.

Wouk (2001) examined the use of the two allomorphs of the Indonesian word for yes, 'ya' and 'iya', in Indonesian conversational data. She found that both are frequently used responsively, as an affirmative marker or a conversational continuer. They can also be used as a tag question to initiate an exchange or make a request that has a low social cost, and as a discourse marker. Let's give an example:

(16) Y: jadi dari rumah P tu ya,
so from house [name] that yeah

R: ya
yeah

Y: itu agak kebelakang-nye tu ya,
that rather to:the:rear-gen that yeah
mau arah ke:(.75) apa tu,(.50)
want. direction to what that
[click]

R: arah kapling,
direction plot:of:land

Y: iya
yes

Y: so from your house huh,

R: yeah

Y: it's kind of behind it huh, you go towards: (.75) whtchamacallit, (.50) [click]

R: toward the field

Y: yes

As can be seen from the above example, the pragmatic marker 'ya' in Indonesian is completely corresponding to the functional variant in Indonesian Chinese where the first 'ya' in the dialogue is used as a tag question, and the second one is used as an affirmative marker or a confirmative marker, and the third one is used as a conversational continuer.

And as Wouk (2001) investigated, 88% of the occurrences of 'iya' are shown to comprise a turn or are turn-initial, while 74% of the 'ya(s)' are intonation units final or turn-final. So is in Indonesian Chinese, the difference is their pronunciation distinct are mainly reflected in intonation. The proportion of 53.6% of the occurrences of 'ya', which read in ascending are shown to be the final of a sentence (it's also called intonation unit final) or comprise turn final, and the proportion of 44.5% which read in descending intonation are shown to comprise a turn or are turn-initial, and only around 2% of the 'ya(s)' occur in the sentence internal.

And as Wouk (2001) suggested, as a discourse marker, 'ya' has a number of different functions,

occurring in repairs, in conclusion drawing, in echoing, most frequently, however, they are used as a means of building solidarity through the creation of fictive common ground.

And the function of pragmatic markers 'ya' in Indonesian Chinese can basically make the same generalization and classification. Wouk (2001) explained the high frequency of this type of usage in Indonesian conversation can be seen as a reflection of Indonesian cultural values, which place a premium on maintaining the appearance of cooperative behavior.

In addition to these, we consider that the monosyllabic characteristics of Chinese characters and the position of modal particles in Chinese can be located are also the reasons for the variation of the function.

4.2 Conclusion

Chinese not only belongs to China, but also belongs to the world. With the spread of Chinese overseas for-ages, a set of different characteristics will be produced, for which being influenced by the local languages is one of the main reasons. For the variation of Indonesian Chinese 'ya', language contact is only the most appropriate explanation and it can be explained properly.

Language is the reflection of culture. If Wouk's inference is correct, i.e. in Indonesia there is a strong orientation towards solidarity and social harmony holds a high value in Indonesian traditional culture. Then, the Chinese-here means the Chinese Indonesian people, who need to integrate into the main ethnic groups, they must be influenced by Indonesian cultural orientation, and necessarily to accept the Indonesian cultural values.

Javanese term *gotong royong* (means collaborative work) will be invoked regularly. The Chinese who is willing to live in harmony with Indonesia's local ethnics, they have to learn the social style and be appreciated and to adapt their value orientation. Conversely, the solidarity in Indonesian laying stress on the harmony interaction will also get others' favourable impression, so that they will all vying to imitate following.

5 REFERENCES

- Andersen, G. (2014). Pragmatic borrowing, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 67: 17-33.
- Thomason, S. G. (2001). *Language Contact: An Introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001.
- Onysko, A. (2016). Modeling world Englishes from the perspective of language contact. *World Englishes*, 35: 196-220.
- Trebits, A. (2021). Degree of multilingualism, code-switching and intensity of target language contact predict pragma-linguistic awareness in an English as a foreign language context. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 18(3): 475-490.
- Wu, A. Q. (2004). The Influence of Language Contact on Language Evolution. *Minority Languages*, (1):1-9.
- Shi, D. X., & Zhu, Z. Y., (1999). The Influence of English on the Syntax of Written Chinese in Hong Kong- Language Changes Caused by Language Contact. *Foreign languages*, (4):2-11.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heine, B. (2013). On discourse markers: Grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, or something else? *Linguistics*, 51(6): 1205-1247.
- Haselow, A. (2011). Discourse marker and modal particle: The functions of utterance final then in spoken English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(14): 3603-3623.
- Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31: 931-952.
- Fraser, B. (2009). Topic orientation markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41: 892-898.
- Alexandra, N. L., Fleißner, F., Kim, A. & Newerkla, S. M. (2020). *give* as a put verb in German-A case of German-Czech language contact?. *Journal of Linguistic Geography* 2020, 8(2):1-15.
- Hovav, M., Reshef, Y., & Taube, M. (2019). *Language Contact, Continuity and Change in the Genesis of Modern Hebrew*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wouk, F. (2001). Solidarity in Indonesian conversation: The discourse marker *ya*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33(2):171-191.

- Andersen, G., Cristiano, F. & Ilić, B. M. (2017). The pragmatic turn in studies of linguistic borrowing, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 113: 71-76.
- Reinier, S. (2021). The Dutch Language in Japan (1600-1900): A Cultural and Sociolinguistic Study of Dutch as a Contact Language in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan, *Dutch Crossing*, 45(2):211-214.
- Unuabonah, F. O. & Daniel, F. O. (2020). *Haba!* Bilingual interjections in Nigerian English: A corpus-based study, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 163: 66-77.
- Kong, Y. Z. (1999). *Cultural Exchange between China and Indonesia*, Peking: Peking University Press.