Cantonese exclusive focus marker *-dak* as perfective aspect

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at The 28th International Conference on Yue Dialects, Hong Kong Metropolitan University
December 13-14, 2024

1. Introduction

➢ Verbal suffix *-dak* in Cantonese

- Exclusive (restrictive) focus use, meaning 'only' ✎ Today's focus!
  - See: T. Lee (1995), Luke (1999), Tang (2000, 2002), P. Lee & Pan (2007), Li (2014:§4), P. Lee (2019:§4.4), Lam (2023), Lui (2023)

(1) <u>The focus use of -dak</u>
佢睇**得**三本書。
Keoi tak-**dak** [saam-bun syu]_F.
3SG read-DAK   three-CL book
'S/he only read three books.'   (Tang 2002:267)

- Besides its descriptive phrase marker, modal and realizational/converbal uses (e.g., Luke 1999, Tang 2003, Cheng & Sybesma 2004, P. Lee & Pan 2007, Yip 2022, Lam 2023)

(2) <u>Other uses of -dak</u>

a. 佢行**得**好快。

    Keoi haang-**dak** hou faai.   (descriptive phrase marker)

    3SG walk-DAK very fast

    'S/he walks very fast.'   (Tang 2002:267)

b. 佢食**得**龍蝦。

    Keoi sik-**dak** lunghaa.   (modal)

    3SG eat-DAK lobsters

    'S/he can eat lobsters.'   (Tang 2002:267)

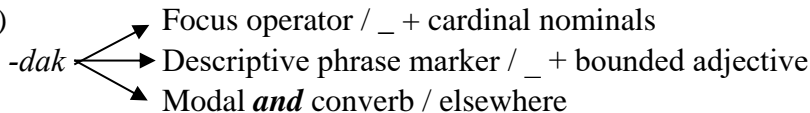c. 佢搵**得**你，就肯定有困難啦。

    [Keoi wan-**dak** nei], zau ganghai jau kwannaan laa1. (realization/converb)

     3SG find-DAK 2SG then must have difficulties SFP

    Since s/he found you, (s/he) must have some sort of difficulties.'   (Luke 1999:216)

(3)   Focus operator / _ + cardinal nominals

   -dak   Descriptive phrase marker / _ + bounded adjective

              Modal ***and*** converb / elsewhere

                             (Yip 2022:148, modified from Tang 2002:303)

➢ *-Dak* as a focus operator
  - Operates on post-verbal elements with quantity [+Q] (e.g., Tang 2002, P. Lee & Pan 2007)
  - Claimed to be an exclusive focus operator in (5) (Li 2014:§4, P. Lee 2019:§4.4)

(4) a. 啲聽眾問得[兩個講者]F 呢條問題。

    Di   tingzung man-**dak** [loeng-go gongze]F ni-tiu mantai.   (IO focus)
    CL.PL audience ask-DAK two-CL   speaker this-CL question
    'The audiences asked only two speakers this question.'   (Tang 2002:269)

  b. 啲聽眾問得我[兩條問題]F。

    Di   tingzung man-**dak**   ngo [loeng-tiu mantai]F.   (DO focus)
    CL.PL audience ask-DAK   1SG two-CL   question
    'The audiences asked me only two questions.'   (Tang 2002:269)

(5) Assertion: $\neg\exists x[(x{\neq}a) \wedge P(x)]$ (Li 2014:147)
   (where a = focused element, P = the predicate *-dak* attaches to)
   Prose: there does not exist any x such that x is not the focused element a and x has the property P
   → Excludes all the elements other than the focused one

➢ Today's goals
- I argue that **-dak** is primarily **a perfective aspect marker**, not a focus operator
  - ▫ Support #1: *Unnoticed* aspectual restrictions of *-dak*
  - ▫ Support #2: Form-meaning mismatch in exclusive doubling with *zinghai* 'only'
  - ▫ Support #3: Exceptional scope of *-dak*

- I propose that **-dak**'s focus use is **syntactic agreement with an exclusive operator**

  (6) [TP … [*zinghai*/EXCL$_{[iEXCL:+]}$ [AspP *dak*$_{[iAsp:PFV, uEXCL:\_]}$ [VP V …
  　　　　　▲..▲ (Agree relation)

  - ▫ As a synchronic reflex of diachronic development *-dak*'s focus use (Yiu 2019)
  - ▫ Corroborates the operator-particle dependency (Quek and Hirsch 2017; Bassi et al. 2022; Sun 2021; Branan and Erlewine 202; Yip 2023; *i.a.*)
  - ▫ A new understanding of "discontinuous constructions" (Tang 2006 *et seq.*)

Roadmap:
§2: Aspectual restrictions of *-dak*　　　　§3: Peculiar focus uses of *-dak*
§4: Proposal　　　　　　　　　　　　　　§5: Conclusion

2. Aspectual restrictions of *-dak*

➢ *-Dak* expresses an episodic perfective reading but not an imperfective reading

- (7)a (reproduced from (1)) translates to (7)b with perfective suffix *-zo*

(7) a. 佢睇**得**[三本書]_F。
    Keoi tak-**dak**   [saam-bun syu]_F.
    3SG read-DAK   three-CL   book
    'S/he only read three books.'

  b. 佢**淨係**睇**咗**[三本書]_F。
    Keoi **zinghai** tak-**zo** [saam-bun syu]_F.
    3SG only   read-PFV three-CL   book
    'S/he only read three books.' (≠reads)

2.1. Eventuality types

➢ As observed as early as in T. Lee (1995) and Tang (2000, 2002), *-dak* can only combine with **bounded/telic events**: *accomplishment* and *achievement*.

(8) 小明今天寫得一篇論文。

Siu-Ming gamnin se-**dak** jat-pin leonman. (Accomplishment)

Siu-Ming this.year write-DAK one-CL article

'Siu-Ming wrote only one article this year.' (Tang 2002:273)

(9) 呢次戰爭死得兩個士兵。

Ni-ci zinzang sei-**dak** loeng-go sibing. (Achievement)

this-CL war die-DAK two-CL soldier

'Only two soldiers died in the war this time.' (Tang 2002:273)

- No atelic events like activity, due to the [+Q] requirement

(10) *阿明跑得馬拉松。

*Aaming paau-**dak** maalaaicung. (Activity)

Ming run-DAK marathon

Int.: 'Ming only runs marathon.'

(only acceptable with the modal reading 'Ming can run marathon.')

- No states—**not reducible to the [+Q] requirement**
  - ◻ Patterns with perfective -*zo*
  - ◻ Contrasts with *zinghai* 'only'

(11) a. *佢喺得一間好靚嘅 café 度。

    *Keoi hai-**dak** jat-gaan hou leng ge café dou.   (State, with -*dak*)
    3SG at-DAK   one-CL very prettyGE café LOC
    Int.: 'S/he is only at a pretty café.'

  b. *佢喺咗一間好靚嘅 café 度。

    *Keoi hai-**zo** jat-gaan hou leng ge café dou.   (State, with -*zo*)
    3SG at-PFV one-CL very prettyGE café LOC
    Int.: 'S/he is already at a pretty café.'

(12) 佢淨係喺一間好靚嘅 café 度(咋)。

    Keoi **zinghai** hai jat-gaan hou leng ge café dou (zaa3).   (State, with *zinghai*)
    3SG only   at one-CL very prettyGE café LOC SFP
    'S/he is only at a pretty café.'

□ Contrasts with other quantificational/focus suffixes as well

(13) a. 大家都喺晒度。

　　　Daaigaa　dou hai-**saai**　dou.　　　　　　　　　　　　　(State, with -*saai*)
　　　everyone all　at-ALL　　LOC
　　　'Everyone is here.'
　b. 連啲筆痕都喺埋度。

　　　Lin　di-bathan　　　dou　hai-**maai**　dou.　　　　　　　(State, with -*maai*)
　　　even CL.PL-pen.mark also　at-ALSO　　LOC
　　　'Even those pen marks are (also) there.'　　　　　　　　　(TVmost, 2016-2-13)

➤ Previous characterization
  • T. Lee (1995: 12): -*dak* has "a completive aspectual meaning" (cf. completive 完 *jyun* 'finish')
  • Tang (2000, 2002) concluded that -*dak* has the boundedness requirement on eventualities

✍ However:
  • It is **not clear** why a focus operator imposes restrictions on *situation/inner aspect*
  • Indeed, -*dak* encodes **perfective aspect**—*viewpoint/outer aspect*!
    (For split aspect, see: Gu 1995, Tsai 2008, Huang, Li & Li 2009, Sybesma 2017, Lu, Lipták & Sybesma 2019, Yip 2020, Tang 2022, Liu & Yip 2023, Lee & Pan 2024)

2.2. Compatibility with modals

➢ <u>Root modals</u>: deontic and dynamic modals
- While *zinghai* may be used under deontic/permission modal *hoji* 'may', ***-dak* cannot**

(14) a. 個學生<u>可以</u>**淨係**交一份功課。
    Go hoksaang <u>hoji</u> **zinghai** gaau jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student may only submit one-CL assignment
    'It is okay for the student to only submit one assignment.'

  b. *個學生<u>可以</u>交**得**一份功課。
    *Go hoksaang <u>hoji</u> gaau-**dak** jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student may submit-DAK one-CL assignment
    Int.: 'It is okay for the student to only submit one assignment.'

- The **same with perfective *-zo*** (*cf.* Tsai 2015 for the aspectual restrictions under root modals)

(15) *個學生<u>可以</u>(淨係)交**咗**一份功課。
    *Go hoksaang <u>hoji</u> (zinghai) gaau-**zo** jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student may only submit-PFV one-CL assignment
    Int.: 'It is okay for the student to have (only) submitted one assignment.'

- The same goes for other root modals
  - Dispositional/future *wui* 'will'; Deontic *jinggoi* 'should', *jiu* 'must'
  - Dynamic *gam* 'dare' and *hang* 'be.willing.to'

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➤ Epistemic modals: allows perfective aspect under its scope (*cf.* Tsai 2015)
- *Zinghai* and -*dak* can be embedded under epistemic modals
- Same with perfective -*zo*

(16) a. 個學生{可能/一定}淨係交一份功課。

    Go hoksaang {<u>honang</u>/ <u>jatding</u>} **zinghai** gaau jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student perhaps/ definitely only submit one-CL assignment
    'The student perhaps/definitely submits one assignment.'

    b. 個學生{可能/一定}交得一份功課。

    Go hoksaang {<u>honang</u>/ <u>jatding</u>} gaau-**dak** jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student perhaps/ definitely submit-DAK one-CL assignment
    'The student perhaps/definitely only submitted one assignment.'

(17) 個學生{可能/一定}(淨係)交咗一份功課。

    Go hoksaang {<u>honang</u>/ <u>jatding</u>} (zinghai) gaau-**zo** jat-fan gongfo.
    CL student perhaps/ definitely only submit-PFV one-CL assignment
    'The student perhaps/definitely (only) submitted one assignment.'

2.3. Compatibility with aspectual markers

➤ Perfective *jau* 'have' and its negation *mou* 'not have'

- *Zinghai* is compatible with *jau/mou*, **-dak is not**
- **Same with perfective -zo** (*cf.* Wang 1965 for Mandarin *mei(you)* and *-le* being suppletive)
- → The two perfective markers **compete for the same syntactic position**

(18) a. 我{有/冇}**淨係**畀五蚊。
    Ngo {<u>jau</u>/ <u>mou</u>}   **zinghai** bei   ng-man.
    1SG   have/ not.have only   give   five-dollar
    'I did/didn't only give five dollars.'

  b. *我{有/冇}畀**得**五蚊。
     *Ngo {<u>jau</u>/ <u>mou</u>}   bei-**dak**   ng-man.
     1SG   have/ not.have give-DAK   five-dollar
     Int.: 'I did/didn't only give five dollars.'

(19) ??我{有/冇}畀**咗**五蚊。[1]
    ??Ngo {<u>jau</u>/ <u>mou</u>}   bei-**zo**   ng-man.
     1SG   have/ not.have give-PFV   five-dollar
    Int.: 'I did/didn't (only) give five dollars.'

- The same for *mei* 'not yet, have yet to'.

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[1] Note that verum focus and metalinguistic negation may improve the judgment, which I set side for now.

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2.4. Non-finite embedding

➢ Some **non-finite** clause-taking predicates **cannot** embed *outer* aspectual markers

- Subject control verbs: *soeng* 'want to', *gaiwaak* 'plan to'

- *Zinghai* may be embedded under these non-finite clauses, *-dak* cannot
- Same with perfective *-zo*

(20) a. 我{想/計劃}一日淨係食兩餐。
    Ngo {soeng/ gaiwaak} [jat-jat **zinghai** sik   loeng-caan].
    1SG   want   plan   one-day only   eat   two-meal
    'I want/plan to only eat two meals per day.'

   b. *我{想/計劃}一日食得兩餐。
    *Ngo {soeng/ gaiwaak} [jat-jat   sik-**dak**   loeng-caan].
     1SG   want   plan   one-day eat-DAK   two-meal
     'I want/plan to only eat two meals per day.'

(21) *我{想/計劃}一日食咗兩餐。
    *Ngo {soeng/ gaiwaak} [jat-jat   sik-**zo**   loeng-caan].
     1SG   want   plan   one-day eat-PFV   two-meal
     'I want/plan to only eat two meals per day.'

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➢ Interim summary:

	Zinghai	*-dak*	*-zo*
1. Stative predicates	OK	*	*
2a. Under root modals	OK	*	*
2b. Under epistemic modals	OK	OK	OK
3. Perfective *jau* 'have' etc.	OK	*	*
4. Non-finite embedding (aspectual lowering excluded)	OK	*	*

→ *-Dak* indicates the **perfective** aspect

3. Peculiar focus uses of *-dak*

3.1. Exclusive doubling

➢ *Zinghai* and *-dak* may be used **together** with **a single focus association**.

- "Discontinuous constructions" (框式結構) (Tang 2015:304; *cf.* Tang 2006 *et seq*, Cheng 2015)

- Syntax-semantics/form-meaning mismatch: the truth condition remains the same.
  → **unexpected** if both mean 'only' in the doubling case

(22)佢**淨係**睇咗[三本書]ꜰ。   (Singleton *zinghai*)

    Keoi **zinghai** tak-**zo**   [saam-bun syu]ꜰ.
    3ꜱɢ   only   read-ᴘꜰᴠ three-ᴄʟ   book
    'S/he only read three books.'

(23)佢睇**得**[三本書]ꜰ。   (Singleton *-dak*)

    Keoi   tak-**dak**   [saam-bun syu]ꜰ.
    3ꜱɢ   read-ᴅᴀᴋ three-ᴄʟ   book
    'S/he read only three books.'

(24)佢**淨係**睇**得**[三本書]ꜰ。   (Exclusive doubling)

    Keoi **zinghai** tak-**dak**   [saam-bun syu]ꜰ.
    3ꜱɢ   only   read-ᴅᴀᴋ three-ᴄʟ   book
    'S/he only read three books.' (Lit.: 'S/he only read only three books.')
    NOT: 'S/he only did one thing, which is only reading three books.'

- Note that the not-at-issue meaning/presupposition might be different, see Li (2014:§4), P. Lee (2019:§4.4) for a scalar account.

➢ The so-called 'only'-concord phenomenon
  • Widespread in other languages
    a. Akan (C. Ahenkorah p.c.)
    b. Bangla (U. Banerjee p.c.)
    c. Cantonese (A. Law 2004; P. P.-l. Lee 2019; Yip 2023, 2024)
    d. Dutch (Barbiers 2014)
    e. Ga (Renans 2017)
    f. German (Hole 2015; J. Bayer 2020)
    g. German sign language (Herrmann 2013)
    h. Hindi (Bajaj 2016)
    i. Japanese (Erlewine 2012)
    j. Kasem (Aremu 2024)
    k. Korean (Y. Lee 2005)
    l. Mandarin Chinese (Hole 2017; Sun 2021)
    m. Vietnamese (Hole 2013, 2017; Erlewine 2017a; Sun 2021, Yip 2023)
    n. Yoruba (Yip and Adedeji 2024)

  • Not allowed in English:

(25) #He **only** read **only** *three books*.
     (Int.: "three books" being the only focus associate)

  • But compare to: negative concord (e.g., Zanuttini 1991, Zeijlstra 2004)

(26) a. S/he **ain't** going **nowhere**.
     b. S/he is **not** going anywhere.

3.2. Exceptional scope

➢ Note that *some* non-finite-clause-taking verbs allow *-zo* embedding,
   which **also** allow *-dak* embedding

   - Subject control*: soengsi* 'try to'; object control: *bik* 'force', *ceng* 'invite', etc.
   - **Aspectual lowering** (Grano 2014, N. Huang 2018, J. Huang 2022, Liu & Yip 2023)
     Perfective meaning scopes over the matrix verb!

(27) 我逼佢[唱**咗**一首歌]。
     Ngo <u>bik</u>   keoi [coeng-**zo** jat-sau go].
     1SG force 3SG   sing-PFV   one-CL song
     'I forced him to only sing one (song)'.

(28) 我逼佢[唱**得**一首歌]。
     Ngo <u>bik</u>   keoi [coeng-**dak** jat-sau go].
     1SG force 3SG   sing-DAK   one-CL song
     'I forced him to sing only one (song)'.

   - We will focus on the scopal interpretation of (28)!

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➢ <u>Narrow scope</u>
- *Zinghai* and *-dak* may take narrow scope under the matrix verb 'force'

(29) [Context: In a karaoke, time is limited and everyone is supposed to only sing one song. Ming wanted to sing two, but I managed to force him to sing only one.]
(佢本來想唱兩首，…)

    a. 我逼佢[淨係唱咗一首]。
       Ngo <u>bik</u>   keoi [**zinghai** coeng-zo jat-sau].   (force > only)
       1SG force 3SG only   sing-PFV one-CL
       'I forced him to only sing one (song)'.

    b. 我逼佢[(淨係)唱得一首]。
       Ngo <u>bik</u>   keoi [(**zinghai)** coeng-**dak** jat-sau].   (force > only)
       1SG force 3SG only   sing-DAK one-CL
       'I forced him to only sing one (song)'.

- ➢ Wide scope
  - *Zinghai* may take wide scope over the matrix verb 'force' if it is placed in the matrix
  - **Surprisingly, *-dak* may also take wide scope, even when embedded!**

(30) [Context: In a singing class, everyone was supposed to sing two designated songs. Ming was very shy and didn't want to sing even one. As a considerate teacher, I gave him a pass and only forced him to sing one, rather than two.]
(佢唔想唱呢兩首歌，…)

   a. 最後我**淨係**<u>逼</u>佢[唱咗一首]。

     Zauhau   ngo **zinghai** <u>bik</u>   keoi [coeng-zo jat-sau].   (only > force)
     eventually 1SG only   force 3SG   sing-PFV one-CL
     'I only forced him to sing one (song)'.

   b. 最後我(**淨係**)<u>逼</u>佢[唱**得**一首]。

     Zauhau   ngo (**zinghai**) <u>bik</u>   keoi [coeng-**dak** jat-sau].   (only > force)
     eventually 1SG only   force 3SG   sing-DAK one-CL
     'I only forced him to sing one (song)'.

     → A **mismatch** between the <u>pronounced</u> position (<u>embedded</u>) and
                the <u>interpreted</u> position (<u>matrix</u>)!

➢ This reading is different from a multiple/stacked 'only' reading

(31) 我**淨係**逼佢**齋(係)**唱咗一首。

    Ngo **zinghai** <u>bik</u>   keoi [**zaai(hai)** coeng-zo   jat-sau].   (only > force > only)
    1SG   only   force 3SG   only   sing-PFV   one-CL
    'I only forced him to do one thing, which is to only sing one (song)'.

➢ <u>More examples</u>

(32) 我淨係請佢講得一分鐘野。   (only>invite)

    Ngo **zinghai** ceng   keoi [gong-**dak**   jat-fanzung je].
    1SG   only   invite 3SG   say-DAK   one-minute thing
    'I only invited him to give a one-minute speech.'

(33) 我淨係叫佢睇得一本書(咋)。   (only>ask)

    Ngo **zinghai** ceng   keoi [taai-**dak** jat-bun syu] (zaa3).
    1SG   only   invite 3SG   read-DAK one-CL book SFP
    'I only ask him/her to read one book.'

4. Proposal: *-dak* as perfective aspect

> ➢ Two major components
> - #1 *-Dak*, just like *-zo*, is **a perfective aspect marker**
>   - ▫ Projects AspP
>   - ▫ Formulated as carrying the interpretable aspectual feature [*i*Asp:PFV]
>
> - #2 The 'only' meaning does *NOT* come from *-dak*,
>   but it is a result of the **Agree** relation with an exclusive operator
>   - ▫ Exclusive operator: yields 'only' meaning, either null or realized as *zinghai*
>   - ▫ *-Dak* carries the uninterpretable exclusive feature [*i*EXCL:_]
>   - ▫ Following the prevailing **operator-particle approach** to exclusive doubling
>   (Quek and Hirsch 2017; Bassi et al. 2022; Sun 2021; Branan and Erlewine 202; Yip 2023; *i.a.*)
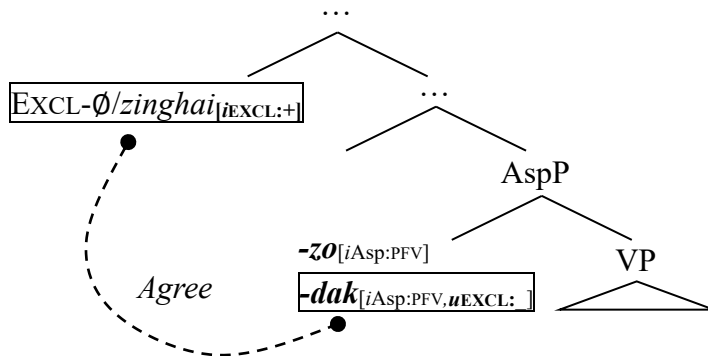
- ➢ #1: The aspectual restrictions follow
  - *-dak* is a perfective aspect

- ➢ #2: Exclusive doubling follows
  - *-dak* is **not** an exclusive operator
    → There is **no syntax-semantic mismatch** when it co-occurs with *zinghai*!
  - The 'only' meaning in singleton *-dak* cases comes from null EXCL-∅
    (also proposed by Lee 2005, Quek and Hirsch 2017; Bassi et al. 2022; Sun 2021; Yip 2023; *i.a.*)

- ➢ #3: Exceptional scope follows
  - Even when *-dak* is embedded, it may agree with an exclusive operator across a *non-finite* clause boundary in the **matrix clause**

(34) 最後我(淨係)逼佢唱得一首。

　　Zauhau　　ngo　(**zinghai**)　<u>bik</u>　keoi　[coeng-**dak**　jat-sau].　　(only > force)
　　eventually　1SG　only　　force　3SG　sing-DAK　one-CL
　　'I only forced him to sing one (song)'.

(35) [TP-matrix I [**EXCL**/*zinghai* [VP-matrix <u>force</u> him [AspP-embedded *-dak* [VP-embedded sing one song …

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- ➤ Diachronic support from early Cantonese (Yiu 2019)
  - 得 *dak* 'acquire'
  - 19th century: -*dak* did **not** have the focus use but had a **"realization"** (實現) use
  - Note that the question with -*dak* in (36) is **answered with the perfective marker** 嘵 *hiu* (*cf.* Kwok & Kataoka 2006)

(36) 我叫你買嘅茶杯，你買嘵未呢? 買嘵咯。買**得**幾多呢? 買**嘵**二十只

我叫你買茶杯，你買了沒? 買了。買了多少? 買了二十個。　　　　　(《散語四十章》，1877)

(Example and Mandarin translation cited from Yiu 2019:170)

- ➤ Mid-20th century:
  -*Dak*'s 'only' focus use was developed from **co-occurrence with other 'only' elements**

(37) 因為當時，我爸爸要帶我去外洋考察，我**衹系讀得**一個星期**啫**

因為當時我爸爸要帶我到海外去考察，我只讀了一個星期! (《十月芥菜》，1952)

(Example and Mandarin translation cited from Yiu 2019:172)

- ➤ I take -*dak*'s <u>exclusive agreement</u> as a **synchronic reflex** of the **diachronic development**

5. Conclusion

> Summary
> - I showed that *-dak* is primarily **a perfective aspect marker**, not a focus operator
>   - □ Support #1: *Unnoticed* aspectual restrictions of *-dak*
>   - □ Support #2: Form-meaning mismatch in exclusive doubling with *zinghai* 'only'
>   - □ Support #3: Exceptional scope of *-dak*
>
> - I proposed that *-dak*'s focus use is **syntactic agreement with an exclusive operator**
>
>   (38) [TP … [*zinghai*/EXCL[*i*EXCL:+] [AspP *dak*[*i*Asp:PFV,*u*EXCL:_] [VP V …
>   ▲ ┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄┄ ▲ (Agree relation)
>
>   - □ As a synchronic reflex of diachronic development *-dak*'s focus use (Yiu 2019)
>   - □ Corroborates the operator-particle dependency (Quek and Hirsch 2017; Bassi et al. 2022; Sun 2021; Branan and Erlewine 202; Yip 2023; *i.a.*)
>
>   - □ **A new understanding of** "discontinuous constructions" (Tang 2006 *et seq.*)
>   → Postverbal elements as agreement markers (冇嘢論) with preverbal operators (*cf.* the agreement view on converbal suffixes in Yip 2019, 2022a, 2022b)
>   → Offer a potential explanation on why "後置成份是較抽象成份,有較寬廣的語義指稱,前置成份是較具體成份,指稱比較直接。" (Cheng 2015)

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