

Factive, Contra-factive and Non-factive Modality Expressions

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ABSTRACT: In a state of affair, a speaker typically asserts the (un)truth of a proposition because his volition indicated to mark a presupposition about what he said. What he said is possible for what happens, happened, will happen in real or imaginary world. For this view, the duty of the hearer must consider whether the state of affair is factivity or nonfactivity. Factivity or nonfactivity usually is implied commitment the (un)truth of a proposition or (un)occurrence of an event through modal predicatives. For instance, (1) I know she has arrived. (2) I think she has arrived. The factivity or nonfactivity in (1) and (2) is committed by the modal predicatives 'know' and 'think'. 'Know' is considered the strong commitment while 'think' is the very weak one of the speaker to the truth of what he said (she has arrived). From this point of view, we first investigate and analyze some of factual and nonfactual modal verbs systematized by Cao Xuan Hao (1999), then we conduct them to see whether they exist in the same way in different types of utterances based on analyzing presupposition and implicature. The results show that there is no complete sustainability of distinction between the word system of factual modality and the word system of nonfactual modality.

KEYWORDS: factive, Contra-factive, Non-factive, proposition, modality

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the discourse analysis of Vietnamese language. we study some Vietnamese modal verb-adverb collocations (compared with English to identify similarities and differences), therefore in the analysis framework of the factivity of a state of affair. we concur with Cao Xuan Hao (1999) and Bally (2003) divide sentences into two parts: modus and dictum. Modus is called modality reflect the speaker's personal perception towards the dictum. The speaker's personal perception can be expressed through his knowledge, attitude, judgment, commitment, etc., while the dictum is considered the same as the proposition or the state of affair of the utterance.

I mostly survey two types of the following sentence in Vietnamese:

Subject (S) + Modal verb-adverb collocation (M) + Verb (V)

Subject (S) + Verb (V)

We study on epistemic modality of adverbs and verbs. Epistemic modality concerns the status of a proposition with respect to the truth value, so its function will express different degrees of commitment to factivity of a proposition. In fact, with the factivity of the proposition, we consider whether the act, behavior or the process of the epistemic expression occurs or not. If its proposition happens, it is called a factive, and if it does not happen, it is called a contra-factive, and if without determining whether it happens or not, it is called non-factive. The value of the state of affair is analyzed in presupposition and implicature of the utterance. We must state that the nature of the relationship between epistemic modality and factivity is provided in detail by Lyons (1977) and Palmer (1977).

II. IMPLICATURE AND PRESUPPOSITION

1.1. Implicature:

According to Nguyen Duc Dan (1998), the implicature is a cognitive concept of the causal relationship between two events A and B. If A has a potential implicature of B, and then B is also a potential implicature of A. To him, the implicature has two levels: semantic and pragmatic implicature.

1.1.1. Semantic implicature:

Semantic implicature, its meaning is created by the nature of the word structure rather than its context. Specifically, when used in a sentence, its meaning will not change and the hearer can easily understand. For instance, the semantic implicature of verbs, and modal verbs. In fact, some verbs, modal verbs which support their semantic implicature of the action after whether it occurs or not, or it is indefinite.

We will make a list of some modal words that have factive implicature (the presupposition of the proposition unchanging), contra-factive (the presupposition of the proposition opposite), and non-factive (the

presupposition of the proposition lies in the possibility) even though they are used in any contexts. However, there is still no absolute certainty in these cases because the nature of mind is transformed and the task of language is to clarify it. This is the reason that evidentiality is required necessarily for marking a cognition of the factivity or non-factivity of the proposition. This cognition can help the hearer understand what the speaker said when he considers all what he has said. In addition, he should consider the speaker's beliefs, knowledge and language behavior towards the factivity of the proposition. This is the process the pragmatic implicature the hearer needs to decrypt.

Now, we can consider three common factive modal verb-adverb collocations: (đành/must, reluctantly, bèn/must, trót/accidentally)

(3) Tôi chớ không được, tôi đành (phải) nhận.

Adjunct AdvP S M V
(Unrefusingly, I must accept.)

Adjunct AdvP S Modal V
(Unrefusingly, I reluctantly accept.)

Adjunct AdvP S Adv V

The proposition in (3) presupposes that “nhận”/ “accept” has occurred although the speaker’s attitude doesn’t like it. So “đành” / “must” commits a factive state of affair.

(4) Giận quá, anh ấy bèn bỏ đi.

Adjunct AdvP S MV

(So angrily, he must leave.)

Adjunct AdvP S M V

The same with (3), in (4) “anh ấy bỏ đi”/ “he leaves” has happened, and “bèn” / “must” commits an actual event or it expresses a factive word.

(5) Cô ấy trót nói đùa một câu không nghiêm túc.

S M V N D N Pr A

(She accidentally joked an unserious joke.)

S Adv V D A N

In (5), the presupposition is “Cô ấy nói đùa một câu” / “She joked a joke”, so “trót” / “accidentally” is factive word, too.

Overall, the speakers in (3) and the agent in (4) are obliged to “accept”, “leave” but “trót”/ “accidentally” in (5) her belief doesn’t like that.

In contrast, twomodal verb-adverb collocations: (toan/intend, suýt / not mean) are considered contra-factive words, but quyết định / decide is a non-factive word.

(6) Vì nghèo, Tuấn toan nghỉ học để giúp đỡ mẹ.

Adjunct AdvPS M V N AdvP

(Because of his poverty, Tuan intend to drop out of school to help his mother.)

Adjunct AdvPS V InfPN AdvP

(7) Nó suýt ôm tôi.

S M V N

(He doesn’t mean to hug me.)

S VP InfP

(8) Vì nghèo, Tuấn quyết định nghỉ học để giúp đỡ mẹ.

Adjunct AdvP S M V N AdvP

(Because of his poverty, Tuan decides to drop out of school to help his mother.)

Adjunct AdvP S V Inf. N AdvP

The presuppositions in (6-7) are that “Tuấn drops out of school” and “Nó ôm tôi” do not exist so “toan”/ “intend” and “suýt” / “not mean” is called a contra-factive modal verb whereas the presupposition of (8) is that “Tuan drops out of school” does not know whether it exists or not so ‘quyết định’/ ‘decide’ is called a non-factive modal verb.

1.1.2. Pragmatic implicature:

Pragmatic implicature or conversational implicature is its meaning depends on its context. Therefore, the hearer must base on the utterance to recognize its meaning.

(8). Người con: “Con muốn mua cái áo đó.”

S M V N

(A son: “I want/would like to buy that dress.”)

S V Inf N

Người mẹ: “Nó đắt lắm.”

S V Adv

(His mom: "It is too expensive")
S V AdvA

Pragmatic implicature in (8) means "a son suggests his mom buying a dress but his mom refuses getting it."

1.2. Presupposition

According to Richards et al (1987), presupposition is what a speaker or writer assumes that the receiver of the message already knows. It means, between the speaker and the hearer have already known the common background knowledge (presupposed information). Cao Xuan Hao (1999) further explained that the speaker must know what the hearer knows about what he is saying, the hearer can identify the person, the thing he is talking about, and even when the conversation is taking place, whether the person, the thing presents in the hearer's short-term memory or not. In addition, presupposed information is always the same when describing the same state of affair even though it is expressed in a variety of sentential types, and a sentence/utterance emphatically has at least one presupposition.

(9a) Tôi biết anh là người giàu có.

(I know you are a rich person.)

(9b) Tôi không biết anh là người giàu có.

(I don't know you are a rich person.)

In (9a-b) the verb "biết"/ "không biết" (know / don't know) presupposes that "anh là người giàu có" (you are a rich person) is true, so "biết" is a factive verb.

According to Cao Xuan Hao, the presupposition of the utterance can be divided two aspects in language (the nature of words), in pragmatic (context).

(10) "Anh đã bị bắt."

(You are arrested.)

In (10) presupposition in language is "Anh bị bắt" / "You are arrested" and presupposition in pragmatic is that the utterance will exist if it is ordered by the police.

III. THE FACTIVITY

To clarify the factivity of the utterance, I will analyze some sentences that contain some epistemic modality through the examples below:

(11a) Tôi nhớ đáp án này đúng.

(I remember this answer is right.)

(11b) Tôi nhớ đáp án này đúng, nhưng thật ra đáp án kia mới đúng.

(I remember this answer is right, but actually that one is.)

The word "nhớ" / "remember" in (11a) expresses a firm commitment to the proposition "đáp án này đúng" / "this answer is right". So, "nhớ" / "remember" here is factive word. However, "nhớ" / "remember" in (11b) is contra-factive because its presupposition is "đáp án này không đúng" / "this answer is not right." This is just the subjectivity of the speaker, and when he/she is looking cautiously for evidence to enlighten, he/she considers it is not.

(12a) Tôi sợ mẹ đánh nên ở nhà.

(He fears that his mother hits him, so he stays at home.)

(12b) Tôi sợ mẹ đánh nhưng vẫn không ở nhà.

(He fears that his mother hits him, but he doesn't still stay at home.)

Obviously, "sợ" / "fear" in (12a) is non-factive because the proposition "mẹ đánh" / "his mother hits him" has not occurred yet and this is only in his mindset, so the presupposition of this utterance is "his mother probably hits him if he is not at home". But, (12b) "sợ" / "fear" is contra-factive because the evidence "he doesn't still stay at home" has rejected the proposition "he fears that his mother hits him". And, the utterance (12b) also implies "he does not fear his mother hits him."

From (11a,b) and (12a,b), we remember the notion of Ayer (1956) when he studied logical modality, he considered the proposition into the relationship between knowledge and belief. He said if someone knows something, he will believe in it. He showed "X knows Y, then he implies X believes it is Y". However, Gettier (1963) gave a situation to reject this definition: Is X wrong the dog for the sheep when X looks at the field? (Remember that the dog is dressed up as a sheep and assumes that X does not see it). Then, indeed, X believes there is a sheep in the field. This statement is true and reasonable. However, it is necessary to re-consider the nature of this sheep.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, we find that verbs are considered factive, contra-factive and non-factive, they sometimes need evidence to make the proposition better understood. Factivity or non-factivity is not only reflected in the attitude of the speaker about the proposition, but also through the linguistic behavior, the

intention, the purpose of the speaker when he expresses a proposition beyond language. Thus, the task of the hearer is to interpret, to identify those meanings on the presupposition, implicature, and even he must interpret elements of linguistic behavior to judge whether or not they are true. These are the preconditions for clarifying the relationship between language and mind. Because human perception is immersed in or encoded into the language through vocabulary, grammar and tone, understanding and correct use of modal verbs will help people maintain and improve good interpersonal relationships in a variety of communicative situations.

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