

## Modal movement licensed by focus

### 1. Phenomenon:

- (1) Epistemic modals can precede or follow the subject

(*Keneng*) Zhangsan (*keneng*) zhunbei-le wancan  
be.possible Zhangsan be.possible prepare-PERF dinner  
'Zhangsan is possible to have prepared the dinner.'

- (2) Root modals cannot precede the subject

{\**Neng*/ \**hui*/ \**keyi*} Zhangsan {*neng*/ *hui*/ *keyi*} zhunbei wancan  
can will may Zhangsan can will may prepare dinner  
Int.: 'Zhangsan can/ will/ may prepare the dinner.'

(T.-H.J. Lin 2011: 50–51, with the addition of *keyi*)

### 2. Previous view: A-not-A questions licensing/Base generation approaches

- (3) Root modals in A-not-A form can precede the subject

*Neng-bu-neng*/ *hui-bu-hui*/ *ke-bu-keyi* Zhangsan zhunbei wancan?  
RED-NEG-can RED-NEG-will RED-NEG-may Zhangsan prepare dinner  
'Can/ will/ may it be that Zhangsan prepare the dinner?'

(T.-H. J. Lin 2011: 69, with the addition of *keyi*)<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Counterexamples:

- (i) A-not-A questions do not always license the high position of root modals

- (ii) the position of focus plays a crucial role in licensing high modals.

- (24) A-not-A questions with different focus positions

[Lisi's Mainland Travel Permit had expired, so that he cannot go to Beijing. If so...]

- a. *Ke-bu-keyi* Zhangsan<sub>F</sub> qu Beijing?

RED-NEG-may Zhangsan go Beijing

'Is it allowed to be that Zhangsan goes to Beijing then?'

- b. \**Ke-bu-keyi* Lisi qu Taipei<sub>F</sub>?

RED-NEG-may Lisi go Taipei

Int.: 'Is it allowed to be that Lisi goes to Taipei then?'

可不可以李四是去台北？

可不可以李四去的是台北？

(25) Polarity questions with different focus positions

- a. Keyi shi Zhangsan<sub>F</sub> qu Beijing {↗/ ma}?  
may FOC Zhangsan go Beijing Q SFP.Q  
'Is it allowed to be that Zhangsan but not someone else goes to Beijing?'
- b. \*Keyi Zhangsan shi qu Beijing<sub>F</sub> {↗/ ma}?  
may Zhangsan FOC go Beijing Q SFP.Q  
'Is it allowed to be that Zhangsan goes to Beijing but not somewhere else?'

(26) is compatible with both). The infelicity of (A2) in (27) then follows from a relevance maxim for not being relevant to the QUD.

Answer for '怎麼' without focus is A2:  
怎麼張三去了北京?

(27) An A-not-A question with a high root modal

- a. Q: Ke-bu-keyi Zhangsan zhunbei wancan?  
RED-NEG-may Zhangsan prepare dinner  
'Is it allowed to be that Zhangsan prepares the dinner?'  
Focus \_ A1:  
怎麼是張三去了北京?
- b. A1: Bu keyi, zhiyou Lisi<sub>F</sub> keyi zhunbei wancan (subject focus)  
NEG may only Lisi may prepare dinner  
'No, only Lisi may prepare the dinner.'
- c. A2: \*Bu keyi, ta zhi keyi zhunbei zaocan<sub>F</sub> (#object focus)  
NEG may 3SG only may prepare breakfast  
'No, he may prepare the breakfast only.'

(26) An A-not-A question with a low root modal

- a. Q: Zhangsan ke-bu-keyi zhunbei wancan?  
Zhangsan RED-NEG-may prepare dinner  
'May Zhangsan prepare the dinner?'
- b. A1: Bu keyi, zhiyou Lisi<sub>F</sub> keyi zhunbei wancan (subject focus)  
NEG may only Lisi may prepare dinner  
'No, only Lisi may prepare the dinner.'
- c. A2: Bu keyi, ta zhi keyi zhunbei zaocan<sub>F</sub> (object focus)  
NEG may 3SG only may prepare breakfast  
'No, he may prepare the breakfast only.'

#### 4. Proposal:

(i) root modals undergo head movement across a focused element to the high position, and this movement is constrained by a focus version of output

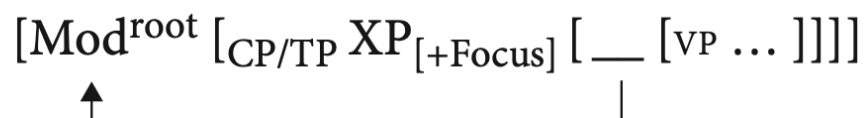
**economy.**

(ii) high position of root modals is licensed by the focus interpretations, rather than the A-not-A question.

(iii) immediate focus

(iv) not only for subject, also for object, predicate, and whole clauses

## (45) Modal movement



## (46) Output Economy (focus version)

Optional operations must affect the output with regard to focus set calculation.

### 5.Evidence:

#### 5.1 Four types of focus

(i) positions of contrast/correction in the discourse;

#### (5) Contrastive focus on the subjects

Keyi *ni<sub>F</sub>* qu, ye keyi *ta<sub>F</sub>* qu

may 2SG go also may 3SG go

'It is allowed to be that you go, and it is also allowed to be that s/he goes.'

#### (9) Corrective focus on the subject

Keyi *ni<sub>F</sub>* qu, bushi *ta<sub>F</sub>*

may 2SG go not 3SG

'It is allowed to be that you go, not him/her.'

(ii) focus-marking devices such as focus marker *shi*;

(11) *Shi*-focus associated with the subject

Keyi <sup>\*</sup>(*shi*) *Zhangsan*<sub>F</sub> *qu* Beijing    **Ok** 你認為怎麼是張三去的  
can <sub>FOC</sub> Zhangsan go Beijing  
‘It is allowed to be that it is Zhangsan that goes to Beijing.’  
**denial)** 可以是張三去北京?  
人是張三去北京?

(iii) *lian...dou* ‘even...also’ focus constructions;

(13) *Lian...dou*-focus on the subject

Q5: 會連張三都找不到李四。 OK

Wo juede [*hui lian Zhangsan*<sub>F</sub> *dou zhao-bu-dao* Lisi]  
1sg think will even Zhangsan also find-NEG-RSLT Lisi  
‘I think that it will be that even Zhangsan cannot find Lisi.’

(iv) elements that come with inherent focus such as *wh*-expressions

(15) *Wh*-subjects

Name, *keyi shei*<sub>F</sub> *mianfei*        *qu* Beijing?  
so        may who free.of.charge go Beijing  
‘So, who may go to Beijing for free?’

## 5.2 Immediate focus

If the focus element is separated from the high modal, the sentence is degraded.

(6) Contrastive focus on the predicates

\**Keyi ni liuxia*<sub>F</sub>, *ye keyi ni zou*<sub>F</sub>  
may 2sg stay also may 2sg leave  
Int.: ‘It is allowed to be that you stay, and it is also allowed to be that you leave.’

(10) Corrective focus on the predicate

\*Keyi ni liuxia<sub>F</sub>, bushi zou<sub>F</sub>

may 2SG stay not leave

Int.: 'It is allowed to be that you stay, not leave.'

ion (12) Shi-focus associated with the object/ the whole VP

\*Keyi Zhangsan shi [qu Beijing]<sub>F</sub>

can Zhangsan FOC go Beijing

\* 你認為怎麼張三是去北京？

Q4: OK 你認為怎麼張三是去北京？

Int.: 'It is allowed to be that it is Beijing that Zhangsan goes to.'

(14) Lian...dou-focus on the object

Q6: 你覺得怎麼張三連李四都找不到？ Ok

\*Wo juede [hui Zhangsan lian Lisi<sub>F</sub> dou zhao-bu-dao]

1SG think will Zhangsan even Lisi also find-NEG-RESULT

Int.: 'I think that it will be that Zhangsan cannot find even Lisi.'

TP: \* 张三寿司有可能自己吃。

CP: 寿司张三有可能自己吃。

5.3 Focus object and predicate

(17) Object focus in lian...dou constructions (pre-subject)

- a. Jingran keyi lian GB<sub>F</sub> na-ge-laoshi dou bu-jiao,  
unexpectedly may even GB that-CL-teacher also NEG-teach  
zhen lipu!

really unacceptable

'How could that teacher not teach GB (Government & Binding theory)!

That's insane!'

? 怎麼可以連數學那個老師都不教？

\*你認為怎麼可以連數學那個老師都不教？

- b. \*Jingran lian GB<sub>F</sub> keyi na-ge-laoshi dou bu-jiao,  
unexpected even GB can that-CL-teacher also NEG-teach  
zhen lipu!  
really unacceptable

(18) Predicate focus in *lian...**dou* focus constructions

- a. Wo juede [hui *lian* *chi*<sub>F</sub> ta dou bu chi]  
1SG think will even eat 3SG also NEG eat  
'I think it will be that s/he even doesn't eat.'
- b. \*Wo juede [*lian* *chi*<sub>F</sub> hui ta dou bu chi]  
1SG think even eat will 3SG also NEG eat

(19) Contrastive focus on the whole clauses

Keyi [*Zhangsan ba wenjian na-guo-qu*]<sub>F</sub>, ye keyi [*Lisi ba tuzhang song-guo-lai*]<sub>F</sub>  
may Zhangsan BA document take-pass-go also can Lisi BA stamp  
give-pass-come  
'It is allowed to be that Zhangsan passes the document there, and it is also allowed to be that Lisi passes the stamp here.'

6.Question:

7.Data judge: