

The syntax of the free choice marker *sidaan* in Cantonese

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Introduction

- This study discusses the distribution of *sidaan* 是但 in Cantonese.
- As noted in many Cantonese dictionaries and reference grammar, it means “casual, random”.

(1) Predicative *sidaan*

- 紅色、白色都得，我好 是但 嘅。 (Zhang and Nie 1999, p.312-3)
- 你食乜野啊？ 是但 喇。 (Li and Bai 1998, p.63)
- 買番規定係買靚粉呀？
是但 啦，你揸主意。 (Mai and Tan 2011, p.300-301)

Introduction

- It can also be used pre-verbally, as an colloquial alternative to express free choice *any* (Matthews and Yip 2011).

(2) Adverbial *sidaan*

- 是但 幫我揀一件。 (Zhang and Nie 1999, p.312-313)
- 是但 搵個人做啦 (Mai and Tan 2011, p.300-301)
- 是但 搵啲乜野食吓啦。 (Cheung 2007, p.356)
- 你 是但 擺一個都冇所謂啦。 (Matthews and Yip 2011, p.310)
- 是但 要乜野都得 (Li and Bai 1998, p.63)
- 是但 搵邊個人幫吓手啦。 (Cheung 2007, p.356)

Introduction

- *Sidaan* also has an adnominal usage, which similarly convey a free choice meaning.

(3) Adnominal *sidaan*

a. 阿明睇咗 是但 一本書。

b. 是但 邊本都得啦。

(Sio 2006, p.40)

- It receives little attention in the literature, except being mentioned in passing in Sio (2006).

Introduction

- In particular, I will identify three closely related usages of *sidaan*, in addition to the predicative usage.

(4) Three usages of *sidaan*

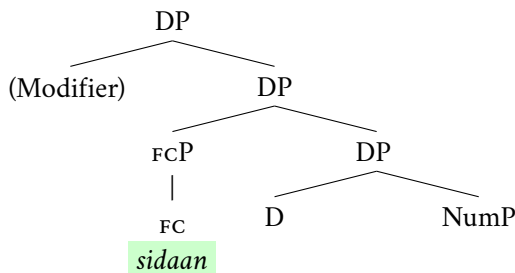
- | | | |
|----|-----------------|------------------------|
| a. | 阿明 是但 睇咗 《小王子》。 | adverbial, manner |
| b. | 阿明 是但 睇咗 一本書。 | adverbial, free choice |
| c. | 阿明睇咗 是但 一本書。 | adnominal, free choice |

- I argue that
 - sidaan* is ambiguous between a manner adverb and a free choice marker;
 - adverbial and adnominal free choice *sidaan* is derivationally related.

Introduction

- To overview the proposal, I propose adnominal *sidaan* is a phrasal modifier.

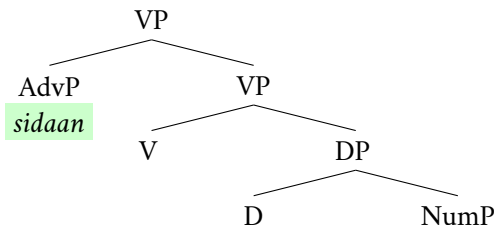
(5) Adnominal, free choice *sidaan*: a modifier of DP



Introduction

- Adverbial *sidaan* can be used as an manner adverb.

(6) Adverbial, manner *sidaan*: a modifier of VP (= an adverb)



Introduction

- The adverbial, free choice reading, however, is derived via incorporation.

(7) Adverbial, free choice *sidaan*: an incorporated phrase onto the verb

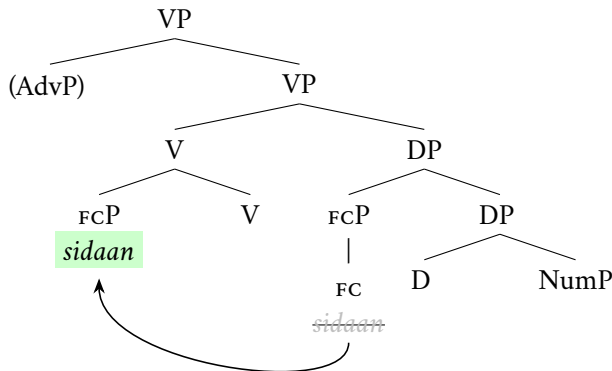


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Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- ***Sidaan* is adnominal, not post-verbal.**

(8) It can function as an argument.

- Indirect object: 我畀咗本書 是但 一個學生。
- Subject: 我知道呢度 是但 一本書係《小王子》。

(9) Coordination with NPs

- 阿明睇咗《小王子》同 是但 一本漫畫。
- 阿明睇咗呢本小說同 是但 一本漫畫。

(10) It can occur after nominal modifiers (but not vice versa)

- 阿明會買 [呢度] 是但 一本書。
- 阿明精讀咗 [用法文寫嘅] 是但 一本書

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- ***Sidaan* is external to DP.**

(11) *sidaan* > *mau*

a. 阿明睇咗 是但 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *呢 \\ *個 \\ *每 \\ 某 \end{array} \right\}$ 一本書。

(12) *sidaan* > *bin/jamho*

a. 是但 邊本都得啦。

(Sio 2006, p.40)

b. 是但 任何一間都得

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- ***Sidaan* gives rise to an individual-denoting, indefinite reading**

- (13) a. Referential:
 阿明睇咗 [是但 一本書]_i。但我唔知 本書_i 叫咩名。
- b. Bound variable:
 每個同學都睇咗 [是但 一本書]，但本本都唔一樣嘅。

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- **Adnominal *sidaan* imposes selectional requirements on its adjacent NP.**

(14) *Sidaan* + NumP

- 阿明睇咗 是但 一本書。
- *阿明睇咗 是但 《小王子》。
- *阿明睇咗 是但 小說。
- *阿明睇咗 是但 所有小說。

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- NumP is not the only possible elements. Some more:

(15) *Sidaan* + *Mau*

- a. 大家不妨買花時也試試加上 是但 某一隻顏色
- b. 佢 是但 任何一科唔開／遲開即刻要坐4年

[Blog](#)

[forum](#)

(16) *Sidaan* + *Jamho*

- a. 是但 任何一個屋苑行去錦上路站都遠過狗
- b. 是但 任何一個英超球員都贏大谷

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[forum](#)

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- **Wh-expressions**: The *wh*-expressions must be independently bound by some operators.

- (17) a. *Sidaan* + **universal *wh***
 是但 邊本都得啦。 (Sio 2006, p.40)
- b. *Sidaan* + ***wh*-indefinites in imperatives**
 唔該 ... 是但 邊位揸fit人出嚟同大家解釋吓好唔好? [blog](#)
- c. *Sidaan* + ***wh*-indefinites in conditionals**
 唔寫或寫錯 是但 邊一樣嘅話，個撈稿唔出嚟。 [Wiki](#)
- d. *Sidaan* + ***wh*-indefinites in unconditionals**
 是但 邊個得閒邊個剪 [forum](#)

Sidaan as an adnominal marker

- Adnominal *sidaan* requires overt Num, unlike other D elements.

- (18) a. *阿明睇咗 是但 本書。
 b. 阿明睇咗 呢 (一) 本書。
 c. 阿明睇咗 每 (一) 本書。
 d. 阿明睇咗 某 (一) 本書。

- The ban on one-omission follows if *sidaan* is a phrasal category.

- (19) a. 阿明 睇咗 (一) 本書 verb licensing
 b. 阿明 睇咗 是但 一本書
 c. *阿明 睇咗 是但 本書 **sidaan* licensing
 d. cf. adverbial *sidaan*: 阿明 是但 睇咗 本書 verb licensing

Proposal

- These above observations justify the following structure:

(20) Adnominal, free choice *sidaan*: a modifier of DP

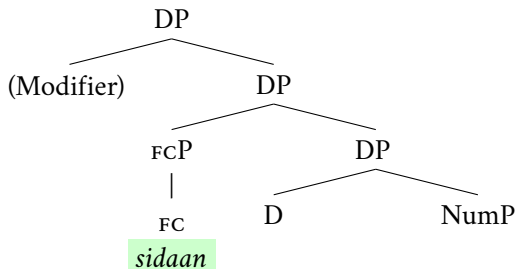


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Sidaan as a manner adverb

- Matthews and Yip (2011), p. 310, suggests
 - “colloquial alternatives to express free choice *any*”
 - “As adverbs, they come before the verb”

My proposal:

- Adverb, but not free choice → a manner adverb
- Free choice, but not adverb → a DP incorporated onto the verb

Sidaan as a manner adverb

- Evidence for a manner adverb:

(21) Incompatible with verbs that entail a non-causal manner:

- # 阿明 是但 精讀咗《小王子》。
- # 阿明 是但 詳述咗《小王子》嘅內容。
- # 阿明 是但 細味咗《小王子》嘅故事。
- # 阿明 是但 鑽研咗《小王子》嘅深意。

Sidaan as a manner adverb

- Evidence for a manner adverb (cont'd):

(22) Compatible with the manner adverbial marker *gam2*

- 阿明好 是但 噉睇咗《小王子》。
- 阿明 是是但但 噉睇咗《小王子》。

(23) Co-occurrence

- 阿明為咗打發時間， 是但 睇咗書櫃入面嘅 是但 一本書。
- # 阿明為咗打發時間， 是但 精讀咗書櫃入面嘅 是但 一本書。
- 阿明想學程式語言，所以 是但 學咗研究會用到嘅 是但 一種。
- # 阿明想學程式語言，所以 是但 鑽研咗研究會用到嘅 是但 一種。

Proposal

- These above observations justify the following structure:

(24) Adverbial, manner *sidaan*: a modifier of VP (= an adverb)

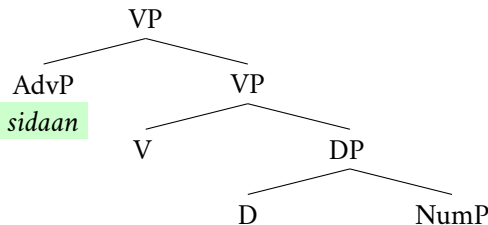


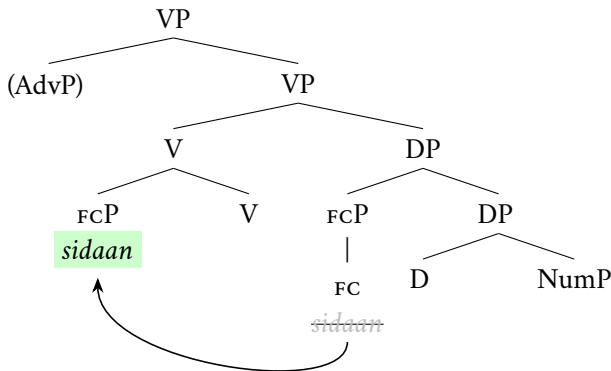
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Sidaan as a pre-verbal, FC marker

- I suggest that an adverbial *sidaan* can indeed be a free choice marker.
- Instead of being an adverb, it is derived from its adnominal counterpart.

(25) Adverbial, free choice *sidaan*: an incorporated phrase onto the verb



Sidaan as a pre-verbal, FC marker

- Since Incorporation is local, and requires structural adjacency, we expect to see **intervention effects if movement is involved**.

(26) Nominal modifier intervention between V and *sidaan*

- 阿明精讀咗 [用法文寫嘅] 是但 一本書。
- *阿明 是但 精讀咗 [用法文寫嘅] △ 一本書。

(27) Adverb intervention between *sidaan* and V

- 阿明 手快快 是但 買咗一本書
- *阿明 是但 手快快 買咗一本書
- cf. 阿明好 是但 噉手快快買咗一本書

Sidaan as a pre-verbal, FC marker

- **Adverbial free choice *sidaan* share the same selectional requirements as its adnominal counterpart.**

(28) a. #阿明 是但 精讀咗《小王子》。

b. #阿明 是但 精讀咗小說。

c. #阿明 是但 精讀咗所有小說。

(29) a. 阿明 是但 精讀咗一本書。

NumP

b. 阿明 是但 精讀咗某一本書。

mau

c. 阿明可以 是但 精讀任何一本書。

jamho

d. 如果阿明 是但 精讀過邊本書，佢就唔會唔識。

wh

Sidaan as a pre-verbal, FC marker

- ***Do-so* replacement fails to target the clause adjacent to FC *sidaan*.**
- I assume 噉做 is similar to 這樣做 in replacing a VP (Wei and Li 2016).

- (30) a. Baseline: manner *sidaan* can be stranded.
 阿明會 是但 [VP 寫吓日記]，阿芬都 是但 [VP 噉做]。
- b. Target: FC *sidaan* cannot be stranded.
 *阿明會 [VP 是但 精讀一本書]，阿芬都會 是但 [VP 噉做]。
- c. Cf. FC *sidaan* must be replaced altogether.
 阿明會 [VP 是但 精讀一本書]，阿芬都會 [VP 噉做]。

- That FC *sidaan* cannot be stranded indicates that it is not an adverb.
- This follows from the incorporation account:
if *sidaan* is incorporated onto V, it cannot be seperated from V.

Some suggestive evidence

- Empirically, elements like *sidaan* are not uncommon, e.g., *zukzuk* 足足 :

(31) *Zukzuk* displays a similar positional alternation.

- 佢食咗 足足 三碗飯。
- 佢 足足 食咗三碗飯。

(32) *Zukzuk* also exhibits selectional requirement.

- *佢食咗 足足 個碗飯。
- *佢 足足 食咗個碗飯。

Some suggestive evidence

- Analytically, incorporation of a phrasal category onto verbs is attested in Mandarin, defended in Wei and Li (2016).
 - They propose that *zheme* 這麼 originates from the object of a VP, and is then incorporated onto the verb.

(33) NP incorporation onto verbs

- 張三打了自己的兒子。瑪莉也這麼做了。(p.187)
 - 張三認為瑪莉很聰明，李四也這麼認為。(p.193)
- Despite being pre-verbal, *zheme* conveys no adverbial meaning.
 - Rather, it replaces a VP/CP argument.

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Further issues

- Differentiation between 是但, 求其, and 隨便

- (37) a. 阿明是但睇咗一本書。
 b. 阿明求其睇咗一本書。
 c. 阿明隨便睇咗一本書。

- Different types of free choice meaning: 是但 vs. 任何

- (38) a. 是但 一枝水有毒。
 b. *任何一枝水有毒。

- (39) a. 我睇咗 是但 一本漫畫。
 b. *我睇咗任何一本漫畫。

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