

# Subject, Stance, and Sequence: An Interactional Construction Grammar Approach to the False-belief Verb *Yiwei* in Mandarin Conversation

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The study of complement-taking mental predicates (CTMPs) such as think and guess in English has received much attention from the fields of Cognitive Linguistics and functional linguistics (e.g., Thompson, 2002; Van Bogaer, 2011). Despite the body of publications, past research tends to focus on the patterns of particular high-frequency CTMPs or put forward a framework that can be applied to account for the general features of this group of verbs. Relatively few look into CTMPs that report (previous) false or incorrect beliefs. Those that touch upon the issue of false-belief predicates often fail to discuss their use in spoken discourse (e.g., Hu, 2006; Glass, 2015). As discourse-based studies of the English phrase I thought have pointed out, previous incorrect beliefs can be reported in particular constructions to serve specific interactional functions (Kärkkäinen, 2012, Smith, 2013). Their findings strongly suggest that false-belief predicates deserve more in-depth investigation.

To address this gap, the present study intends to investigate the use of *yiwei* '(someone) mistakenly thought,' which is a lexicalized item for reporting false belief (Hu, 2006; Glass, 2015), in Mandarin conversation. A detailed analysis of this verb is conducted, drawing on the framework of Interactional Construction Grammar (Fried and Ostman, 2005; Linell, 2009; Wide, 2009; Fischer, 2010; Nikiforidou et al., 2014; Diewald 2015, among others), which integrates the approach of Interactional Linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018) and the theory of Construction Grammar (Fillmore et al., 1988; Goldberg, 1995), and on the 80 instances of *yiwei* from two of the largest corpora of spoken Taiwan Mandarin, the NTU spoken Chinese corpus and the NCCU corpus of spoken Chinese (Chui & Lai, 2008).

The instances of *yiwei* retrieved from the corpora yield a number of significant findings: First, *yiwei* tends to precede content that is structurally less extended and complex, which differs from other more common CTMPs (cf. Huang, 2003). That is, there seems to be a pairing between the meaning of the verb and the structure of the construction(s) in which it is used. Second, combinations of the false-belief verb with different subjects appear to form constructions that help achieve various stance-related, interactional purposes (e.g., foreshadowing discrepancy or showing disagreement). Third, the function of the same combination may vary in accordance with the sequential environment in which it occurs. In other words, the subject-verb fragment and the sequential context together constitute a broader construction that connects the lexico-grammatical resources and socio-interactional needs in Mandarin conversation (cf. Fried and Ostman, 2005; Linell, 2009; Wide, 2009).

By virtues of these findings, this study not only serves as a basis for cross-linguistic comparison of the use of false-belief verbs in discourse, but also sheds some light on the mutual influence between grammar and interaction and the possibility of incorporating Construction Grammar and Interactional Linguistics.

## Selected References

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