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Evaluation report on the Ph. D. Dissertation

EPISTEMIC MODALITIES IN SPOKEN STANDARD TIBETAN

by Zuzana VOKURKOVÀ

This dissertation (377 p.), with a two supervisors, Bohumil Palec (Charles University at Prague) and Nicolas Tornadre (Université de Paris 8) constitutes a rigorous analysis of epistemic modalities in spoken Standard Tibetan. The work is divided into five chapters, with an introduction and a general conclusion. In addition, it contains bibliography references, a glossary and four appendices (I. Tibetan writing and phonology; II. The list of grammatical morphemes and their functions; III. The TAM verbal endings in spoken Standard Tibetan, and, finally, IV. 611 Tibetan examples). The examples are given in Wylie transliteration, followed by English interlinear gloss and English translation, and sometimes with the context of the analyzed utterance or a commentary in brackets. It should be noted that the written presentation is perfect, and thus the candidate must be congratulated.

Taking into account formal, semantic and syntactic properties, Zuzana Vokurkovà (ZV) discusses in detail various lexical and grammatical means of the expression of epistemic modalities (epistemic verbal suffixes, called 'endings', and epistemic adverbs), their geographic uses and frequency, she proposes a classification of all types of epistemic endings.

The introduction (pp. 11-16) briefly describes the data of which the main part are acquired between 2002 and 2006 mostly in central Tibet but also in the diaspora in India and Europe; she underlines the difficulties for building the paradigm of different epistemic verbal endings.

In the first chapter (p. 17- 74), the candidate starts by very briefly mentioning some theoretical approaches on time and the aspect. She underlines the importance of the concept of temporal reference, the deictic / non-deictic distinction and the difference between grammatical and lexical aspect. Although these two categories are not the object of the dissertation, it would have been useful that the theoretical position of the quoted author can be accompanied by some comments and the personal point of view of the candidate on the theory mentioned (for example, on the absence of the concept of interval in the approach of the quoted authors as Reichenbach 1966, 1947, or on the (erroneous) assertion of Moeschler 1989, quoted p. 20, who considers that the French Passé "is limited to the information E-R (the event preceding the moment of the utterance)". On the other hand, although the problems of aspects and tenses are discussed in the following chapters, a non-specialist would have appreciated here some examples allowing him to have a vague idea of the expression of time and aspect in spoken Standard Tibetan

The second part of this chapter (p. 22-74), which is related to approaches devoted to the category of modality, is thorough, clear, and concise. After a preliminary overview of the treatment of modality from linguistic point of view, in connection with the theory of speech acts and the notions of factitivity and subjectivity, Zuzana Vokurkovà presents the different types of modality in the literature: epistemic, evidential, deontic and illocutionary. Discussing the problematic distinction between evidential and epistemic modalities, she distinguishes, as Dik (1997), Bhat (1999) and Tournadre (2004), among others, evidential and epistemic modalities; she integrates also negation in the modality. She presents in a very concise way three models of modality and focuses quite justifiably that Palmer's (1986), Dick's (1997) and Gosselin's (2005) approaches differ as well from the theoretical and terminological point of view as classification (p. 66-67). We might note in passing however that the few short remarks concerning the treatment of modality in logic do not make possible to really benefit from it, on the one hand, and that it is damage that certain work on the modality carried out in France or published in French was not taken into account (for example, H. Kronning,1996. *Modalité, cognition et polysémie : sémantique du verbe modal devoir*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Studia Romanica Upsaliensia 54) or *Aspects de la Modalité*, Tübingen, Max Niemer Verlag, 2003, among others ; or dissertations on the same topic at the University of Paris-Sorbonne).

Chapter Two (p. 75-144) gives a grammatical overview of modern and spoken Standard Tibetan. It is entirely adequate and admirably organized. In addition to the description of the linguistic situation in Tibet or the classification of the Tibetan dialects, with their resemblances and differences, it offers a preliminary overview of the grammar of this language where one can find the necessary information on the morhology (verbal inflection, verbal endings, auxiliaries and copulated, the system of tenses and aspects, evidential markers, grammaticalization of nominalizing morphemes...) and the syntax (phrasal structures - simple and complex).

Chapter Three (p. 145-186) inserts to us in the sharp one of the subject: it refers to the main means of the expression of epistemic modalities (epistemic adverbs and epistemic verbal endings). Here epistemic verbal endings are analyzed from conceptual, functional and syntactic point of view. The candidate shows their polysemous characteristics. Verbal endings thus emerge as epistemic (possibility, probability, degrees of certainty), evidential (inferences) or deontic (obligation) markers, or with other derived meanings (surprise or regret, for example); in addition, she shows that they convey various aspectual and temporal values. Combining epistemic ending markers and comparing their use in various syntactic constructions or their co-occurrence with epistemic adverbs, Zuzana Vokurkovà reveals very fine epistemic and aspecto-temporal values. As a result, she obtains a classification of eleven types.

Every type of this classification is analyzed from different points of view (morphological, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic) and closed by a very useful conclusion in chapter Four (p. 187-294). This chapter also contains observations on the various uses of constructions and specific observations about their use in conditional sentences (for example, p. 224-225) and constraints with different persons (for ex., p. 220, the endings *gi.a.yod* used generally with 3d pers. and *a.yong* both with the third and the first pers.). Covering almost all the functions of the every epistemic type, the author shows certain choices on the English translation that change the effect of the original Tibetan examples (examples p. 323, cited in the abstract). One must note here the constant preoccupation with a conceptual and terminological clearness

The last chapter Five (p. 295-319) deals with the compatibility of secondary verbs which specify the meaning of the preceding lexical verb, with epistemic endings. The candidate observes that several parameters take place here, but the semantic and syntactic properties of secondary verbs appear to be the most important. She also shows

that the secondary verb combines only with certain lexical verbs and she underlines the importance of the context. Thus, for example, *nus* 'dare' can occur with the imperfective endings and sometimes with present perfect and with perfective endings only "for single perfective actions" (p. 307). On the other hand, *ritsis* 'intend (to do)' cannot occur with epistemic endings but only with auxiliaries.

The author closes with a short conclusion summarizing her principal results of her dissertation.

The work presented by Zuzana Vokurkovà contains the scholarly qualities and constitutes a contribution to the advancement of knowledge expected of a Ph.D. Dissertation in linguistics, and I recommend that it proceed to an oral examination (defense) at The Charles University at Prague.

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