

De-stress in Mandarin: Clitics, Cliticoids and Speech Minichunks

普通话轻读词：附着词，类附着词，语块

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HAND-OUT

I. ENGLISH: has “Words with weak forms” 弱形式词，弱读式词 (prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, modal verbs, articles, personal pronouns) – about 50 words
If carrying logical stress, or occurring in isolation: **full, stressed pronunc.** = “strong form”
Regular, most common realization: **reduced, de-stressed pronunciation** = “weak form”

What shall we do for the rest of the week?

	part of speech 词类	full (= strong) form 完整式	reduced (=weak) form 弱读式
<i>shall</i>	auxiliary verb	[ʃæl]	[ʃəl]
<i>we</i>	personal pronoun	[wi:]	[wɪ]
<i>for</i>	preposition	[fɔːr]	[fɹ]
<i>and</i>	conjunction	[ænd]	[n]

shared features of “Words with weak forms”

- they are **monosyllabic**
- they are **function words** 功能词 (prepositions, conjunctions..): no (or little) lexical meaning
- they are **extremely frequent** in language
- **two different pronunciations:** strong form (stressed, full), weak form (de-stressed, reduced)
- **the choice** between the forms is decided by **pragmatic context**
- **weak form** is used **much more often**

Weak form may never stand alone! It clings to a neighbouring stressed word (*the-rest, two-of-them*). Such words are called **CLITICS** (Greek *klinein* = “to lean on”), 附着词 *fùzhuó cí*

II. STANDARD CHINESE has a very similar set of words (also cca 50):

- **monosyllabic personal pronouns** 人称代词: *wǒ* 我, *nǐ* 你, *nín* 您, *tā* 他
- **conjunctions** 连词: *hé* 和, *tóng* 同...
- **prepositions** 介词: *zài* 在, *bǎ* 把, *bǐ* 比, *gěi* 给...
- **monosyllabic postpositions** 后置词: *shàng* 上, *xià* 下...
- **measure words** 量词: *gè* 个, *běn* 本, *xiē* 些...
- **modal verbs** 能愿动词: *yào* 要, *huì* 会, *xiǎng* 想...
- **“low-content” verbs:** (exist.) *yǒu* 有, *zài* 在, *shì* 是
- **formal adverbs** «虚化»副词: *jiù* 就, *hěn* 很, *dōu* 都

They also have “strong form” (stressed) and “weak form” (unstressed). Examples:

	part of speech 词类	full form 完整式	reduced form 弱读式
<i>hé</i> 和	conjunction	[xɿ [^]] ²	[xə]
<i>shì</i> 是	copula (“low-content” verb)	[ʃ̩ː] ⁴	[ʃ̩]
<i>hěn</i> 很	adverb	[xən] ³	[x̩]

<i>tā</i> 他	personal pronoun	[t ^h a:] ¹	[t ^h ə]
<i>zài</i> 在	preposition	[tʂai] ⁴	[tʂə]
<i>gè</i> 个	measure word	[kɤ̌] ⁴	[kə]
<i>bǐ</i> 比	preposition	[pi:] ³	[pɪ]
<i>xiǎng</i> 想	modal verb	[ɕ ¹ ɑŋ] ³	[ɕ ¹ ǝ]

My (newly coined) term for these Chinese words: CLITICOIDS *lèi fùzhuó cí* 类附着词
“Something what looks like certain thing, but it is not quite like it” (humanoid, asteroid...)
(cf. the Greek morpheme *oid* – “look like”). They mostly (but not always) behave as clitics.

Chinese CLITICS *fùzhuó cí* 附着词: structural particles 的, 得, 地, aspect particles 了, 着, 过, sentence particles 吗, 呢, 吧... They always behave as clitics (no lexical tone → no potential to be stressed).

The Clitics and Cliticoids are **very frequent** in speech! (high text coverage, *fùgàilǜ* 覆盖率)
Also, hard to learn. Therefore **we should devote a special care to them in L2 teaching!**

III. Minichunks of speech *Wēixíng yǔkuài* 微型语块: 2-3 syllable word strings

Efficient tool to exercise many things:

1. basic vocabulary
2. tone combinations (including the neutral tone)
3. unstressed pronunciation of the Clitics and Cliticoids
4. various stress patterns (●●, ●●, ●●●, ●●●, ●●●, ●●●)
5. sentence intonation (statement vs. *ma* 吗 questions)

Minichunks containing the Cliticoids: examples

- personal pronoun (as a subject) + verb
- verb + personal pronoun (as an object)
- preposition + noun
- preposition + place name
- noun + postposition
- modal verb + content verb
- “low-content” verb + noun
- formal adverb + verb / adjective

disyllabic

nǐ qù! 你去!
mà tā 骂他
bǎ shū 把书
zài nàr 在那儿
shù shàng 树上
yào qù 要去
yǒu rén 有人
hěn hǎo 很好

trisyllabic

wǒ zhīdao 我知道
máfan nǐ 麻烦你
gěi bàba 给爸爸
zài Běijīng 在北京
zhuōzi shàng 桌子上
yào chūqu 要出去
shì lǎoshī 是老师
hěn piàoliang 很漂亮

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