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# The non-interrogative sentence-final particle *ne* 呢 in Mandarin\*

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*The meanings and functions of sentence-final particles in Mandarin are constantly under debate. The sentence-final particle ne 呢 (henceforth: SF ne) is one of these particles. This paper is devoted to arguing that the non-interrogative SF ne is a contradiction marker, signalling that the currently stated message is in contradiction with a previously existing assumption. In sentences that SF ne combines with, there is always, implicitly or explicitly, a contradicting negative or positive assumption. This paper also discusses how contradiction should be treated in Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG). It is argued that SF ne is an operator of contradiction under the category of polarity, operating at the layer of the Communicated Content at the Interpersonal Level. It is also suggested that a sub-category of contradiction should be added to the category of polarity in the framework of FDG.*

## 1 Introduction

Mandarin Chinese has a rich inventory of sentence-final particles, which occur frequently in daily conversations. The meanings and functions of these particles are very elusive and thus are constantly under debate. More often than not, the meanings and functions assigned to them are not inherent to the particles themselves at all, but rather result either from the occurrence of other elements in the sentence, or from the interaction between the sentence and the context. The sentence-final particle *ne* (henceforth: SF *ne*) is no exception in this respect. Consider examples (1a) and (1c).

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\* This is a revised version of a chapter in my dissertation. I am indebted to my supervisors Kees Hengeveld and Hella Olbertz for their comments on various drafts of this paper. I would also like to express my gratitude to Lachlan Mackenzie and Enoch Aboh for their valuable suggestions.

- (1) a. 说着话呢  
*Shuō zhe huà ne.*  
 speak PROG words CTR  
 ‘(They) are talking, (line busy).’ (Chao 1968: 805)
- b. 说话呢  
*Shuō huà ne.*  
 speak words CTR  
 ‘Say something, come on.’
- c. 他会开飞机呢  
*Tā huì kāi fēijī ne.*  
 he can fly airplane CTR  
 ‘He can fly an airplane! (you wouldn’t believe it!)’ (Zhu 1982: 213)
- d. 他会开飞机  
*Tā huì kāi fēijī.*  
 he can fly airplane  
 ‘He can fly an AIRPLANE!’

In sentences like (1a), SF *ne* is believed to indicate a continued state (Chao 1968: 805; Zhu 1982: 208; Lü 2016: 412–413; Constant 2011: 21–25), which is, however, incorrect, as the continued state reading in sentences with *ne* is not due to *ne*’s presence but to the occurrence of the progressive marker *zhe* (Li & Thompson 1981: 302–303; Qi 2002: 42; Hu 1981: 108). When the progressive marker *zhe* is removed, it results in (1b), which can have a directive interpretation. As for (1c), SF *ne* is believed to indicate exaggeration (Lin 1984: 218; Zhu 1982: 213; Lü 2016: 413). This is also incorrect, as the exaggeration reading of the sentence is retained even with the absence of *ne* (Lin 1984: 218–219; Shi 2000: 33; Qi 2002: 42) as in (1d), in which the speaker could be overstating the subject’s ability (flying an airplane) to impress the addressee.

As is the case with most other Mandarin particle research, there are two divergent approaches to SF *ne* as observed, for instance, by Qi (2002: 35–36) and Wu (2009: 1–8): the maximal meaning approach and the minimal meaning approach. The former tries to attribute multiple meanings to SF *ne* (e.g. Chao 1968: 804–805; Zhu 1982: 208; Lü 2016: 412–413; Qi 2002: 34–35) while the latter tries to provide a unified treatment by finding a common denominator that can account for all the uses of SF *ne* (e.g. Li & Thompson 1981: 300–307; Hu 1981: 108–109; Lin 1984: 237; Chu 2006: 127–134; Li 2006: 11–19; Xu 2008: 159; Wu 2009: 1–25). However, no matter which approach is adopted, there is a consensus that SF *ne* has an interrogative and a non-interrogative use. These two uses have different historical sources (Qi 2002: 37–41), although there is still disagreement

about what specific origins they have. According to Simpson (2014: 161), “[w]hether it is possible to arrive at a convincing uniform analysis of *ne* in all its occurrences might seem to remain open as a question”.

Actually, the attempts to unify the divided interrogative and non-interrogative uses within an umbrella function often lead to very general characterizations. For instance, the particle *ne* is argued to have a unified function of appealing to the hearer’s active participation (Alleton 1981: 91–115), signaling relevance to the context (Chu 2006: 127–134) or mutual manifestness (Ljungqvist 2011: 165–181). “Participation”, “relevance” and “manifestness” seem to be too general to capture the different uses of *ne*. Some other scholars (Li & Thompson 1981: 300–307; Xu 2008: 159; Lin 1984: 217–240; Wu 2009: 1–25) propose less general characterizations. SF *ne* is claimed to have a function of “response to expectation” (Li & Thompson 1981: 300–307), to indicate contrastiveness (Lin 1984: 217–240), to have a function of looking back in the context of contrast (Chu 2006: 7–29), to call attention to a discrepancy (Wu 2009: 1–25), and to signal difference (Xu 2008: 159). What is overlapping in these proposals is that there is an element of contrast and difference in the meaning of SF *ne*.

This paper, applying the separate treatment of the interrogative *ne* and the non-interrogative *ne*, argues that the non-interrogative SF *ne* is a contradiction marker. Also, I will discuss how contradiction should be treated in Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG, Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008), the theoretical framework adopted in this paper. The examples provided are mostly retrieved from the CCL corpus, which is a freely-available online corpus created by Peking University, consisting of all kinds of naturally-occurring data.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 and Section 3 will introduce the theoretical framework adopted and the methods used in this paper respectively. Section 4 will be devoted to arguing that the non-interrogative SF *ne* is a contradiction marker. Before this paper is rounded off in Section 6, the treatment of contradiction in FDG will be discussed in Section 5.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

This paper adopts the theoretical framework of Functional Discourse Grammar. In this section I will briefly introduce some notions directly relevant to this paper.

Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG, Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008), a typologically-based theory of language structure, recognizes four different levels of linguistic organization: the Interpersonal, Representational, Morphosyntactic and Phonological Levels. These four levels are organized in a top-down fashion, with the Interpersonal Level dominating the Representational Level as well as the other two levels: the Representational Level dominating the Morphosyntactic and Phonological Levels, and the Morphosyntactic Level dominating the

Phonological one. The Interpersonal Level captures pragmatics whereas the Representational Level captures semantics, as far as systematically coded by either grammatical or lexical means. For each Level, there exists an internal organization of a series of layers that are in a hierarchical relationship in terms of scope. All layers at the Interpersonal level have a wider scope than all layers at the Representational Level. As especially the Interpersonal Level is relevant to this paper, I will concentrate on that level in what follows.

As shown in Figure 1, there are five layers at the Interpersonal Level, with the layer of the Move having the widest scope, the layer of the Ascriptive Subact having the narrowest scope, and the layer of the Communicated Content occupying a position in the middle. Scopal relations are reflected iconically in the surface structure of a sentence in terms of the distance that linguistic items have with regard to the core predicate. The more distance an item has, the wider scope it has. When items co-occur, the ones farther away have scope over the others (For details, cf. Hengeveld 2017).

Move > Discourse Act > Communicated Content > Referential Subact > Ascriptive  
Subact

**Figure 1:** Layers and scope relations at the Interpersonal Level in FDG  
(adapted from Hengeveld 2017: 16)

What is relevant here is the layer of the Communicated Content, which “contains the totality of what the speaker wishes to evoke in his/her communication with the addressee” (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008: 87), and the layer of the Referential Subact, which is a subact of reference performed by the speaker in order to evoke an entity (ibid: 113).

Since the publication of Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008), FDG has gradually expanded the hierarchical structure of grammatical categories at the clausal level, currently including tense, aspect, mood, evidentiality, mirativity, polarity and localization. Each category is located on one or more layers, depending on the number of subtypes that each has. Negation is a subtype of polarity, with *denial* being a subtype of negation that operates at the layer of the Communicated Content. Denial is used to deny the appropriateness of a Communicated Content (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2018: 39). For instance, in (2), denial is expressed through the periphrastic structure *it is not that* in (2B), by which speaker B denies the appropriateness of the communicated content *you hate me*.

- (2) A: You hate me!  
B: It's not that I hate you, it's just that I think you are a bit annoying.  
(Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2018: 39)

### 3 Methods

This paper uses naturally-occurring data retrieved from the CCL modern corpus, which consists of 509,913,589 words and covers a wide range of text types. I first retrieved 4032 sentences with *ne* from this corpus, and then manually analyzed each of them as the CCL corpus is not annotated. After excluding those sentences that contain the interrogative use of *ne* and the non-sentence-final use of *ne*, I obtained a set of 351 sentences with the non-interrogative SF *ne*. These 351 sentences were then randomized and the first 200 sentences were selected to constitute my sub-corpus for analysis. If not otherwise stated, all the examples given in this paper are from this sub-corpus.

### 4 A contradiction marker

#### 4.1 Introduction

As observed by Blakemore (1989: 22), interpreting an utterance involves not only identifying the proposition it expresses but is concerned with working out the consequences of it for the addressee's existing assumptions as well. These existing assumptions can be either used to establish the relevance of a new item of information or be modified or affected by that new item of information.<sup>1</sup> In other words, a new item of information may provide evidence *for* an existing assumption or alternatively evidence *against* an existing assumption. I use Blakemore's term *assumption* as a cover term for related notions such as belief, claim, expectation, assertion, etc. When an existing assumption is being argued against, the speaker may explicitly signal this relationship through various means, intonational, lexical or grammatical. For instance, in (3) the English *but* indicates a denial of assumption.<sup>2</sup> The existing assumption associated with *Mark is a billionaire* is that Mark should be generous and willing to spend money; however, the presence of *but* explicitly indicates that this assumption is incorrect.

(3) Mark is a billionaire but he is stingy.

I label this kind of relationship *contradiction*. A contradiction marker is used to SIGNAL that the currently stated information contradicts the existing assumption,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A similar view can be found in Tanya Reinhart's (1981) file card theory of information packaging.

<sup>2</sup> Blakemore (1989) terms this function of *but* a denial of expectation. More discussion can be found in Section 4.7.

<sup>3</sup> This is true in most cases; however, when the speaker explicitly expresses the previously existing assumption, the contradiction lies in between the stated assumption and what really happened in the context. See Section 4.4 for details.

be it a preceding message, or an assumption either implicit in that message or already existing in the context. In this section, I argue from seven perspectives that the non-interrogative SF *ne* in Mandarin is a grammatical marker to signal contradiction. These seven perspectives are: negation (§4.2), felicitous context (§4.3), participant being contradicted (§4.4), co-occurrences (§4.5), illocutions (§4.6), contradiction or contrast (§4.7) and mirativity (§4.8).

#### 4.2 *Contradiction versus negation*

Consider the following example:<sup>4</sup>

- (4) **Context:** A guest remarks to Harry Truman's mother that she must be very proud of her son because he is the President of the United States. Truman's mother agrees and says smilingly:

**Sentence:** 不过，我还有一个儿子，他同样让我感到非常自豪。他现在正在地里挖土豆呢。

*Búguò, wǒ hái yǒu yī gè érzi, tā tóngyàng*  
however I still have one CLF son he likewise

*ràng wǒ gǎndào fēicháng zìhào. tā xiànzài zhèngzài*  
let I feel very proud he now in.course.of

*dì lǐ wā tǔdòu ne.*  
field in dig potato CTR

'However, I have another son. He made me equally very proud. But he is digging up potatoes in the field.'

**Contradiction:** This son of mine is also very successful. He could not be a farmer.  
He is a farmer.

In (4), when a mother of a US president says that she is equally proud of another son, the addressee is expected to derive an assumption that this son is also very successful based on the common social criteria of success with regard to job types. However, the succeeding remark that the son is digging up potatoes cancels and contradicts this assumption. SF *ne* here is used to explicitly mark this contradiction between the assumption implicitly expressed in the previous sentence and the newly presented information. If *ne* is removed from (4), the utterance is a neutral statement in the sense that the relevance of this subsequent

<sup>4</sup> All the sentences retrieved from the CCL corpus are presented along with their context and contradiction information; however, those sentences from other sources are not presented in this pattern due to the unavailability of the relevant information.

sentence to the preceding one is not explicitly marked by the speaker. It is up to the addressee to figure it out.

This contradiction occurs in the implicit or explicit form of an affirmative and negative pair. More often than not, what is being contradicted is a negative assumption in the context while the contradicting information, being expressed in the current sentence, is affirmative in nature. In my sub-corpus, among the 200 examples, there are 149 affirmative cases and 51 negative cases in terms of their polarity. As in (4) above, the polarity of the sentence with *ne* is affirmative while the assumption hinted at by the preceding sentence is negative (this son could not be a farmer). Another illustration is given in (5).

- (5) **Context:** An old man has adopted a girl for one year and her biological father comes to take the girl back and offers the old man two thousand *yuan* for having taken care of her. The old man says angrily:

**Sentence:** 咱是干亲呢，干亲还兴要钱？！

*Zán shì gàn qīn ne, gàn qīn hái xìng yào qián?!*  
 we COP fictive relative CTR fictive relative even may ask money  
 ‘We are adoptive relatives. Do adoptive relatives ask for money?!’

**Contradiction:** You do not consider us as adoptive relatives as you are trying to pay.

We are adoptive relatives, so you do not need to pay.

In (5), the sentence with *ne* is positive in terms of its polarity. It emphasizes the fact that the two interlocutors are no strangers but connected due to the adoption. There is a common cultural belief that payment usually does not occur between people with connections such as relatives. In the adoptive father’s eyes, they have become relatives because of the adoption. However, the biological father’s attempt to pay contradicts this common assumption, as he is acting as if they were completely strangers. By contrast, unlike in (4), the contradicted assumption in (5) is not derived from the preceding sentence but implicitly expressed in the context. Both (4) and (5) have an affirmative polarity, paired with the assumption of a negative polarity.

Contrary to (4) and (5) above, in example (6), the polarity of the sentence with *ne* is negative, as shown by the presence of the negative word *bu*, which contradicts the positive assumption in the context that a child will write better after being criticized.

- (6) **Context:** The narrator is talking about how to educate children. He gives an example to illustrate his point. A mother is so upset about her child’s careless homework that she tears the notebook into pieces and asks the child



to rewrite. Looking at the torn homework, the child is very angry and does not change his or her attitude. The narrator continues saying:

**Sentence:** 写得还不如上次好呢

*Xiě dé hái bú rú shàng cì hǎo ne.*  
write RESULT even not as.good.as last CLF good CTR  
'The writing is even worse than the previous time.'

**Contradiction:** A child will write better after being punished by a parent. The new writing turns out to be worse than the previous time.

Apart from the fact that the contradicted assumption can be implicit either in the preceding message as in (4) or from the context as in (5), it can also be partly contained, as in (7), or fully contained as in (8), in the preceding sentence. In (7), the preceding sentence mentions explicitly that “Ming De” is the largest club in Peking University. This leads to the assumption that Ming De is already a club, which is contradicted by the succeeding sentence. The contradiction, in this case, is not targeted towards the whole preceding sentence, but part of it, the part concerning only the assumed official status of Ming De.

- (7) **Context:** Several students of Peking University want to organize those “Ming De” scholarship winners to do something meaningful together. They are quickly supported and funded by RMB 100,000.

**Sentence:** 一下子“明德”就成为了北大经费最充裕的社团。可是，请等等，我们还不是一个社团呢

*Yīxiàzǐ “míng dé” jiù chéngwéi le běidà*  
suddenly Ming De then become PFV Peking.University

*jīngfèi zuì chōngyù de shètuán. kěshì, qǐng*  
funding best ample ATTR club but please

*děngděng, wǒmen hái bú shì yī gè shètuán ne.*  
wait we still not COP one CLF club CTR

‘Suddenly, Ming De became the student association which has the amplest funding in Peking University. But, please wait a moment; we are not even an association yet.’

**Contradiction:** Ming De is a student association already.  
Ming De is not officially a student association yet.

In (8), the whole sentence uttered by Speaker A is contradicted by Speaker B as can be seen clearly from the repetition of Speaker A’s sentence in Speaker B’s

response. Without the presence of *ne*, the response by B could have several alternative interpretations depending on the intonation as well as the context. For instance, it could mean that Speaker B agrees with Speaker A in certain contexts. Because of this, the speaker sees the need to help the addressee anchor the intended interpretation of his/her utterance for the sake of communicative explicitness and efficiency.

(8) **Context:** talking about a game.

**Conversation:** A: 真好玩

*Zhēn hǎo wán.*

really good play

‘What fun!’

B: 还真好玩呢

*Hái zhēn hǎo wán ne.*

still really good play CTR

‘You still call that real fun! (This is not fun at all.)’

(Chao 1968: 805)

**Contradiction:** What fun it is!

It is not fun at all.

The above discussion shows that SF *ne* can combine freely with sentences of either polarity. In none of the examples in my sub-corpus, the removal of SF *ne* changes the polarity status of the sentence. The difference between the presence and absence of SF *ne* lies in the explicitness of the contradiction relationship between the currently stated information and the previously existing assumption, be it contained in or inferred from the preceding sentence, or existing in the context. That is to say, the assumption being contradicted can be the previous sentence, part of the previous sentence, or the message either derived from the previous sentence or assumed in the context. Upon signaling contradiction, SF *ne* provides a linguistic clue for participants as to how to process the current sentence with regard to existing assumptions. Although SF *ne* itself does not indicate negation, as exemplified in the examples of *ne* throughout this paper, it is closely related to polarity, as in all the sentences that *ne* combines with, there always exists a corresponding negative or positive assumption, be it implicit or explicit. The presence of *ne* makes the existence of a positive or negative assumption explicit.

The phenomenon that *ne* combines with a far greater number of sentences of affirmative polarity is in line with the underlying principles of human conceptual strategies. Givón (1978: 105–109) explains why affirmative constructions outnumber negative ones in human communication based on the

perceptual figure/ground ontology of negation, which considers the negative as the ground / norm while the affirmative is the figure/counter-norm, as “[e]vents, or actions – which are AGENTED events – in language, are changes in the state of the universe across a certain time axis” (1978: 105, original emphasis) and “*information* is defined as ‘surprise’ (original emphasis) or ‘breaking the norm’”. In terms of perception precisely the same is true: Our attention is attracted to the figure over the background, to the change over the norm” (1978: 109). To put it simply, perceptually speaking, something not happening is default and infinite whereas a change can stand out against the normal inertia of the universe. These perception principles are definitely reflected in communication. In the case of polarity, it explains why utterances with positive polarity outnumber utterances with negative polarity in daily communication.

With regard to *ne*, its greater combinability with affirmatives is very likely for the reason that when a norm is broken, there seems to be a greater need to help the addressee navigate its connection with previously existing assumptions.

All in all, SF *ne* does not indicate negation, as will be further explored in Section 5.

### 4.3 *Felicitous contexts for contradiction*

As pointed out by Givón (1978: 80), a felicitous context for a negative requires the existence of a previous affirmation:

a felicitous discourse context for the negative is the previous mention of the corresponding affirmative, or alternatively the belief by the speaker that the hearer has heard of the possibility of that corresponding affirmative being true, and in fact has tipped his belief toward the truth of that corresponding affirmative.

Otherwise, it is infelicitous to present a negative as in (9). The utterance *My wife’s not pregnant* presupposes something in the context related to the pregnancy, such as discussions about it or its likelihood, etc. If there is no such context, it is inappropriate to say (9), which can thus be challenged by the addressee as in (10).

(9) **Context:** I meet a friend in the street by accident. My friend knows I’m married. I greet him and he says, what’s happening? I volunteer the following information:

**Sentence:** ? Oh, my wife’s not pregnant. (Givón 1978: 80)

(10) a. Wait a minute – was she supposed to be pregnant?

b. Hold it – I didn’t know she was supposed to be pregnant! (ibid.)

In a similar vein, although *ne* is not used for negation, it also requires the existence of a assumption that can be contradicted or cancelled. In other words, it is infelicitous to use *ne* if there is no previously existing assumption or in an out-of-the-blue context.

Li (2006: 11–12) considers *ne* as a marker that indicates that the speaker considers the information that is being conveyed as extraordinary in character. She believes that (11B1) is infelicitous because there is nothing of extraordinary importance if the car accident happened in a place where car accidents occur very often; by contrast, it is felicitous to use *ne* in (11B3) because “the content of the information that is conveyed by (11B3) is considered by the speaker to be unusual” (2006: 12) as it is against the common knowledge that it rarely snows in Hong Kong.

- (11) A: 有什么新闻?  
*Yǒu shíme xīnwén?*  
 have what news  
 ‘Any news?’

\*B1: (In a place where car accidents occur very often)

那边出车祸了呢  
*Nà biān chū chē huò le ne.*  
 that side happen car accident MIR CTR  
 ‘There is a car accident over there.’

B2: (In a place where it is unlikely for a car accident to occur)

那边出车祸了呢  
*Nà biān chū chē huò le ne.*  
 that side happen car accident MIR CTR  
 ‘There is a car accident over there.’

B3: 香港最近下雪了呢

*Xiānggǎng zuìjìn xià xuě le ne.*  
 Hong Kong recently fall snow MIR CTR  
 ‘It snowed in Hong Kong recently.’

(Li 2006: 11–12)

In my opinion, the reason why *ne* is infelicitous in (11B1) but felicitous in (11B3) is that *ne* signals contradiction, which requires a previously existing assumption. If speaker A does not have any knowledge at all about the car accidents in the place concerned, then there is no previous assumption, and therefore *ne* in (11B1) would be inappropriate, as it would build up a connection with a non-existing

assumption. As in the case of an inappropriate negative statement such as (9), the speaker may respond to (11B1) by means of (12).

- (12) 怎么, 那边不应该出车祸吗?  
*Zěnmě, nà biān bú yīnggāi chū chē huò ma?*  
 what that side not should happen car accident REINF  
 ‘What? Car accidents are not supposed to happen over there?’

As for (11B3), *ne* is felicitous, because people assume that it will not snow as snow is very rare in Hong Kong, (although the strict logical reasoning would not rule out the possibility of snowing, people just assume that it will not happen). This practical assumption, although inaccurate, provides the target for contradiction when it did snow.

Li (2006: 12) also argues that *ne* can be felicitous in (11B2) as its context (it is unlikely for a car accident to occur) legitimizes the use of *ne* to mark the information as of extraordinary importance. In my view, this is inaccurate, since the felicity of both (11B2) and (11B3) results from the contradiction between the previously existing assumption and the ongoing message as paired in (13).

- (13) a. Over there it is unlikely for a car accident to occur.  
 There is a car accident over there.  
 b. It rarely snows in Hong Kong.  
 It snowed in Hong Kong recently.

As mentioned earlier in this section, Li (2006: 12) believes that (11B1) is infelicitous in a context where car accidents happen very often because the information being conveyed is not of extraordinary importance. As a matter of fact, a different explanation is that there is no contradiction involved between the contextual information and the information being conveyed, as in shown (14).

- (14) Car accidents occur very often over there.  
 There is a car accident over there.

Besides, it is not accurate to equate the importance of the information to the frequency of occurrence of events or activities. For instance, suppose a context like this: a man who witnesses a car accident at a crossroad where car accidents happen very frequently runs to the nearest police station to report this. He shouts (15a) at the police, but the police do not believe him, because people usually make a phone call in case of an emergency. Under such circumstances, it is then fully acceptable for him to subsequently shout out (11B1), repeated as (15b) below.

(15) (In a place where car accidents occur very often)

a. 那边出车祸了

*Nà biān chū chē huò le.*  
 that side happen car accident MIR  
 ‘There is a car accident over there.’

b. 那边出车祸了呢

*Nà biān chū chē huò le ne.*  
 that side happen car accident MIR CTR  
 ‘There is a car accident over there.’

In (15a), the information being conveyed is considered very important by the speaker; however, it is still infelicitous to use *ne*. This clearly demonstrates that *ne* is **not** used to mark the importance of a message. This is shown by the later felicitous use of *ne* in (15b) when the police show disbelief at what the speaker says. It is the police’s disbelief that is in contradiction with the speaker’s that legitimates the use of *ne* in (15b). In both (15a) and (15b), there is no doubt that the information is important and urgent. However, the shift of context in order to make (15b) felicitous shows that the presence of *ne* is not determined by whether the information is important or not.

The above discussion shows that two requirements have to be met to make the occurrence of *ne* felicitous in a sentence, a previously existing assumption, and a contradiction between this existing assumption and the current utterance.

#### 4.4 *Whose assumption is being contradicted?*

It is usually believed that SF *ne* is used by the speaker to call on the addressee to pay particular attention to the sentence being presented (e.g. Chao 1968: 805; Alleton 1981: 91–115; Li & Thompson 1981: 300–305; Wu 2009: 1–25; Ljungqvist 2011: 165–181). This is true, because when the speaker utters a piece of information, he/she usually directs it towards the addressee, who is believed by the speaker to hold an assumption which is in need of updating. In (16), the speaker uses *ne* to indicate that the assumption entertained by the addressee that tea farmers do not sell their tea themselves is corrected by the new item of information that tea farmers too sell the tea that they have produced.

(16) **Context:** The speaker is talking about tea farmers. A big tea market has been set up in which the sales people are the tea farmers from Huang Shan and other provinces themselves. He continues commenting:

**Sentence:** 如今的茶农不再只管种茶、制茶了，他们正尝试商品经济的滋味呢！

*Rújīn de chá nóng bú zài zhī guǎn*  
nowadays ATTR tea farmer not again only in.charge

*zhǒngchá zhì chá le, tāmen zhèng chángshì*  
grow tea make tea MIR they PROG taste

*shāngpǐn jīngjì de zīwèi ne!*  
commodity economy ATTR flavor CTR

‘Nowadays, tea farmers no longer only grow and produce tea. They are having a taste of the commodity economy.’

**Contradiction:** Tea farmers grow and produce tea; they do not sell it themselves.

Tea farmers do the selling job.

The contradiction with an assumption entertained by the addressee can be seen even more clearly in conversations such as the one in (8) above, repeated here as (17).

(17) **Context:** talking about a game.

**Conversation: A:** 真好玩  
*Zhēn hǎo wán.*  
really good play  
‘What fun!’

**B:** 还真好玩呢  
*Hái zhēn hǎo wán ne.*  
still really good play CTR  
‘You still call that real fun! (This is not fun at all.)’

(Chao 1968: 805)

**Contradiction:** What fun it is!

It is not fun at all.

In (17), the possible context might be two participants talking about a game. Speaker B is directly contradicting speaker A, implicitly indicating that what is being talked about (e.g. a game) is not fun at all. This is made explicit through the presence of *ne*.

However, the addressee is not the only person whose assumption needs to be updated. It is also common for speakers to renew their own knowledge upon the discovery of a new information. Hence, the contradiction can also be targeted towards the speaker him/herself.

- (18) **Context:** An official, along with many others, accompanies the Vice Prime Minister Li on a visit to a local school located in the countryside. Having some other errands, the official leaves the group. After a while, he hears someone playing the piano beautifully. Subsequently:

**Sentence:** 心想农村学校音乐教师水平还不低呢

*Xīn xiǎng nóngcūn xuéxiào yīnyuè jiāoshī*  
heart think country school music teacher

*shuǐpíng hái bú dī ne.*  
level even not low CTR

‘He thinks to himself that the music level of country teachers is not bad.’

**Contradiction:** The music level of teachers in the countryside is bad.  
The music level of teachers in the countryside is not bad.

In (18), the speaker is surprised to find that the musical performance of country school teachers is not as poor as he expected. He is alone at that time and the presence of “*xin xiang*” shows that he is thinking to himself, so the sentence being uttered is not targeted towards any other person but himself. The presence of *ne* signals that this new discovery contradicts his own former assumption.

Sometimes, the speaker uses expressions such as *yi-wei* to explicitly correct him/herself.

- (19) **Context:** The speaker’s mother sent the letter to the Chinese consulate in America, asking them to pass it on to her daughter; however, when the speaker went to collect the letter, she was told that the consulate was not supposed to provide such private services. The speaker remarked:

**Sentence:** 我还以为领事馆是为国民服务的地方呢

*Wǒ hái yǐwéi lǐngshì guǎnshì wéi guómín fúwù*  
I even think consulate COP for citizens serve

*de dìfāng ne.*  
ATTR place CTR

‘I thought that the consulate is to serve its people.’

**Contradiction:** You refused to serve me.  
I thought that the consulate is to serve its people (I was wrong.)



In (19), the context puts *yi-wei* in a past time frame, which indicates what is being said is the speaker's past thought, which is corrected by the new discovery that the consulate is unwilling to help. Note that, in this case, there is a flip of the contradictory relationship. Unlike most others, the current statement is the pre-existing assumption whereas the new discovery is left unsaid in the context. The exceptional cases such as (19) actually further reveal the inherent nature of *ne* as a marker of contradiction, as it does not matter whether it marks a contradiction with the verbalized previous assumption or the information that goes against the previous assumption, as long as there is a contradiction involved. As discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, contradiction works in pairs. The marking of either one of a pair calls attention to the contradictory relationship as a whole.

In addition to contradicting the speaker or the addressee's assumption or utterance, the contradiction can be directed towards both the speaker and the addressee's assumption when the occasion arises.

- (20) **Context:** Liu, a veteran of the Red Army, holds a higher social status than the other villagers and thus is supposed to have a more comfortable life. However, he smokes the cheapest cigarettes, drinks the cheapest wine, and owns a black and white TV set of more than ten years old. Upon finding this out, the villagers say to him:

**Sentence:** 刘老头，你这个老红军的生活还不如我们呢

*Liú lǎo tóu, nǐ zhè gè lǎo hóng jun de*  
Liu old head you this CLF old red army ATTR

*shēnghuó hái bú rú wǒmen ne.*  
life even not better we CTR

'Old Liu, you, a veteran of the Red Army, are living a life even worse than ours.'

**Contradiction:** Veterans who fought for the country have a more comfortable life than ordinary people.

Liu is living a life worse than ordinary people.

In (20), the implicit message is that the villagers believe that Liu entertains the same assumption (based on world knowledge) that a veteran lives a life more comfortable than ordinary villagers. They use *ne* to signal that this shared assumption is in contradiction with the current situation and thus should be abandoned by both parties. It is not clear whether Liu really holds the same assumption, but that is what the villagers assume at the moment of speaking. As seen from (20), the use of *ne* can be oriented towards both the speaker and the

addressee when the newly presented information is against an assumption supposedly shared by both.

As pointed out by Blakemore (1989: 18), the speaker may provide linguistic clues for the addressee to process how relevant a new item of information is to the addressee's existing beliefs and assumptions. This is true because to help the addressee process information the speaker uses linguistic means. However, as shown in this section, these linguistic clues are not targeted towards the addressee only. Human interactions do not always involve the addressee as the speaker may speak to him/herself in the form of a monologue. In this case, it is not impossible for the speaker to use linguistic means to build a connection between a new item of information and his/her own existing assumptions or knowledge. Also, if the existing assumption is shared by both the speaker and the addressee as common knowledge, it is possible for the speaker to explicitly signal how to process the newly presented information with regard to this common knowledge. Therefore, the use of a pragmatic signal can be oriented not only towards the addressee, but also towards the speaker him/herself, or even towards both the speaker and the addressee. SF *ne* provides such a pragmatic signal in Mandarin.

#### 4.5 Co-occurrences

It is believed that SF *ne* occurs frequently with adverbs *hái* and *cái* in declaratives (Hu 1981: 108; Lin 1984: 223–227; Lü 2016: 413). In my sub-corpus, as shown in Table 1, the adverb *hái* does occur very frequently with *ne*; however, the adverb *cái* does not co-occur as frequently as claimed. In addition to *hái* and *cái*, other words, phrases or even structures can also co-occur with *ne*, albeit much less frequently.

**Table 1:** The co-occurrence frequencies with *ne*

<i>hái</i> 'even, still, yet, after all'	88	<i>yě</i> 'also'	3
<i>cái</i> 'really, then and only then'	6	<i>jiù</i> (for emphasis)	2
<i>lián ... hái</i> 'even...yet'	3	<i>shènzhì hái</i> 'even still'	1
<i>lián ... yě</i> 'even...also'	2	<i>dǎo shì</i> 'unexpectedly'	1
<i>jìng</i> 'unexpectedly'	2	<i>bìng</i> (for emphasis)	1
<i>jìng ... yě</i> 'unexpectedly also'	1	<i>guàibúde</i> 'no wonder'	1

The adverb *hái* means 'even', 'still', 'yet', or 'after all' in different sentences. In (21), it means *even*, which gives rise to the interpretation that the praise is unexpected from her teacher. The presence of *hái* brings about an emphatic effect on *biǎoyáng* 'praise', which is in opposition with the criticism expressed by the mother in the context.

- (21) **Context:** The mother criticizes her daughter for not getting scores as high as she expected and asks her to work harder. The daughter asks her mother why she thinks so, as her scores this time are actually higher than last time. The daughter adds:

**Sentence:** 老师还表扬我进步了呢

*Lǎoshī hái biǎoyáng wǒ jìn bù le ne.*  
 teacher even praise I progress MIR CTR

‘My teacher even praised me for my progress.’

**Contradiction:** You assume that I didn’t do well in the exam.

I did very well in the exam and even the teacher praised me for that.

The same is true for the occurrence of *cái*, as in (22a), and the other linguistic expressions listed in Table 1, of which (22b) is an example.

- (22) a. **Context:** A hooligan occupied a family’s house by force. The son came back home, telling his father what has happened. The father responds:

**Sentence:** 俺才不管那些事呢

*Ān cái bú guǎn nà xiē shì ne.*  
 I really not care that some affairs CTR

‘I really don’t care about those affairs!’

**Contradiction:** You think that I should care.

I don’t care at all.

In (22b), there is a structure *lián ...hái*, which reinforces the emphatic effect brought about by the single occurrence of *hái*.

- (22) b. **Context:** Du Le, a refrigerator-manufacturing factory, promises that every purchase can be refunded in five years. Five years later, they are unable to fulfill their promise. The factory representative explains their difficulties.

**Sentence:** 现在连买原材料的钱还没有呢

*Xiànzài lián mǎi yuán cáiliào de qián hái*  
 now even buy raw material ATTR money still

*méi yǒu ne.*  
 not have CTR

‘At the moment we still don’t even have the money to buy raw materials.’

**Contradiction:** We are supposed to refund every purchase.  
We are not able to.

The emphatic expressions listed in Table 1 are related to unexpectedness or surprise, which unavoidably hints at a contradiction with the current sentence’s corresponding negative or affirmative assumption. The free combination of *ne* with these expressions indicates clearly in what kinds of sentential environments *ne* is able to and likely to occur.

If these emphatic expressions already express some kind of contradiction, the question arises whether it is redundant to use *ne*. The answer is ‘no’, as the emphatic expressions and SF *ne* have different scope. The emphatic expressions usually occur before the predicate of the sentence, thus having scope over the predicate, as in (21), (22a) and (22b), whereas SF *ne* always occurs in the sentence-final position, signaling the relationships across propositions, having scope over the sentence as a whole. It is entirely legitimate for elements of different scope to occur in the same sentence, even if they express similar categorial meanings. The co-occurrence of emphatic expressions and SF *ne* brings out the cumulative effect of enhancing the contradiction between what is being stated and the assumption in the context.

#### 4.6 *Illocutions*

It is usually believed that SF *ne* occurs in declaratives and interrogatives only (e.g. Li & Thompson 1981: 300–307; Xu 2008: 159; Chu 2006: 127–134; Li 2006: 11–21). Consequently, the discussions about SF *ne* are restricted to its functions in these two sentence types. However, Hu (1981: 109) points out that *ne* can occur in directives as well, albeit rarely. Both (23a) and (23b) are directives in which the speaker is urging the addressee to say or do something, which is in contradiction with the addressee’s reluctance or unwillingness to carry out the desired action.

- (23) a. 您说呢!  
*Nín shuō ne!*  
 you.HONR say CTR  
 ‘Please say it, say it.’ (Hu 1981: 109)
- b. 好妹妹，替我梳梳呢  
*Hǎo mèimèi, tì wǒ shū shū ne.*  
 good sister substitute I comb comb CTR  
 ‘Good sister, comb for me, please.’ (Lü 2014: 422)

Although no such directive has been found in my sub-corpus, both (23a) and (23b) are perfectly natural. The sub-corpus does contain an example of *ne* used in a prohibitive sentence, as in (24). The prohibitive use of *ne* has not been mentioned in the literature, to the best of my knowledge.

- (24) **Context:** Memorial temples are for the dead who have made great contributions to the country. In order to flatter the prime minister, one official built such a temple for him although the prime minister is still alive. Since then, other officials have followed suit and thus such temples are built all over the country. Da Hong doubts whether the emperor allows this to continue. Ma Cheng Lin responds:

**Sentence:** 你别以为皇上有多正派呢

*Nǐ bié yǐwéi huángshàng yǒu duō zhèngpài ne.*  
 you don't believe emperor have how upright CTR  
 'Don't believe that the emperor is very upright.'

**Contradiction:** An emperor is so upright as to not tolerate any misconduct.  
 Don't trust the emperor to be upright.

The negative word *bie* 'don't' is used in Mandarin prohibitives exclusively. In (24), the speaker is suggesting the addressee to not trust the emperor, which is in contradiction with the proposition the speaker assumes the addressee is entertaining. More examples of the presence of *ne* in prohibitives are found in the searching of the CCL corpus, as in (25).

- (25) **Context:** The sister-in-law has a headache, so she doesn't want to go and have dinner outside. The younger sister says with a begging look:

**Sentence:** 别扫兴呢

*Bié sǎo xìng ne!*  
 don't sweep interest CTR  
 'Don't spoil our pleasure!'

**Contradiction:** Not joining people for dinner outside spoils other people's pleasure.  
 Don't do that.

With regard to questions, there are five types in Mandarin, namely the polar question, the *wh* question, the Verb-not-Verb question, the alternative question and the phatic question. It is believed that interrogative *ne* occurs in all kinds except the polar one (e.g. Chao 1968: 804–805; Zhu 1982: 208; Lü 2016: 412–

413). Based on this criterion, I removed the interrogative use of *ne* from the 4032 examples retrieved from the CCL modern corpus, resulting in 351 examples, more than half of which were selected randomly to constitute my sub-corpus, as introduced in Section 3. Interestingly, three cases of the non-interrogative *ne* were found in a polar question with the particle *ne* expressing contradiction. Example (26) is a rhetorical question, uttered by a mother to show slight disapproval of the daughter's possible reluctance to leave the father alone.

(26) **Context:** The father is a TV journalist whose job is to help TV viewers solve problems and deal with complaints. The family is just about to go somewhere together when the telephone rings. It is another serious complaint. Upon hearing this, the wife knows that her husband is going to be very busy, so she says in a low voice to her daughter:

**Sentence:** 咱们先走吧，没看见爸爸正忙着呢吗？

*Zánmen xiān zǒu ba, méi kànjiàn bàbà zhèng máng*  
we first go MIT not see Dad being busy

*zhe ne ma?*

PROG CTR MIT

'Let's go first. Don't you see Dad is busy right now?'

**Contradiction:** Dad is not being busy at the moment.

Dad is being busy at the moment.

Fang (2021) argue that the interrogative *ne* and *ma* are both illocutionary reinforcers at the layer of Discourse Act, thus mutually exclusive. However, in (26), *ne* and *ma* do co-occur. This is possible, as *ne* is non-interrogative in this case, hence functioning as a contradiction marker. This shows that, although SF *ne* occurs in polar interrogatives, it does not indicate interrogativity. In fact, this is quite reasonable, as it is acceptable for a contradicting message to be questioned at the same time. As in (26), the mother not only signals that the message 'Dad is being busy' contradicts the daughter's assumption that Dad is not, but also presents this contradicting message in the form of a question. Only in this case, the question is a rhetorical one which is not a real question and does not expect an answer from the daughter but to make the point that the father is really very busy. If *ne* can signal contradiction in polar questions, albeit in a small number of cases in my sub-corpus, the question arises as to whether *ne* functions similarly in other types of interrogation. This is not the case in the relevant examples in the CCL corpus, which of course needs further exploration but is beyond the scope of this paper.

From the above discussions, we can see that the non-interrogative SF *ne* can occur in polar interrogatives, directives, prohibitives, and declaratives, despite the fact that it is predominantly present in declaratives (3 polar interrogatives and 1 prohibitive, out of 200 in my sub-corpus). In all these three types of sentences, *ne* has an invariable function of indicating contradiction. What is different is that *ne* in declaratives and polar interrogatives signals a contradiction between propositions, and is thus aimed at updating old information, whereas in both directives and prohibitives *ne* signals a contradiction between actions specified, thus leading to the abandonment of either the reluctance to carry out the desired action or to the abandonment of the willingness to take some action which is later prohibited by the speaker. Actually, the fact that *ne* can occur in these four sentence types reveals its contradicting nature, as contradiction should not be confined to statements only. It is quite reasonable for two actions to be in contradiction with each other, and the evaluation of the contradiction between two propositions is negotiable with the participants concerned. In directives, the speaker urges the addressee to take some action, which it is assumed by the speaker that the addressee is reluctant to take; in prohibitives, the speaker prohibits some action that is assumed by the speaker that the addressee is about to take; in polar questions, the speaker presents a contradicting proposition in an inquisitive way.

#### 4.7 *Contradiction or contrast/difference?*

Lin (1984: 217–240) argues that the particle *ne* has an invariant meaning of ‘contrastiveness’, by which he means “when *ne* is used, what has been guessed, claimed, expected or believed to be a certain way is pointed out to be another way. In other words, two or more objects, or situations are put in contrast.” Similarly, Chu (2006: 7–29) holds that *ne* has a function of looking back in the context for contrast; Wu (2009: 1–25) proposes that *ne* is used to call the addressee’s special attention to a discrepancy in the common ground shared by the speaker and the addressee; Xu (2008: 159) believes that *ne* in statements signals the difference between what the speaker says and the addressee’s claims or expectations. In my opinion, it is not accurate to categorize *ne* as marking ‘contrast’, ‘discrepancy’ or ‘difference’ as these categorizations do not capture the denying and abandoning property of SF *ne*.

The English word *but* has two uses: *contrast* and *a denial of expectation* (Blakemore 1989) as illustrated in (27).

- (27) a. Susan is tall but Mary is short. (contrast)  
 b. John is a Republican but he’s honest. (a denial of expectation)  
 (Blakemore 1989: 15)

As demonstrated by Blakemore (1989: 30–32), the difference between these two different uses is that contrast indicates that the speaker is drawing the addressee's attention to the difference or differences between things while a denial of expectation, which I term as *contradiction*, indicates that the speaker is abandoning one proposition in favor of the other previously existing assumption. These two meanings of *but* are realized in some languages by different words, such as *sondern* and *aber* in German and *sino* and *pero* in Spanish (Blakemore 1989: 15)<sup>5</sup> as exemplified in (28).

(28) **Semantic opposition:** contrast (German *sondern* and Spanish *sino*)

a. *Das ist nicht bewusst, sondern ganz automatisch.*  
that is not conscious but completely automatic

b. *Eso no es consciente, sino totalmente automático.*  
that no is conscious but totally automatic

'It is not conscious but completely automatic.'

**Denial of expectation** (German *aber* and Spanish *pero*)

a. *Er ist intelligent, aber nicht sehr arbeitsam.*  
he is intelligent but not very hard-working

b. *Es es inteligente, pero poco trabajador.*  
he is intelligent but little hard-working

'He is intelligent, but does not work hard.'

(Anscombe & Ducrot 1977: 23–40)

In Mandarin, this distinction corresponds to the use of *ne* in different sentential positions. In the non-sentence-final position, *ne* is a marker of contrastive topic, while in the non-interrogative sentence-final position, *ne* is a contradiction marker. The topic use and the sentence-final use should not be considered the same marker as can be clearly seen in sentences in which two *ne*'s co-occur, as in (29).

(29) **Context:** The speaker is talking about whether children with high academic degrees can bring happiness to old people's later life. First, he gives an example of a renowned professor whose children have PhD degrees but they cannot take care of him even when he is sick because they live abroad. Then, by comparison, the speaker gives another example in which an old

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<sup>5</sup> There are disagreements in the literature as to whether the meanings of these words are as clear cut as claimed. However, this still serves my purpose to show that contrast and denial of expectation are different.



man has two children, a son and a daughter, both of whom had only secondary school education but live very near the man.

**Sentence:** 他初中毕业，在马路对面修自行车，就在附近；闺女呢，胡同口对面卖酱油呢

*Tā chūzhōng bìyè, zài mǎlù duìmiàn xiū,*  
he secondary.school graduate be road opposite repair

*zìxíngchē jiù zài fùjìn; guānnǚ ne, hùtóng kǒu*  
bike right be nearby daughter TOP alley mouth

*duìmiàn mài jiàngyóu ne.*  
opposite sell soybean.sauce CTR

‘He [the son] has a secondary school diploma, making a living by repairing bicycles just across the street, very close by while his daughter sells soybean sauce at the entrance of the alley.’ (from the CCL corpus, outside of my sub-corpus)

**Contradiction:** The son works very closely to the old man’s home. It is not likely that the daughter also works so close by.

The daughter sells soybean sauce just at the entrance of the alley (She also works close by.)

In (29), the first *ne* is a topic marker, indicating that the topic about the daughter is in contrast with the previous topic about the son; the second *ne* is used to indicate that the information about what the daughter does contradicts the addressee’s assumption that the son works so close to the old man’s home and it is unlikely that the daughter also works so close by. The co-occurrence of two *nes* in a single sentence shows that the particle *ne* functions differently in different sentential positions as it is redundant to have the same linguistic element occupy two sentential positions expressing the same meaning in a single sentence. Hence, it is not correct to categorize the sentence-final *ne* as having the same function of marking contrast or difference. To claim that the contrastive topic marker *ne* and sentence-final *ne* function in the same way is similar to saying that German *aber* and *sondern* and Spanish *pero* and *sino* are of no difference.

What is more, although there are divergent views concerning the labeling of SF *ne* in the literature, the contradicting and correcting functions are sometimes explicitly acknowledged. Li & Thompson (1981: 301) and Wu (2009: 13) point out that the information with *ne* contradicts the addressee’s expectation in some situations; Lin (1984: 226) argues that *ne* is used to “correct a claim, guess, expectation or belief”.

Therefore, in order to capture the correcting and abandoning property of SF *ne*, it is better to differentiate it from the contrast use and label it as a contradiction marker.

#### 4.8 *SF ne is not a mirative marker*

As discussed in Section 4.5, SF *ne* combines very frequently with emphatic expressions. The sentences in which they occur have a reading of unexpectedness or surprise. This gives rise to the question whether *ne* indicates mirativity. Mirativity is a grammatical category that characterizes a proposition as newsworthy, unexpected, or surprising (Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012: 488). When the speaker presents contradicting information, it is highly possible that this information is unexpected or surprising. For instance, (1c), repeated as (30) below, has a possible reading of both unexpectedness and surprise.

- (30) 他会开飞机呢  
*Tā huì kāi fēijī ne!*  
 he can fly airplane CTR  
 ‘He can fly an airplane!’ (Zhu 1982: 213)

However, this reading is not due to the occurrence of *ne* as its removal does not affect this reading. In fact, it is the interaction of the content of the sentence with the context that leads to this reading, as to be able to fly a plane itself is not common and surprising when the subject in the sentence is just an ordinary person who is known only to be able to drive a car. The reason why *ne* is not a mirative marker can be seen from the fact that it can occur in sentences that do not have a mirative reading. As discussed in Section 4.6, *ne* can occur in directives and prohibitives. In all the three examples given, there is no reading of surprise. Let us consider another example.

- (31) **Context:** The boy is lying in bed when it is time to get up. The mother wakes him up and tells him to hurry. But after a while, the boy is still in bed. The mother says:

**Sentence:** 起来呢，怎么还不起来？

*Qǐlái ne, zěnmē hái bú qǐlái?*

get.upCTR how still not get.up

‘Get up. How could you not get up?’

**Contradiction:** The boy wants to stay in bed.

Get up quickly. (Author’s own example)

In (31), the mother might be surprised to find that the boy has not gotten up, but the directive in which *ne* occurs itself does not give such a surprise reading since it is a repeated request, which is neither surprising nor newsworthy to either of them. The following (32) is another example to show that *ne* does not indicate newsworthiness.

- (32) a. **Context:** A boy is about to go for a picnic with friends. When he is leaving, his mother says:

**Sentence:** 下雨了  
*Xià yǔ le.*  
 fall rain PRF.MIR  
 ‘It is raining.’

- b. **Context:** The boy waits for a while, hoping that the rain will stop soon. However, after ten minutes or so, it is still raining. The boy does not want to wait any more and decides to go despite of the rain. At this time, both the mother and the boy know that it is still raining and each knows that the other knows about the rain. Then the mother says:

**Sentence:** 下雨呢  
*Xià yǔ ne.*  
 fall rain CTR  
 ‘It is raining.’ (Author’s own example)

(32a) is a new piece of information presented by the mother to the boy. The mirative *le* is used to signal its newsworthiness. By contrast, (32b) is not new to the boy at all as the boy knows about the rain and the speaker (the mother) knows that the boy knows it. Nevertheless, it is still legitimate to use *ne* in (32b). This indicates that *ne* cannot be used to mark the newsworthiness of the information. Instead, *ne* is used to signal the contradiction between the mother’s ‘you shouldn’t go as it is raining’ and the boy’s ‘I will go despite of the rain’.

In addition to the fact that SF *ne* can occur in contexts involving no newsworthy or surprising information, SF *ne* can co-occur with a mirative marker. The sentence-final particle *le* is a marker of mirativity (Fang 2018). In (33), the speaker is using *le* to signal to the addressee that the stated information is new and worthy of notice in the sense of, for instance, trying to remind him/her to make less salty dumplings next time.

- (33) 晚上的饺子有点咸了  
*Wǎnshàng de jiǎozǐ yǒu diǎn xián le.*  
 night ATTR dumpling have a.little salty MIR

‘The dumplings I had last night were a little salty!’  
 (outside my sub-corpus but in the CCL corpus)

In (11B2), (11B3), and (15b) in Section 4.3, and (21) in Section 4.5, *le* and *ne* co-occur, a fact that also shows that *ne* could not indicate mirativity as markers of the same category are mutually exclusive in a single sentence.

(34) 他们的态度也转变了，作了检讨，报纸上还登了呢

*Tāmen de tàidù yě zhuǎn biàn le, zuò le jiǎntǎo,*  
 they ATTR attitude also turn change PRF.MIR do PFV criticism  
*bàozhǐ shàng hái dēng le ne...*  
 newspaper DIR even publish MIR CTR

‘Their attitude have also changed and they made self-criticism. All this is even published in newspapers.’

To summarize, *ne* is not a mirative marker, as it can occur in sentences that do not convey a new, unexpected or surprising message and as it can co-occur with a mirative marker. Even if it occurs in sentences that have a mirative reading, *ne* does not contribute to this reading; the propositional content of the sentence does.

#### 4.9 Summary

In Section 4, I have argued from seven perspectives that SF *ne* is a marker of contradiction, signaling the relationship between the currently stated information and the previously existing assumption. The assumption can be directly contained in or implicitly expressed by the preceding sentence, or it can remain implicit in the context. Firstly, SF *ne* does not express negation, as it combines freely with sentences of either polarity without changing their polarity status; secondly, to make *ne* felicitous requires the existence of something that can be contradicted; thirdly, the contradiction can be oriented towards the previous assumption held by the speaker, the addressee, or even both the speaker and the addressee; fourthly, the frequent co-occurrences with emphatic expressions confirm *ne*’s inherent nature of contradiction; fifthly, SF *ne* can signal contradiction not only in declaratives but in directives and prohibitives as well; sixthly, the non-interrogative SF *ne* does not indicate contrast or difference but functions similarly to *aber* in German and *pero* in Spanish; lastly, *ne* is not a mirative marker as it can co-occur with the mirative marker *le* and it can occur in sentences that do not convey a new, unexpected or surprising message.

## 5 Contradiction in FDG

As introduced in Section 2, FDG recognizes a hierarchically layered organization across levels. Based on this organization, Fang (2021) investigates the meanings and functions as well as the rigid sentential sequencing of eight Mandarin sentence-final particles (*ou*, *a*, *ma*, *ba*, *le*, *ne*<sub>1</sub>, *ne*<sub>2</sub> and *de*; *ne*<sub>1</sub> is the non-interrogative SF *ne*), locating the non-interrogative SF *ne* at the layer of the Communicated Content at the Interpersonal Level, as given in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The hierarchical layering of Mandarin sentence-final particles (Fang 2021)<sup>6</sup>

	Interpersonal Level			Representational Level
	Move	Discourse Act	Communicated Content	Propositional Content
Mood	<i>a</i> , <i>ou</i>	<i>ba</i> , <i>ma</i> , <i>ne</i> <sub>2</sub>		<i>de</i>
Polarity			<i>ne</i> <sub>1</sub>	
Mirativity			<i>le</i>	

According to this analysis, SF *le* is another particle that is located at the layer of the Communicated Content. Grammatical elements at the same layer are mutually exclusive when they pertain to the same category, but when they pertain to different categories, they can co-occur in a single sentence. Hence, the possible explanation for the sequence of *le ne* in a single sentence is that they fall into different categories. As argued in Fang (2021), SF *le* falls into the category of mirativity while SF *ne* falls into the category of polarity.

Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2018) explore how the category of negation operates across all the layers of both the Representational Level and the Interpersonal Level. As introduced in Section 2, they state that denial is the category of negation that pertains to the layer of the Communicated Content. As argued in Section 4.2, SF *ne* does not indicate negation as its presence or absence does not affect the polarity status of the sentence and it can combine freely with sentences of both affirmative and negative polarities. Therefore, SF *ne* does not indicate denial. However, so far, negation is the only category of polarity and denial is the only sub-category of negation at the layer of the Communicated Content recognized in FDG's TMAEP (tense-modality-aspect-evidentiality-polarity) hierarchical framework.

<sup>6</sup> In this table, *ne*<sub>1</sub> refers to the non-interrogative sentence-final *ne* and *ne*<sub>2</sub> refers to the interrogative sentence-final *ne*.

In fact, there is another type of polarity that has recently gained more attention in the literature: polarity contrast, which is defined as a device to highlight the polarity meaning of a sentence and to contrast sentences with negative and positive polarity in discourse (Dimroth & Sudhoff 2018: 1). Note that polarity contrast differs from polarity in that polarity contrast brings contrastive effects between existing polarity values. It does not denote polarity itself. Polarity contrast is realized in natural languages through different devices. For instance, German may use the accentuation of a finite verb as in (35) and Dutch may use the particle *wel* as in (36).

(35) German (Turco *et al.* 2014: 95)

- a. A: *Das Kind hat nicht geweint.*  
the child has not cried  
‘The child did not cry.’
- B: *Das Kind HAT geweint.*  
the child HAS cried  
‘The child Did cry.’
- b. A: *Das Kind hat geweint.*  
‘The child cried.’
- B: *Das Kind HAT nicht geweint.*  
the child HAS not cried  
‘The child DID NOT cry.’

(36) Dutch (Turco *et al.* 2014:100)

*De meneer leest het boek wel.*  
the man read.3SG the book CTR  
‘The man DOES read the book.’

As can be seen from (35), similar to the case of SF *ne*, the German accentuation of the finite verb can always involve an affirmative or negative assumption in the preceding context. In (35a), there is a negative preceding sentence/assumption whereas in (35b), there is a positive preceding sentence/assumption. The Dutch particle *wel*, however, enjoys more restrictions as it can only occur in affirmative sentences. Unlike the German accentuation device, it is ungrammatical for *wel* to mark polarity contrast in negative sentences as in (37).

(37) \**Het kind heeft WEL niet gehuild.*  
the child has CTR not cried  
‘The child DID not cry.’

(Dimroth & Sudhoff 2018: 4)

Despite of this, according to Turco *et al.* (2014: 94–106), both the German accentuation of a finite verb and the Dutch affirmative particle *wel* can be used to signal either polarity contrast or polarity correction. The latter can be clearly seen in (35a), which corrects/contradicts Speaker A's utterance *The child did not cry*, as well as in (35b), which corrects/contradicts Speaker A's utterance *The child cried*. If an element of correction or contradiction is expressed by these linguistic means, then it is inadequate for the term *polarity contrast* to be a cover term for both polarity contrast and polarity contradiction, at least as far as German and Dutch are concerned.

Also, the term polarity contrast does not adequately cover the uses of SF *ne*. As argued in Section 4.7, the reason why SF *ne* is labeled as a contradiction marker, not a contrast marker, is that the term *contradiction* captures the abandoning and correcting properties which the term *contrast* is incapable of indicating. Along this line, the term *polarity contrast* fails to give sufficient credit to polarity contradiction expressed by linguistic devices such as SF *ne* that indicates meanings beyond polarity contrast and enjoys less restrictions (e.g. unlike the Dutch affirmative particle *wel*, *ne* can occur in sentences of negative polarity). Thus, polarity contradiction should be separated from polarity contrast, enjoying an independent status under the category of polarity. Accordingly, I propose that a sub-category of contradiction should be added to the category of polarity in the TMAEP structure to accommodate a pragmatic strategy used by the speaker to signal at the Interpersonal Level that a Communicated Content is in contradiction with another Communicated Content or with a previously existing assumption in the context. As argued earlier in this section, the marker *ne* does not denote polarity yet is highly associated with the polarity status of the sentence in which it occurs.

More research needs to be done to see whether there are dedicated markers of contradiction in other natural languages.

## 6 Conclusion

I have argued that the Mandarin non-interrogative SF *ne* is a contradiction marker in its own right, signaling that the current information contradicts the existing assumption, be it a preceding message, or an assumption either implicitly expressed in that message or already existing in the context. With the presence of *ne*, the speaker makes his/her intentions clearer and more explicit, as if guiding the addressee through the interpretation process; without *ne*, it then depends on the addressee to process how relevant the currently stated information is to the preceding sentence or within the context.

In addition, I have discussed how contradiction should be accommodated in FDG. I have suggested that contradiction should be recognized as a sub-category of polarity at the layer of the Communicated Content in the TMAEP framework. I have furthermore argued that SF *ne* is a polarity operator of contradiction at the layer of the Communicated Content at the Interpersonal Level.

## 7 Abbreviations

3	third person
ATTR	attributive
CLF	classifier
COP	copula
CTR	contradiction
DIR	directive
HONR	honorific
MIR	mirative
MIT	mitigative
PFV	perfective
PRF	perfect
PROG	progressive
RESULT	resultative
SG	singular
top	topic

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