

# An Acoustic Study of Syllabic Constituents and Their Interaction in Prosodic and Morphological Contexts in Liyang and Surrounding Wu Dialects

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## Abstract

Liyang 溧陽 dialect and its surrounding dialects including Lishui 麗水 and Gaochun 高淳 are usually regarded as marginal dialects of Wu, because many discrepancies in various linguistic aspects have been identified for them in comparison with mainstream Wu dialects. The present research aims to investigate and analyze such discrepancies, especially those found in syllabic constituents including tone, initial consonant, medial, main vowel and coda in prosodic/intonational, morphological and syntactic contexts. The research started with a series of fieldwork visits to dialectal spots, thereby obtaining abundant first-hand materials. Then the analysis of the data from the perspectives of diachronic and synchronic comparison was conducted with the help of acoustic and statistical approaches.

The findings of this research are manifold. (1) So-called stress clash is found in Liyang and surrounding dialects, which does not normally exist in other Wu dialects. Taking vivid quadrisyllabic expressions (*shēngdòngde sìzìgé* 生動的四字格 in Chinese) for instance, the penultimate position in this domain is occupied by a syllable which is stressed by means of the combination of the most sonorant initial consonant and vowel, and a rising or a longer tone. (2) In Liyang and surrounding dialects, certain prosodic domains, including vivid trisyllabic expressions, are limited to certain patterns such as [H.H.H], [H.L.M], [H.H.L], [L.M.H] and [M.H.L] (each letter refers to the main feature of one tone), and these patterns are determined, to a great extent, by: (2a) the intrinsic pitch height relation of vowels such as [ɪ], [u], [ɑ] and [ɔ] respectively, and (2b) the contour patterns of the tones at the left-most position in the word and phrase domains. (3) In the morphological process of projecting monosyllabic forms up to disyllabic, trisyllabic or quadrisyllabic forms, neutralized tone or suffix is extensively used in Liyang and surrounding dialects, and the suffixes of this kind include noun suffix [ŋ] in Danyang dialect, noun suffix [ʈʂ] in Rugao dialect and verbal suffixes [ʈʂʌʔ] and [lɑʊ] in all these group dialects.

Keywords: Wu dialect, tone, tone-vowel interaction, experimental phonetics, phonology, stress clash, prosodic domain