

**AN INTERFACE PROGRAM FOR PARAMETERIZATION OF  
CLASSIFIERS IN CHINESE**

by

Au Yeung, Wai Hoo

Division of Humanities

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Abstract

This thesis promotes an interface inquiry into how classifiers are parameterized in Chinese, which is scheduled into a four-phased program.

Phase I (classifier and mathematics) presents a multiplication-based parametric analysis to derive the rise of classifiers and the origin of their numerical value by asking why and how the sortal classifier has picked up the value of one. This numerical value will be incorporated into the multiplication formula to parameterize how modern dialects, such as Cantonese and Mandarin, vary against the syntax and semantics of classifiers.

Phase II (abstract syntax and semantics) presents the tremendous consequence due to the mathematics interface as an arena for parametric selection. CL-raising is seen as the need to satisfy these mathematics interface conditions. So the choice of this syntactic mechanism by a dialect but not by the other dialect is motivated by the mathematics – syntax mapping.

Phase III (surface syntax and semantics) brings the effect of the abstract syntactic operation to the surface by realizing it as a clustering pattern that differentiates Cantonese and Mandarin. For example, while Cantonese has the sequence X-CL-N, Mandarin does not. Furthermore, the dialectal parameterization may not simply rest on the syntactic level, but simultaneously hook on the semantic side. From the semantic point of view, the structure X-CL-N denotes definite and unity interpretations. The abstract syntax simultaneously affects the classifier performance on surface syntax and semantics.

Phase IV (synchrony and diachrony) turns the scene to the ancient times of Chinese when the parametric analysis is subject to the evaluation against historical data. Across the synchronic – diachronic interface, if the analysis is adequate enough, it should predict the developmental stages of the syntactic properties of classifiers in the history of Chinese.