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More on the Morphological Typology of Sinitic

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Abstract

Chinese is often defined as a 'textbook example' of an isolating language, with comparatively few affixes that are usually etymologically transparent (Sagart 2004). After 'deconstructing' the notion of the isolating morphological type, I shall discuss data from a number of Chinese dialects spread over the Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan, Hebei, and Shandong provinces. I will show that there seem to be some areal clusters with productive morphological phenomena not expected to occur in isolating languages, which can be explained both by the cross-linguistically widespread tendency towards the reduction of certain items in speech production and, arguably, by processes of convergence among dialects. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

Mandarin dialects – Jin dialects – morphological typology – grammaticalisation – phonetic erosion

1 Introduction

Few linguists, if any, would object to the classification of Chinese as an isolating language, at least as is usually defined in the general literature. For instance, according to Packard (2006:358), "Chinese scores rather high on the isolating language scale," since it lacks obligatory morphology, the boundaries between morphemes are clearly defined, there is no cumulative exponence, and morphemes have a single phonological form (no allomorpy/suppletion); he stresses particularly the point that in this

* Traditional Chinese characters have been used as a default throughout the article. However, in order to be consistent with the sources quoted, simplified characters will also be employed. I did not add characters when the sources do not provide them. The *Pinyin* and *Yale* systems are used, respectively, for the transliteration of Standard Mandarin and (Hong Kong) Cantonese. For all other varieties, I used (italicised) IPA transcriptions as provided by the sources, with tones indicated as superscript numbers; when no transcription is provided, I used SMALLCAPS (toneless) Pinyin transcriptions following the Standard Mandarin reading of the characters. The glosses follow the general guidelines of the Leipzig Glossing Rules when applicable; additional glosses include CONT 'continuous,' COS 'change of state,' GOAL 'goal marker,' and SFP 'sentence-final particle.' I would like to thank, first and foremost, Prof. Christine Lamarre (柯理思) for encouraging me to research this topic. Also, I would like to thank the participants of the 2013 LFK Society Young Scholars Symposium and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. Needless to say, the mistakes which may be found are the sole responsibility of the author.

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Network Perspectives on Chinese Dialect History

Chances and Challenges

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Abstract

Little is known about the history of Chinese dialects. Major dialect groups were identified long ago using various traditional criteria, such as tonal and segmental development from their presumed common ancestor; however, scholarly agreement about their detailed development is largely lacking. At the core of the problem lies the role that language contact played in the history of Chinese. Unlike in the case of other language families, the Chinese dialects never really separated into distinct, independent languages, but kept evolving in close contact to each other. As a result, it is hard to tell whether traits shared among the dialects have been inherited or borrowed. Recent network approaches from a biological perspective could show a way out of this dilemma, since they were specifically designed to handle vertical and horizontal aspects in bacterial evolution, and the first pilot studies in historical linguistics have reported promising results. In this paper, a case study on the application of network approaches in Chinese historical linguistics is presented. Based on a dataset of 200 basic items translated into 23 Chinese dialect varieties, competing proposals for Chinese dialect classification are compared and tested for general plausibility. The results of the comparison show that network approaches are a useful supplement for quantitative and qualitative approaches in Chinese historical linguistics. In order to reach their full potential, however, the underlying evolutionary models need to be more closely adapted to linguistic needs, and additional evidence, like geographic information, needs to be taken into account. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

Chinese dialect classification – Chinese dialect history – network approaches – lexical borrowing

1 Chinese Dialect Classification and Chinese Dialect History

The sociolinguistic situation in China is incredibly complex: For a long time, countless, mostly mutually unintelligible, varieties of Chinese have been developing under the backdrop of a common culture and writing system. Influenced by centripetal forces of varying prestige languages, centrifugal forces of geographic distance, and different waves of migrations, the modern Chinese dialects constitute a language family whose linguistic divergence resembles that of the Romance languages (Norman 1988: 187–188, Wang 1997), but whose history is so complex and intertwined that it seems impossible to describe it by means of a classical family tree (Norman 2003: 76).

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Proposal for a Transcription of Chinese Characters in the Study of Early Chinese Language and Literature

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Abstract

This paper outlines the pitfalls of the current anachronistic practice of transcribing early Chinese documents by identifying each character with a *kǎishū* 楷書 equivalent. In its place, I suggest a way of transliterating characters directly, by rendering into roman letters the phonetic and semantic information encoded by a character. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

transcription – Chinese

1 Current Practice

The standard approach to deciphering pre-Qin Chinese documents is to identify each pre-Qin character with a *kǎishū* 楷書 character, to take each *kǎishū* character as representing the morpheme that it represents in Pǔtōnghuà 普通話, and finally to read the result as if it were standard Classical Chinese. False assumptions underpin this methodology at every step; the procedure assumes a direct linear progression in both script and language from the Shāng 商 dynasty until today. W. S. Coblin has demonstrated in various publications that the linguistic side of this assumption is false (e.g. 2001, 2007: 69–103); Imre Galambos shows that the paleographic assumption is also false (2006: 146–150).

Transcription can serve three purposes: (1) to typographically present words originally written in one script system using text written in another script system,[1] (2) to draw attention to the structure of the script system in a way that is more explicit than the native script itself reveals,[2] and (3) to regularize

1 The typographical representation of Chinese words in Roman script is easily satisfied. As an index referring to a certain philosopher 'Confucius' serves perfectly well. This series of Roman letters has a very tenuous relationship with the name this philosopher would have been called in his own life, but by convention it is what he is called in English. No accuracy or fidelity is gained by calling him 'Kongzi' instead. This series of letters accurately reflects what this man is called according to one romanization system for Pǔtōnghuà, but neither the letters Kongzi nor the pronunciation they indicate would be any more meaningful in the philosopher's ears than the equally arbitrary and more conventional 'Confucius'.

2 For example, in hand written Tibetan the letter ད, the letter ཌ, and the punctuation mark *tsheg* are difficult to distinguish; transliterating them respectively with a 'd', 'ḍ', and a space disambiguates them clearly. In a similar fashion, transcriptions

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Origins of Jino Fricatives

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Abstract

This paper investigates the origin of fricatives in two dialects of Jino, namely Youle Jino (YJ) and Buyuan Jino (BJ), which are spoken in Sipsongpanna (Xishuangbanna), Yunnan Province, China, and are genetically affiliated with the Lolo-Burmese branch of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family.

Synchronically, YJ has 10 fricatives, /f, v, s, z, ʃ, r, ç, j, x, ɣ/, while BJ has only 4, /f, s, ɕ, x/. This paper also deals with /w/ and /j/ in BJ, although they may be considered to be semivowels from a synchronic point of view. In cognate words, YJ fricatives are mostly retained from Proto-Jino (PJ), whereas BJ merges them into fewer phonemes under certain conditions. Moreover, it should be noted that /f, ɕ, x/ in some BJ words derive from PJ /*l̥/.

In the Sipsongpanna area, Tai Lue [Tai-Kadai] and the Yunnan dialect of Chinese [Sinitic, Sino-Tibetan] have been dominant languages, from which both YJ and BJ inherited several fricatives. Most fricatives in loanwords are the same as those in the donor languages, except in the case of *ɕ-* and *ʂ-*, which had merged into a single phoneme within the phonology of the local Chinese dialects before language contact with Youle Jino. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

Jino (Jinuo) – Tibeto-Burman – fricatives – Chinese dialect – Tai-Lue

1 Introduction

Jino is a member of the Lolo-Burmese (LB) language group of the Tibeto-Burman language family and is spoken in the Sipsongpanna[1] (Xishuangbanna) Autonomous State within the borders of Yunnan

* An earlier version of this paper was read at the Young Scholar Symposium of the Li Fang-Kuei Society for Chinese Linguistics held at the University of Washington (Seattle, USA/ August 2013). The author appreciates the insightful comments from Prof. Anne Yue, Prof. Zev Handel, Prof. Katia Chirkova, Dr. Nathan Hill, Dr. Wang Feng, and many other participants of the symposium. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for providing me with many helpful comments. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Yoshiharu Iwaya (October 2, 1918--August 12, 2013), who died of old age on the day of my presentation. For his lifelong support of my academic studies I am deeply grateful.

1 The Sipsongpanna area has at least four language families: Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Miao-Yao, and Mon-Khmer. Until the 1950s, there was a kingdom governed by the Tai Lue people; hence, the dominant language of the area was Tai Lue, which has now been replaced with the local dialect of Chinese (Yunnan Chinese).

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Derivational Verbal Morphology in Khaling

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Abstract

This works describes the -t applicative/causative, the voicing alternation as well as a few other residual morphological processes in Khaling, and discusses their relevance to Sino-Tibetan historical comparison. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

Khaling – Kiranti – applicative – anticausative – causative – incorporation – analogy

1 Introduction

In the Sino-Tibetan family, the Kiranti languages are among those with the most complex verbal morphology. This morphology is both typologically unusual (Bickel et al. 2007) and potentially ancient (Jacques 2012a, DeLancey 2014). A detailed description of the verbal morphology of Kiranti languages is therefore of potential interest to both typologists and comparative linguists.

Of all the Kiranti languages, Khaling presents perhaps the most complex set of stem alternations.

Jacques et al. (2012) provide a description of these alternations and a model explaining how to build an abstract root from which all alternations can be predicted.

In addition to this complex inflexional morphology, Khaling also presents a rich system of derivation, which has a number of clear parallels in the Kiranti subfamily. In this paper, three derivations are described and analyzed: applicative/causative, incorporation and anticausative. Other valency alternations such as the reciprocal and causative, which involve periphrastic constructions, as well as the reflexive, which presents a special conjugation, are not discussed here and will be presented in a forthcoming work.

The present research is based on a database comprised of 648 verb roots. Unless necessary, only root forms are quoted; the reader can refer to Jacques et al. (2012) to determine the conjugated forms from these roots.

* This research was funded by the HimalCo project (ANR-12-CORP-0006) and is related to the research strand LR-4.11 "Automatic Paradigm Generation and Language Description" of the Labex EFL (funded by the ANR/CGI). The author would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for insightful suggestions.

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Phrasing, Prominence, and Morphotonology

How Utterances are Divided into Tone Groups in Yongning Na

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Abstract

Yongning Na is a Sino-Tibetan language spoken in an area straddling the border between Yunnan and Sichuan. The Yongning Na tone system is based on three levels: L, M, and H. It comprises a host of rules that are specific to certain morphosyntactic contexts. These rules represent the bulk of what language learners must acquire to master the tone system. Different rules apply in the association of a verb with a subject or an object, the association of two nouns into a compound, that of a numeral and classifier, and that of a word and its affixes, for instance. The domain of tonal computation is referred to here as the *tone group*; tonal processes never apply across tone-group junctures. The present study investigates how utterances are divided into tone groups in Yongning Na, building on examples from narratives and elicited combinations. There is no hard-and-fast correspondence between syntactic structure and tone group divisions: several options are generally open for the division of an utterance into tone groups. The choice among these options depends on considerations of information structure. This study is intended as a stepping-stone towards the long-term goal of modelling the Na tonal system (its morpho-phonology and its phonetics), and placing the findings in a typological perspective. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

intonation – phrasing – prominence – morphotonology – tone groups

1 Introduction: Challenges in the Description of the Tone System of Yongning Na

Yongning Na (endonym: /nɑ˩-ʐwɤ˧/) is a member of the Naish subgroup of the Sino-Tibetan family, which also includes the Naxi and Laze languages (Guo Dalie and He Zhiwu 1994: 5–9; Jacques et al.

* Many thanks to Duan Bingchang 段炳昌, Wang Weidong 王卫东, Yang Liquan 杨立权 (Yunnan University) and Latami Dashi 拉他咪・达石 (Ninglang Research Centre in Ethnology) for making his fieldwork possible, and to the Na language consultants and friends, in particular Latami Dashilame 拉他咪・达石拉么. Many thanks to Roselle Dobbs for insightful suggestions about data analysis and thorough editing of the entire article. Many thanks to the participants at the Li Fang-Kuei Young Scholars Symposium in 2013, and to two anonymous reviewers, for useful comments and suggestions. The author alone is responsible for remaining shortcomings.

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New Perspectives on the Suprasegmentals in mBrugchu Tibetan

An Introduction to the Tonogenesis Triggered by Breathy Voice

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Abstract

mBrugchu Tibetan, a linguistic group of the Tibetic languages spoken in Zhouqu County, Gannan Prefecture, Gansu, is regarded as a tonal language in previous works. This paper shows that it does not have a distinction of tone in regards to pitch, but rather has prominent breathy phonation which has not yet obtained a phonological position as a suprasegmental and, instead, is merely one of the phonetic features of the voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. The paper discusses two dialects, dGonpa and Ongsum; the breathy phonation of dGonpa is more prominent than that of Ongsum, this is because /ɦ/ plays a different role in each dialect and hence has different functions. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

mBrugchu Tibetan – tonogenesis – phonation type – breathy voice

1 Introduction

mBrugchu Tibetan is one of the Tibetic languages[1] spoken in Zhouqu [*'Brug-chu*; 舟曲][2] County, Gannan [*Kan-lho*; 甘南] Prefecture, Gansu [甘肅], China. It is known as a language with a tonal, referring to pitch, distinction (Huang 2007). However, contrary to previous descriptions, "breathy voice" is a more notable feature than pitch height in mBrugchu Tibetan. This paper discusses a function of breathy voice attested in two dialects of mBrugchu Tibetan, referring to the phonetic theory of phonation and register provided by Zhu (2010), from the historical perspective.[3] It aims to describe the following phenomena:

* I should like to express my special thanks and gratitude to my Tibetan friends from mBrugchu Bon gDugs-dkar and dGra-lha Tshe-ring for spending time to teach me their mother tongue. I am also grateful to Nicolas Tournadre, Nathan Hill, Guillaume Jacques, Katia Chirkova, Zev Handel, and two reviewers for providing me with many insightful comments for a revision of the paper. I also thank Abe Powell for amelioration of English.

1 See Tournadre (2014) and Tournadre & Suzuki (forthcoming) on the term 'Tibetic.'

2 Tibetan toponyms have three names in order of *pinyin* [*Tibetan transliteration; Chinese characters*]. The Tibetan transliteration follows the Wylie method except for the capitalisation and hyphenation rules of proper names.

3 A synchronic description is not the primary purpose of this paper. For a detailed phonological discussion, see Suzuki (2013c, 2014). The phonetic description in the present paper strictly follows the *pandialectal phonetic description* proposed in Tournadre & Suzuki (forthcoming), a description in which not only refined IPA but also well-defined phonetic symbols used in China are used without any mention.

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The Gelong Language in the Multilingual Hub of Hainan

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Abstract

This paper is a preliminary report on the author's investigation of a language spoken in the western part of Hainan Province—Gelong (哥隆話, also known as *cunyu* 村語, lit.: village language). This study is based on the fieldwork data collected in 2011 and 2012. The purpose is to compare the author's data and those of Fu (1996) and Ouyang (1998) and to discuss the affiliation of this language by comparing the 100 basic vocabulary items in Gelong and Hlai. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

Gelong – Hlai – basic vocabulary – Hainan Island – linguistic affiliation

1 Introduction

This study examines the Gelong language spoken in western Hainan Province. The Gelong language drew the author's attention when he and his team were working on the multilingual situation of Sanya and its neighboring areas on some sociolinguistic issues including language shift and language maintenance (see Tsou et al, 2007, Tsou, Chin and Mok, 2010, Chin and Tsou, 2013). In 2009, the author was introduced to two native speakers of Gelong who lived and worked in Sanya. While full documentation of Gelong was completed almost two decades ago (see Ouyang (1998) and Fu (1996)), the author planned to document a new set of data of this language and to compare it against those previous records with an aim to observe any change that has taken place in the language. On the basis of the fieldwork data on 3000-some vocabulary items, no significant linguistic difference is found, except a few variations at the lexical level that can be possibly attributed to the influence of the Hainan Min dialect (see Table 1 below).

These lexical items are usually not considered basic vocabulary and it is not surprising to see changes and influences from other neighboring languages, especially those with a higher sociolinguistic status (Tsou and You 2003).

* The study reported in this paper is supported by a General Research Fund granted by the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong. The project title is *A Typological and Sociolinguistic Study of the Gelong Language Spoken in Western Hainan* (Project No.: GRF 840611).

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Sound Correspondence and the Comparative Study of Miao-Yao Languages

From the Perspective of the Pervasiveness of Sound Correspondences

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Abstract

Pervasive sound correspondence requires reflexes in all languages compared. Relaxing this requirement would include more late borrowings into the comparison and could cause a misunderstanding of language relationships. From this perspective, this paper investigates the basis of sound correspondence in the reconstruction of Proto-Miao-Yao. The genetic relationship between Miao-Yao languages can be confirmed by the genetic indicator of more high-rank and less low-rank related morphemes, either through the requirement of pervasiveness or a relaxed requirement; though this relaxation results in some degree of distortion. A similar procedure has been applied to related morphemes between Chinese and Proto-Miao-Yao with similar results. A genetic relationship, rather than language contact between Chinese and Proto-Miao-Yao, has been suggested by rank analysis. To double-check this conclusion, the inexplicability principle was used. This principle refers to the inability to describe the representation of related morphemes in the recipient language in terms of the phonological system of the donor language; these inexplicable elements are considered to be inherited from the ancestor language rather than acquired through borrowing. (This article is in English.)

Keywords

pervasiveness – sound correspondence – Miao-Yao – rank theory – inexplicability principle

1 Pervasive Sound Correspondence and Historical Comparison

Sound correspondence is the basis of historical comparison. Only after the establishment of sound correspondence can other procedures like identifying cognates or borrowing words, reconstructing proto-forms,

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