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(Review)

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REVIEW

Diversity in Sinitic Languages. Edited by Hilary M. Chappell.
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1. OVERVIEW OF *DIVERSITY OF SINITIC LANGUAGES*

The difference in grammar, or morphosyntax, among Chinese dialects was once thought to be insignificant, as reflected in Chao's (1968:13) famous claim that "[i]t is in matters of grammar that the greatest degree of uniformity is found among all the dialects of the Chinese language." This idea, however, has been critically challenged since the 1980s when more dialectal data come into light.¹ *Diversity in Sinitic Languages* is the latest milestone in the exploration of the grammatical diversity across Chinese dialects. As the book title suggests, the editor views traditional Chinese dialect groups as related but different languages. The term 'Sinitic languages' will be used throughout this review.

The book under review comprises three parts, bringing together ten chapters by eight authors. All the chapters, except Chapter 3 by Peyraube,

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1. A pioneer in this area is Zhu Dexi (1985), who explores the diversity of neutral question forms across Chinese dialects.

are products of the project entitled ‘The hybrid syntactic typology of Sinitic languages (SINOTYPE)’ funded by the European Research Council from 2009 to 2013. The final product of the project, following this book, will be a series of typological descriptive grammars of lesser-known Sinitic languages such as the Waxiang language spoken in Hunan, Hui’an Southern Min spoken in Fujian, and Nanning Southern Pinghua spoken in Guangxi.³

In Part I of the book, two chapters, following the introduction, are devoted to approaches to the grammatical diversity of Sinitic languages. To highlight the nature and extent of the diversity across the languages, Chappell’s chapter applies the notion of *linguistic area*, which typically describes languages belonging to different families, to analyzing Sinitic languages. She identifies five linguistic areas based on an examination of disposal, passive and comparative constructions. Peyraube’s chapter demonstrates with specific examples how typological research on Sinitic languages may benefit from studies of diachronic grammar. In contrast, in the West the influence of typology upon diachronic studies is more significant than that of diachronic studies upon typology.

In Part II, extensive data were presented in three typological studies to illustrate important aspects of the grammatical diversity across Sinitic languages. Yujie Chen’s study investigates demonstrative systems with a sample of 303 Sinitic languages. Chen shows that on top of the two-term systems, which are the most prevalent type in Sinitic languages as well as in world languages, there also exist one-term, three-term, four-term, and even five-term systems in the Sinitic family. Some languages with a one-term system are found to employ another type of system as well. In systems with three terms or above, a demonstrative member may be derived from another member through various devices, such as syllable lengthening, stressing, reduplication and tone sandhi. While different systems in the languages are mainly based on the distance scale, a small number of them are reported to be also sensitive to visibility. Wang revisits bare classifier

3. Details of the ‘SINOTYPE’ project can be found at the website, Centre de recherches linguistiques sur l’Asie orientale, “Enseignants-chercheurs, Hilary Chappell,” under the title, “The hybrid syntactic typology of Sinitic languages (Projet ERC: European Research Council, Advanced Grants category. Sinotype 230388), <http://crlao.ehess.fr/index.php?112>, accessed April 12, 2018.

phrases ([CL-N]; noun phrases made up of a classifier + noun without a numeral or demonstrative) with a sample of 120 Sinitic languages. Taking into account the syntactic distribution (the possibility of preverbal use and postverbal use) and the semantic interpretation (the possibility of definite reading and indefinite reading) of the bare classifier phrases, Wang identifies a range of seven behavioral types from the 16 logical types produced by the four variables. Eventually he comes up with three implicational universals: (a) preverbal [CL-N] phrases \supset postverbal [CL-N] phrases; (b) preverbal indefinite [CL-N] phrases \supset preverbal definite [CL-N] phrases; and (c) postverbal definite [CL-N] phrases \supset postverbal indefinite [CL-N] phrases. Chappell and Peyraube co-author the last chapter of Part II, presenting a study of comparative constructions in Sinitic languages. The study focuses on the two main types of comparatives in the languages, the COMPARE type with the marker-standard-predicate configuration and the SURPASS type with the predicate-marker-standard form. More specifically, the authors disagree with the common belief that the SURPASS type is very limited in geographical distribution and show that although the COMPARE type dominates in the North and is gradually replacing the SURPASS type, particularly in the central area, the SURPASS type is, in fact, rather widespread, which is more common in but not limited to the South. The depth at which these three studies in Part II examines the grammatical diversity in the Sinitic languages is commendable. Beyond illustrating the diversity with extensive and solid examples, they also offer plausible explanations for the diversity through proposing implicational universals, as in the chapters by Yujie Chen and Wang, and providing a diachronic account, as in the study of Chappell and Peyraube.

In Part III, four case studies of individual lesser-known Sinitic languages shed light on the grammatical diversity from different angles. Sousa compares Nanning Pinghua and Nanning Cantonese, which co-exist in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, with Old Nanning Mandarin and the indigenous Tai languages of Northern Zhuang and Southern Zhuang from a language contact perspective. Although Nanning Pinghua and Nanning Cantonese are quite similar, especially in phonology, Sousa illustrates some essential ways in which they differ. He argues that Nanning Cantonese shares more structural features with Zhuang

than Nanning Pinghua does. This finding is surprising considering the fact that Nanning Pinghua has a much longer contact history with Zhuang. Ngai presents a study of the origin of the numeral for “one” [kei²¹³] 个 (rendered as KA in the following) in Shaowu Min. This form for “one” is unusual in the sense that it is not a cognate of the corresponding pan-Chinese form IT 一 or of the corresponding pan-Min form SOK 蜀. In fact, as Ngai (196-206) points out, KA, a cognate of IT (in the form of [i⁵³]) and a cognate of SOK (in the form of [ɕi²¹]) all co-exist in Shaowu Min as numerals for “one” with different syntactic distributions. It is rare, at least in Sinitic languages, that three forms for ‘one’ co-exist in a single language. She argues that KA is the indigenous one in the language and proposes that its source is most likely an adjective meaning ‘unique’ in Old Chinese. Another case study is conducted by Li on complex personal pronouns in Fuyang Wu. In most Sinitic languages, there is only one set of pronouns, with singular-plural distinction. However, in some central and northern Wu languages, including Fuyang Wu, two sets can be found, namely simple pronouns and complex pronouns, the latter of which are derived from the former through prefixation. In synchronic terms, Li shows that complex pronouns with no stress can only occur in topic positions while stressed complex pronouns are much freer. In diachronic terms, he argues that complex pronouns are derived from fusions of simple pronouns and a preceding copula in cleft sentences. In the last chapter, Weirong Chen studies comparative constructions in Hui’an Southern Min, where six types are identified. It is found that the two most common comparative types in Sinitic languages, the COMPARE type with the marker-standard-predicate configuration and the SURPASS type with the predicate-marker-standard construction, are the least frequently used ones in Hui’an Min; the hybridized type with the marker-standard-marker-predicate form and the short type with the marker-predicate form dominate in the Hui’an Min data. In order of frequency, Chen discusses the six types of comparatives from typological and historical perspectives.

2. DISCUSSIONS ON SPECIFIC CHAPTERS

Following an overview of the book, we would like to draw attention to and offer a critical discussion of specific points put forward in three

chapters, namely Chapter 2 by Chappell on the geographical classification of Sinitic languages based on grammatical criteria, Chapter 7 by Sousa on the language contact of Nanning Pinghua and Nanning Cantonese with Zhuang, and Chapter 8 by Ngai on the special numeral form for “one” in Shaowu Min.

In an earlier proposal by Norman (1988), Sinitic languages were divided into northern, central, and southern groups, according to ten criteria that cover grammatical, phonological and lexical aspects. In this volume, revealing greater diversity, Chappell further divides the southern languages into three groups and proposes a total of five linguistic areas in China, which include the Northern, the Central Transitional, the Southwestern, the Far Southern, and the Southeastern areas, on the basis of their grammatical differences, particularly the differences in lexical sources of disposal object markers, passive markers and comparative markers, and the difference in structural type of comparative construction.

A principled approach to language classification based on phonological criteria, such as that demonstrated by Ting (1982), has been instrumental in showing the genetic relatedness among members of a language family. When neighboring languages without genetic relationship demonstrate similarities due to language contact, *linguistic area* is typically applied as a label to describe the phenomenon. Chappell’s chapter, however, appears to break from these traditions. It not only classifies Sinitic languages according to *grammatical* features, but it also applies *linguistic area* as a label for its classifications of Sinitic languages, which are clearly genetically related to each other, which means that the common features defining the linguistic areas may be due to genetic relationship (and the consequent parallel development due to this relationship; see Dixon 1997:14) and not necessarily contact. For this reason, when interpreting these linguistic areas, it is important, first, to compare them with the distribution of the ten Sinitic language groups as delineated by Wurm et al. (1987), which represent genetic classification, and, second, to consider historical grammar.

As previously mentioned, one of the five linguistic areas proposed by Chappell is the Central Transitional area, which generally overlaps with the areas of Jianghuai Mandarin, Wu, Hui, Gan and Xiang. However,

strictly speaking, its status as a linguistic area is controversial. Among the features examined in this chapter, the relatively distinctive evidence for the Central Transitional area is the derivation of disposal object markers from GIVE verbs and HELP verbs. However, this still cannot define the area. On the one hand, object markers of the Northern Wu languages are derived from TAKE verbs (see Zheng 2017:215-225 for further discussions); on the other hand, the feature of using GIVE and HELP verbs as object markers is not limited to the Central Transitional area but also prevalent in the Southwestern area. When it comes to passives and comparatives, it is even more difficult to argue that the Central Transitional area is a linguistic area. For passives, the lexical sources of the markers in this area are highly diverse, including GIVE, TAKE, SUFFER, WAIT and causative verbs. Because of this diversity, no sources can be said to be distinctively common in the area. Although passive markers from GIVE verbs can be found in all the Sinitic language groups situated in the area and are, therefore, relatively common, this is a pan-southern feature, which means that there is insufficient evidence supporting the isolation of the Central Transitional area from the Far Southern and the Southeastern areas. For comparatives, the SURPASS type is widespread in the Central Transitional area, but it is being rapidly replaced by the COMPARE type. These two types are pan-southern and pan-northern features respectively and both, again, cannot offer sufficient evidence supporting the isolation of a new linguistic area. As far as the data given in the chapter are concerned, the area seems more like a transitional zone between linguistic areas rather than an additional linguistic area. Further investigations will provide more conclusive evidence on this issue. However, be it a linguistic area or not, this area does deserve attention given that, as Chappell points out, some grammatical features found in certain languages there have not been reported in other Sinitic languages, such as the topicalization and the polarity types of comparatives.

In another chapter, Sousa reports that while Nanning Pinghua has been in contact with Zhuang, the indigenous Tai languages of Nanning, for much longer than Nanning Cantonese, the latter carries surprisingly more Zhuang-like features of grammar than the former. He explains that the traditional social distance that the Pinghua community has kept from the

Zhuang population has led to a weaker linguistic influence of Zhuang upon Nanning Pinghua despite the long history of their contact. On the other hand, Nanning Cantonese has been strongly influenced by Zhuang, thereby diverging from Standard Cantonese, which is spoken away from Nanning. This explains Zhuang-like features of Nanning Cantonese that is absent in Nanning Pinghua and Standard Cantonese. Examples of such features discussed in this chapter are the adjective-classifier-noun construction and the anaphoric use of classifiers with no head noun, numeral or demonstrative. In addition, Yue has been influenced by a strong Tai substratum. This accounts for Zhuang-like features of Nanning Cantonese that Nanning Pinghua lacks and, yet, shared by Standard Cantonese. Such features include gender suffixes for animals, no preference for disyllabicity of nouns over monosyllabicity, postverbal adverbials like ‘first’, preverbal bare classifier phrases, and the possessive construction with no possessive or modifier marker but a classifier.

The above explanation appears adequate until one notes that Nanning Pinghua has borrowed a considerable amount of vocabulary items, including some basic ones, from Zhuang, far more than Nanning Cantonese has. The fact that Nanning Pinghua has many Zhuang loanwords was originally not surprising given the long history of their contact. However, it becomes an oddity when Sousa puts forward the argument about the traditional distant relationship between Pinghua and Zhuang speakers and the weaker Zhuang influence upon Nanning Pinghua in an attempt to explain why Nanning Pinghua shows fewer Zhuang-like grammatical features. The author has faithfully pointed out the asymmetry of Zhuang interference between lexicon and grammar shown by Nanning Pinghua as compared with Nanning Cantonese, but the chapter may have misjudged that the asymmetry is uncontroversial.

According to Thomason’s (2001) generalization of the asymmetry between lexical and grammatical interference involving languages-in-contact, lexical interference features are found at an earlier stage than grammatical ones in situations where the majority of people who introduce interference features into the recipient language are fluent, typically native, speakers of the recipient language; conversely, grammatical interference features come earlier and are more significant

than lexical ones in cases where most of those who transmit interference features are non-native speakers of the recipient language who have learnt it imperfectly, which are typically cases of substratum interference. If it is the case that Pinghua native speakers, as Sousa describes, are conservative towards the Zhuang people, Pinghua native speakers would be unlikely to be the main medium that introduces Zhuang interference features into Pinghua. Given this, it is surprising that Nanning Pinghua shows Zhuang lexical interference more significantly than Zhuang structural interference. Further investigations are needed to understand the reason for this asymmetry of the Zhuang influence upon Nanning Pinghua.⁴

Ngai's study brings the numeral system of the Shaowu Min language into light, paying special attention to how KA, also being used as a general classifier, has developed into the numeral for "one". The author argues that the lexical source of KA is JIE 介, which originally means "single" and "unique". To this end, she provides evidence from classical texts that 个, the written form of KA, and JIE 介 were free variants which subsequently coalesced. Additionally, cognates of JIE are occasionally employed as a general classifier in some modern Sinitic languages such as those spoken in Liannan (Hakka) and Fuzhou (Min). Map 8.3 (p.86) shows that there are five forms for numeral "one" in the Sinitic languages of Southeastern China. Beside the pan-Chinese form IT, all the other four forms, namely, KA, SOK (developed from DU 獨), KU- 寡 and TSI 犗 (developed from TE 特) share the concept of 'lone' or 'unique'.

While most arguments made in this chapter are robust and convincing, we had difficulty understanding the author's attempt to link KA and JIE. On the one hand, KA itself could mean "alone", as evident by the compounds *geren* 個人 'individual; personal', *geti* 個體 'an individual' and *gexing* 個性 'personality', all of which use *ge* 個 (=KA) as modifiers; on the other hand, the primary meaning of JIE is 'boundary', as documented in the *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 (ca 100 CE). Using JIE for referring 'single; lone'

4. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is to take structural distance between the target language and the recipient language into consideration. Early Cantonese to which Nanning Cantonese was derived already had a strong Tai substratum, possessing many Zhuang-like features; conversely, the Pinghua language is believed to be a descendant of an ancient northern Sinitic language (Wang 2005:108-118). It is well acknowledged that languages with similar structures are prone to transfer grammatical properties.

is unattested not only in classical texts, but also in the Min language group. We observe that examples (33) and (34) of p.219 do show the classifier usage of /ka²¹³/, written as 介, in Fuzhou Min, with the function of individualizing nouns. The etymology of this word, however, is highly dubious. Feng (1998:68), for example, writes it as 個 (=KA).⁵ Arguing for a coalescence of KA and JIE appears to be unnecessary.

Another comment concerns the origin of TSI, whose variants include Xiamen /tsit⁸/, Hui'an /tsit⁸/ and Jian'ou /tsi⁸/ . The author has not mentioned how these forms are derived from the proposed TE 特. A single origin of TSI and SOK has been argued by Kwok (2017), who, from a phonologically point of view, found that all parts, except the final, of TSI and SOK correspond regularly. Kwok assumes that the final of TSI was contaminated by the numeral IT. Table 1 lists the data of 10 Min varieties which use TSI for 'one'. One would easily figure out that all the TSI forms and all the IT forms share the same finals.

Table 1 The forms of TSI 'one' and IT 'one' in 10 Min languages

Languages	TSI	IT
Xiamen 廈門	tsit	it
Quanzhou 泉州	tsit	it
Zhangzhou 漳州	tsit	it
Datian 大田	tse?	e?
Longyan 龍岩	tsit	it
Fuding 福鼎	θi?	i?
Jian'ou 建甌	tsi	i
Jianyang 建陽	tsi	i
Shaowu 邵武	çi	i
Youxi 尤溪	çie	ie

Notes: Adapted from Kwok (2017, Table 4).

If this view is accepted, then we only need to deal with four forms for "one" in the Southeastern Sinitic languages. The coalescing form of SOK

5. In this respect, we advise researchers of Sinitic grammars not to take the written forms of published data as the real etymologies.

and TSI extends from the Wuyi 武夷 mountain area of Fujian in the north to the Chao-Shan area of Guangdong in the south (e.g. Shantou /tsek⁸/). It turns out that among the seven subgroups of Min identified by Wurm et al. (1987), only the Shao-Jiang group and the Central Min group do not use SOK/TSI as the basic numeral for ‘one’.

In conclusion, although we have different views from the authors on some specific issues, overall the volume has considerably deepened our knowledge of the grammatical diversity of the Sinitic languages by collecting and analyzing extensive data from both well- and lesser-known languages in the group.

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