SYNCHRONIC VARIATION, GRAMMATICALIZATION AND LANGUAGE CONTACT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINISH MORPHEMES IN THE YUE-CHINESE AND THE ZHUANG LANGUAGES IN THE GUANGXI REGION

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AUGUST 2014

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Synchronic Variation, Grammaticalization and Language Contact: the Development of the FINISH Morphemes in the Yue-Chinese and the Zhuang Languages in the Guangxi Region
共時變異、語法化和語言接觸：論南寧粵語及壯語中「完畢」語素的演變

Submitted to
Department of Chinese and History
中文及歷史學系
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
哲學博士學位

by

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August 2014
二零一四年八月

Abstract

Language change is simply a fact of life; it cannot be prevented or avoided (Campbell 2013: 3). When asked to identify the causes of language change, historical linguists usually give us internal explanations (Lass 1997: 209), while contact linguists specifically focus on external factors such as borrowing, interference, metatypy and others (Weinreich 1963, Ross 1999, Thomason 2001). Among these external factors, the contact-induced grammaticalization theory pioneered by Heine & Kuteva (2003, 2005) is particularly well-suited to explain the grammatical changes undergone by the languages in South China (F. Wu 2009a, Kwok 2010, D. Qin 2012, Y. Huang & Kwok 2013, Kwok *et al*. forthcoming, *etc*.).

The present thesis investigates how a particular internal factor (grammaticalization) and external factor (language contact) interact to produce the polyfunctionality of the peculiar 'FINISH' morpheme 晒/łai^{33}/ in the Yue dialect spoken in Nanning (henceforth: NNY), in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. My investigation reveals that while 晒/łai^{33}/ (< *sai) is clearly a Yue word, certain of its grammatical functions have been borrowed from Zhuang through language contact. These borrowed functions are not found in other members of Yue outside Guangxi. This case study provides not only first-hand data on the language contact situation in the Nanning region, but also a theoretical explanation for the linguistic situation found. Additionally, this study will deepen our understanding of the corresponding postverbal morpheme 晒 /sai^{33}/ in Cantonese, the grammatical functions of which have been debated for decades (cf. Mo 1993, T. Lee 1994, Tang 1996, Cheung [1972] 2007, P. Lee 2012a; among others).

The thesis contains six chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a preliminarily review of the literature on language contact phenomena in China, introduces the methodology used in across this study, and addresses the importance of the present topic.

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the linguistic background of the Guangxi Region. First, I describe the social and economic factors that give rise to the diversity

of languages in Guangxi. After that, I present concise linguistic profiles for each language and make a comparative survey of their linguistic properties.

Chapter 3 offers a detailed grammatical description of my target morpheme. First, I describe the polyfunctionality of 晒/łai^{33}/ in NNY from a synchronic perspective. Second, I compare the grammatical properties of NNY 晒/łai^{33}/ with its counterparts in Cantonese and other Yue dialects, arguing that 晒/łai^{33}/ in NNY possesses various grammatical functions which are not found in other members of the Yue family.

Chapter 4 extends my observation to the Zhuang languages in Guangxi, and illustrates that, in most of these languages, the native 'FINISH' morphemes possesses a rich array of functions that are comparable to those of 晒/łai^{33}/ in NNY. After analyzing the grammatical properties of five Zhuang dialects, I tentatively propose a polygrammaticalization model of the 'FINISH' morphemes in Zhuang. The validity of this model will be examined by using data from some other languages.

Chapter 5 deals with the functional changes in NNY 晒/łai^{33}/ induced by contact with Zhuang. Rather than directly borrowing of certain linguistic elements, the "Zhuang shifters" replicated the use patterns of the 'FINISH' morphemes, attributing the familiar grammaticalization processes in Zhuang to the development of the NNY 'FINISH' morpheme, 晒 /łai^{33}/. By imposing the Zhuang process on the Yue morpheme, speakers of the NNY dialect ultimately produced a polyfunctional variant of 晒/łai^{33}/ which is atypical in the Yue group. Based on the contact-induced grammaticalization model, this chapter paints a clear picture of the contact process between NNY and Zhuang, taking into full consideration certain areal features of the Guangxi Region. After evaluating the weight and value of several areal features, a putative linguistic area—the Central Southern Guangxi Area—is established.

Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of this study, and discusses certain cautions and drawbacks inherent to the application of migration theory in the study of language contact. Finally, I emphasized the need for further observation and a broader-ranging investigation into this topic in the future.

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Abbreviations and Symbols

Linguistic Terms

1sg	1st person single
1pl	1st person plural
2sg	2nd person single
2pl	2nd person plural
3sg	3rd person single
3pl	3rd person plural
ART	article
ASP	aspect
ATTR	attributive
AUX	auxiliary
BEN	benefactive
CAUS	causative
CL	classifier
COM	comparative marker
COMP	complement
COP	copula
COV	coverb
CT	class term
DEM	demonstrative
DET	determiner
DIM	diminutive
DIST	distant marker
DP	dynamic perfect
DUR	durative
EMPH	emphatic
EXPR	expressive
EXH	exhaustion particle

GEN	genitive
IMP	imperatives and commends
INCHO	inchoative
INTENS	intensifier
L_1	first language
L_2	second language
LNK	linker
M	male (gender marker)
MANN	manner marker
MOD	modal auxiliary
MODI	modifier
NEG	negative
NOM	nominative
NUM	number
PP	pragmatic particle
PASS	passive
PFV	perfective
POSS	possessive
PROG	progressive
PROH	prohibitive
REC	reciprocal
SELE	selective marker
ST	standard (in the comparative construction)

Symbols

> becomes/grammaticalizes to/develops into

— primarily quantified by

~~~ secondarily quantified by

* ungrammatical

grammatical, but pragmatically odd (can only be interpreted in another way)
~~~