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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

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by

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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 晰/lai³³/ in the Yue dialect spoken in Nanning (henceforth: NNY), in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. My investigation reveals that while 晰/lai³³/ (< *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 晰/sai³³/ 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/ɬai³³/ in NNY from a synchronic perspective. Second, I compare the grammatical properties of NNY 晒/ɬai³³/ with its counterparts in Cantonese and other Yue dialects, arguing that 晒/ɬai³³/ 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 possess a rich array of functions that are comparable to those of 晒/ɬai³³/ 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/ɬai³³/ 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 /ɬai³³/. By imposing the Zhuang process on the Yue morpheme, speakers of the NNY dialect ultimately produced a polyfunctional variant of 晒/ɬai³³/ 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>1st person single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>1st person plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>2nd person single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>2nd person plural</td>
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<td>causative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>comparative marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
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<tr>
<td>COV</td>
<td>coverb</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>class term</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
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<tr>
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<td>diminutive</td>
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<tr>
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<td>distant marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>dynamic perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUR</td>
<td>durative</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>emphatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXPR</td>
<td>expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXH</td>
<td>exhaustion particle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GEN  genitive
IMP  imperatives and commends
INCHO inchoative
INTENS intensifier
L₁  first language
L₂  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)