

Issues in writing a grammatical sketch of Chinese Pingjiang dialect

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1. Introduction

Pingjiang dialect is the dialect spoken in the Pingjiang county, which lies in the north-east of Hunan province and borders Hubei and Jiangxi province.

In the places adjacent to Pingjiang, Tongcheng and Xiushui speak Gan dialect; the area near Pingjiang of Liuyang and Tonggu is of the same situation. On the other hand, Changsha and Miluo are Xiang dialect, as the same with the part of Yueyang County which is adjacent to Pingjiang. That is to say, Pingjiang is surrounded by Gan dialect in the east, south and north, except that its west is mostly Xiang dialect, which makes Pingjiang dialect very complex...



Figure 1 Pingjiang in China

Most of the dialects in Pingjiang are identified as the subdialects of Gan dialect. According to *Pingjiang County's Local History*, which was edited by the Editorial Committee of *Pingjiang County's Local History* of Hunan Province in 1994, there are four subdialects in Pingjiang. They are Chengguan, the north-east, the west and Cenchuan dialects. As Chengguan² dialectal area (the

² The phonology of Chengguan dialect is nine vowels :/i u y e ø o ə a α/; 19 consonants :/p p^h t t^h k k^h ʔ m n ŋ f s ʃ x ts ts^h tʃ tʃ^h l /, seven tones: 33, 13, 35, 21, 55, 22, 4ʔ.

central part of the map) covers the widest area and has the largest population, I'm only referring to it in the study. The population of Pingjiang is 1 million and 40 thousand.



Figure 2 The dialects in the Pingjiang

2. Process

- Reason

Pingjiang dialect is my mother tongue. I had lived in Pingjiang until I was twenty years old. I am very interested in my dialect. However, there is no previous study on the grammar of Pingjiang dialect. So I decided to write it myself.

- How to start

In 2003, I started to write an introduction for Pingjiang dialect as my graduation dissertation. My teacher is also interested in my dialect. He encouraged me.

- Research period

I visited Pingjiang 9 times for research purpose in the past 4 years and six months. I conducted a 4-month investigation.

- Current Situation?

I finished the descriptive study of the phonology and grammar of Chinese Pingjiang dialect in Japanese this March as my doctoral thesis.

3. The problems in the study of my dialect

3.1. How to classify the part of speech of Chinese language

It is necessary to classify the part of speech when describing a language. Usually, the classification is based on the change of morphology. But there is no clear change of morphology in Chinese, such as Isolate language. So it is very difficult to classify the part of speech of Chinese language. You can not determine that the morpheme is a verb or an adjective because it has no change in morphology.

mən ¹³	san ³³	bolt	xau ³⁵	t ^h ai ²²	Very big
door	bolt		Good	big	
san ³³	mən ¹³	To wear a bolt	xau ³⁵	su ²²	good thing
wear	door		good	thing	
			xau ³⁵	sia ³⁵	easy to write
			good	to write	

3.2. The case of the problem in my study

I define the part of speech when describing Pingjiang dialect according to the word's function in a sentence. The result is that the part of speech of Pingjiang dialect is interjection, Onomatopoeia, numeral, conjunction, particle, verb, auxiliary, adjective, adverb, noun, preposition and classifier. I feel it is easy to explain the function of the words in my thesis using this classification of part of speech. But I cannot establish a good classification standard. So there are some examples which I don't know how to deal with. Some cases are against my definition.

3.2.1. Examples of adjectives

I set the rule "it could be modified by a degree adverb" as the standard of defining an adjective. But the following cases can not be modified by an adverb.

mi ³³	xeŋ ⁴	very black	mau ³³	k ^h iaŋ ³³	very light
	black			Light	
kuaŋ ⁵⁵	ts ^h iaŋ ³³	very blue	kuaŋ ⁴	liəuŋ ⁴	very green
	black			green	

3.2.2. Examples of verbs

It expresses ability when an auxiliary word ti? Is succeeded, but some cases like these are hard to explain.

- "Adj + ti?" expresses ability

01 si⁵⁵ k^{hu}55 tseŋ⁴ ʂø²¹ tʂ^hoŋ¹³ pəŋ⁴ tiŋ⁴ ko²¹ o²¹
 thin trousers DM TO long Neg PT PT
 The thin trousers could not very long.

02 i³⁵ k^{huai}55 i³³ xai¹³ t^{hai}22 tiŋ⁴ ŋa⁵⁵ tseŋ⁴
 Dem CL wear more big Num DM
 This sweater should be a little bigger.

03 san³³ liəuŋ⁴ a³³ pi³⁵ ŋo²¹ t^{hai}22 pəŋ⁴ tiŋ⁴ man¹³ to³³
 three six PT than 1SG big Neg very many
 36? It is not so bigger than my shoes.

● “V + tiŋ⁴” does not express ability

04 i³⁵ ko⁵⁵ p^{hien}55tsu³⁵ xan⁵⁵ tiŋ⁴
 Dem CL film to watch
 This film is worth to watch.

05 i³⁵ tʂaŋ⁴ piŋ⁴ tseŋ⁴ sia³⁵ tiŋ⁴
 Dem CL pen DM to write
 This pen is good for write.

06 pəŋ⁴ ʂi²¹ tsau³⁵t^hau²² mi²¹ o²¹ k^hiaŋ⁴ tiŋ⁴ o³³
 Neg CO early rice rice PT to eat PT
 It is not early rice; it is delicious.

So what can I do? Is there any frame which could make my description of grammar become fluent?
 The part of speech is important in the description of grammar, so I try to set it in my study,
 but it is not so good. I need a new frame which could work in place of the classification of part of
 speech. Would you like to tell me any thing about this? Thank you.

Abbreviations

1、2、3	Pronominal	CO	Copula	Int	Interjection	PL	Plural
Adj	Adjective	Dem	Demonstrative	Neg	Negative	PT	Particle
CL	Classify	DM	Diminutive	N	Noun	SG	Singular