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 Cenchiuan dialects. As Chengguan dialectal area (the

\[ \text{The phonology of Chengguan dialect is} \ \text{nine vowels}: /i \ u \ y \ e \ o \ o \ a \ a/; \text{19 consonants}: /p \ b \ t \ k \ ? \ m \ n \ f \ s \ x \ ts \ ts' \ ts'' \ l/; \text{seven tones}: 33, 13, 35, 21, 55, 22, 4\?}.\]
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>män³³</th>
<th>san³³</th>
<th>bolt</th>
<th>xau³⁵</th>
<th>tʰai²²</th>
<th>Very big</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>bolt</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>big</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>san³³</td>
<td>män³³</td>
<td>To wear a bolt</td>
<td>xau³⁵</td>
<td>su²²</td>
<td>good thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wear</td>
<td>door</td>
<td></td>
<td>good</td>
<td>thing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xau³⁵</td>
<td>sʰia³⁵</td>
<td>easy to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>good</td>
<td>to write</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mi³³</th>
<th>xe³⁴</th>
<th>very black</th>
<th>mau³³</th>
<th>kʰiaŋ³³</th>
<th>very light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Light</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuoŋ⁵⁵</td>
<td>tsʰiaŋ³³</td>
<td>very blue</td>
<td>kua⁴⁴</td>
<td>liau⁴</td>
<td>very green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
The thin trousers could not very long.

This sweater should be a little bigger.

It is not so bigger than my shoes.

This film is worth to watch.

This pen is good for write.

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