



Department of
Linguistics and Modern Languages
語言學及現代語言系

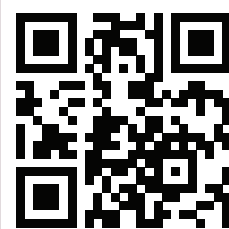
A Scientific Analysis Must Be Attested by the Data

A Revisit to the Prenuclear Glide of the Chinese Syllable

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Date: October 5, 2021 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
***Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM**

The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 4 October 2021



Abstract

A maximal Chinese syllable consists of an onset consonant (C), a prenuclear glide (G), a nuclear vowel (V) and a coda consonant or off-glide (X), namely CGVX, for example, luan [lwan] 'egg' and biao [pjau] 'watch'. In traditional Chinese phonology, the Chinese syllable is divided into two parts: *Shengmu* (Initial) and *Yunmu* (Final), the former being C and the latter consisting of GVX, which is, however, problematic by itself in two aspects according to the contemporary phonology. First, *Yunmu* is ternary branching, which is not compatible with the binary principle in contemporary linguistics. Second, VX, as the poetic rhyming unit, is not structured as a constituent.

Many attempts have been made to solve these two problems in light of contemporary phonology, particularly in Onset-Rhyme (OR) model of syllable structure (Pike & Pike 1947) which is well-attested cross-linguistically. Generally, there are six different attempts to represent the Chinese syllable structure, arguing over the affiliation of the prenuclear glide, which is the typical complexity of the Chinese syllable structure and is also a big challenge for the well-attested OR model. Some attempts have proposed that the prenuclear glide occupies the second position in the onset. Some have proposed that the glide is part of the nucleus. Others regard the glide as a secondary articulation on the onset consonant. Others still think of the glide as an independent branch directly linking to the syllable node. Also some have proposed an IF model with Initial for *Shengmu* and Final for *Yunmu* which binarily branches into G(lide) and R(hyme) consisting of N(ucleus) and C(oda). And also some have put forward a universal X-bar model of the syllable to replace the OR model, based on syntactic X-bar structure. So far, there has been no authoritative opinion to conclusively decide the Chinese syllable structure.

This study is to revisit the Chinese syllable structure by analyzing the previous attempts, focusing on the prenuclear glide to see if we can find a better solution which should be not only compatible with principles of contemporary phonology, but also well satisfy the factual data of Chinese language.

Speaker

Jisheng Zhang (1955-), Ph.D. in LUCL, Leiden University, the Netherlands, professor of linguistics in East China Normal University, is academically interested in phonology, focusing on Chinese phonology and sign language phonology, and is the author of *The Phonology of Shaoxing Chinese* (2006), *The Phonology of Shanghai Sign Language* (2019), *Contrastive Studies of English and Chinese Phonology* (2020) and about 60 articles published in *Lingua*, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, *Studies of the Chinese Language*, *Contemporary Linguistics*, *Linguistic Sciences*, *Journal of Foreign Languages*, etc. He is a winner of *Outstanding Achievement Award in Humanities and Social Sciences* by Ministry of Education (2009) and *Shanghai Philosophy and Social Science Outstanding Achievement Award* (2008, 2012, 2016). He is also a peer reviewer of such journals as *International Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, *Language and Linguistics*, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, *Lingua*, *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, *International Phonetic Association*, *Journal of Phonetics and System*.

All are Welcome

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