

AN ONGOING TONAL-PATTERN CHANGE: LANZHOU DIALECT

Li Yi¹ Han Li² Yingyi Li³ Juejue Mu⁴

¹ *China Agricultural University, Beijing*

² *Stony Brook University, New York*

³ *Peking University, Beijing*

⁴ *Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Monterey*

ABSTRACT

The tonal-pattern of Lanzhou dialect is experiencing a change demonstrated in two aspects: a) *Yin-ping* 阴平(T1a) has two variants, falling and level, and the former is being replaced by the latter; b) *Shang-sheng* 上声(T2) and *Qu-sheng* 去声(T3) are merging. We propose that the tonal change of T1a is partially a result of language contact, and the sandhi T1a from initial position of disyllabic combination also plays a role in extending the level tone to the citation T1a, the change of T1a then further triggers the merger of T2 and T3. Yet whether it is the change of sandhi T1a in the initial position or the change of the surface representation of citation T1a, or the merger of T2 and T3, all the directionality of tonal change is in line with the “clockwise tone shift circle” (Zhu et al. 2015; Yang and Xu 2019). We argue that tone changes are mainly due to internal factors. Although there are external stimuli, the path of tone change follows rules. The illustration of the ongoing tonal-pattern change in Lanzhou dialect will shed light on the understanding of the rules.

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Li Yi (衣莉; corresponding author) [daisy-yili@163.com]; No.17, CAU, Tsinghua East Road, Beijing;  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1906-3653>

KEYWORDS

Tonal-pattern change Evolution Merger Tone sandhi

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on tone change previously took the form of diachronic investigations, which have focused on the chronological evolution of language/dialect. It was Labov (1963: 273–309; 2006) who first put forward the sociolinguistic diagram on the segmental level and examined the social factors that are accountable. With regards to the studies concerning the in-progress tonal change, many regional dialects including Cantonese (Mok et al. 2013: 341–370), Wu dialect (Carroll 2010), Lalo language (Yang et al. 2015: 52–77), Thai language (Teeranon 2007: 1–16; Zsiga 2008: 395–408), Taiwan Mandarin (Sanders 2008: 87–107), Singapore Mandarin (Lee 2010: 345–362) and a typology of tone system changes (Pittayaporn 2007: 1421–1424; Hyman 2018: 221–240), as well as tonal evolution (Yang and Xu 2019: 417–459; Zhu 2010: 1–19; Zhu 2012: 1–16; Zhu 2014: 193–205; Zhu 2018: 113–132) have been investigated in depth.

However, the studies on Lanzhou tone system are only static descriptions. According to the previous descriptions, there are 4 citation tones in Lanzhou tonal system, which are T1a (*Yin-ping* 阴平), T1b (*Yang-ping* 阳平), T2 (*Shang-sheng* 上声), and T3 (*Qu-sheng* 去声). Table 1 lists all 14 references concerning the tonal description of Lanzhou dialect. What puzzles us is the records of T1a and T2 are inconsistent in the literature, though as Chao (1931: 312–354; 1968) and Duanmu (1994: 555–608) point out, a variation within one level in numerical representation is not to be taken and the practice of modifying the values of tone is very common. However, the variation in the literature sometimes exceeds ‘one level’. T1a has been transcribed as a falling [HM/ML] or a level [H], and T2 as a convex [MHL], a level [H], a falling [HL], and a rising [MH] respectively (Table 1), though T1b and T3 are more stable, with the former as a falling [HL] and the latter as a rising [LM]. The dialect surveys carried by Zhu and Yi (2015: 1–11) found T1a a high-level tone [H] (illustrated in Figure 1) and Yi (2014; 2019a: 59–65; 2019b) found T2 and T3 are merging.

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兰州方言：一个正在变化中的声调格局

衣莉¹ 李晗² 李颖异³ 木觉珏⁴

¹ 中国农业大学

² 纽约州立大学石溪分校

³ 北京大学

⁴ 蒙特雷国际研究院

摘要

兰州方言的声调变化表现在两个方面：阴平 (T1a) 有降调和平调两种变体，并且平调正在取代降调；上声 (T2) 和去声 (T3) 有合并的趋势。文章的主要观点认为 T1a 的声调变化是由语言接触引发的，普通话的影响促使双字调中已经发生变调内化的 T1a 首字将平调扩散延展到单字调 T1a 和双字调的尾字 T1a 上。T1a 的声调变化进一步引发了 T2 和 T3 的合并。在上述的三个变化中：双字调首字 T1a 的内在音系变化、单字调 T1a 的后续变化、T2 和 T3 的合并，所有这些声调变化的方向都符合“顺时针声调变化圈” (Zhu et al. 2015; Yang and Xu 2019)。我们认为声调的变化方向主要由内在的自然因素决定的，虽然有时会有外因的刺激诱发，但声调变化的路径是有规律可循的。对于正在变化的兰州声调进行研究，会有助于对上述规律的理解。

关键词

声调格局 演化 合并 连读变调