

## Variation of tone categories in Yu Dialect

—Analysis of the internal and external motivations of variation for a Chinese dialect

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Yu Dialect (YD) is distributed in the Town of Yu (Shanxi, China). It belongs to Jin Dialects---a special dialectal group of Chinese, which is surrounded by Mandarins but maintains its particular features in tonal system, such as check tone, which is a tone category of Medieval Chinese (MC) but has disappeared in most of Mandarins. (Language Atlas of China 2012)

In the past decades, tonal system of YD is observed a prominent variation. The tonal system includes level tones, falling tones and check tones. The table below demonstrates the difference between what recorded in Liu (2010) and that concluded on my data collected in 03.2019.

Liu (2010)	HL	HM	LL	HH	HMq	Lq
My investigation (2019)	HL		LL	HH	HMq	Lq

From the table, we can see that two falling tones HL and HM have merged together recent years. Meanwhile, in my investigation, I also found two check tones HMq and Lq show a strong tendency to merge together. In detail, HM is merged into HL, and the check tone HMq is inclined to vary to Lq (The q marking after L and HM refers to a check tone.).

I compare the tone sandhi patterns recorded in Song (1991), Liu (2010) and collected by myself, and summarize the merger of two falling tones is motivated by internal phonological factors, while the merger of two check tones are motivated by language contact. I focus on the following disyllabic tone sequences with tone sandhi, including tone modification and deleting.

Song and Liu:      HM-HM→HL-HM    HM-HMq→HL-HMq    HL-HL→HL-o(22)

My investigation:    HL-HL→HL-HL    HL-HMq→HL-HMq    HL-HL→HL-o(22)

OCP: juxtaposition of two identical oblique tones is forbidden.

After working on decades of data of each pattern, I suppose that HM changing to HL to repair \*OCP breaks the boundary between HM and HL, which finally invokes all syllables bearing HM vary to HL gradually.

Song (1991):      HM-HM→HM-o(212)    HMq-HM→HMq-o(212)    LL-HM→LL-o(212)

Liu (2010):      no record                      no record                      LL-o(22)

My investigation (2019): HM-HM→HM-o(22)    HMq-HM→HMq-o(22)    LL-HM→o(22)

In Song (1991), when HM is deleted the default tone assigned to the TUB is a low concave tone [212] rather than the common default one LL [22]. But in Liu (2010), all deleted tone represent as [22], same as my investigation. I suppose the concave default tone intensified the tendency of HM at final position changing to HL.

As for the merger of two check tones, the motivation is importing loanword from powerful Mandarin, especially Standard Chinese. The process is as follows:

HMq →(Smoothing)→LL/HL→(Reversing, language contact) →Lq

Specifically, a character had been pronounced with HMq in MC varied to a smooth tone about 100 years ago. The variation was generally caused by internal motivation. However, imitating the pronunciation of loanwords takes the register of check tone back, but its pitch is assigned with the unmarked check tone Lq. The phenomenon spreads in the form of lexical diffusion.

*References: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2012), Language Atlas of China (2nd edition), Beijing: The Commercial Press. Liu, X. (2010). Study on Phonology of Yu Dialect. Master Dissertation. Shanxi University. Song, X. (1991). Yu Dialectal Geography. Shanxi University Joint Publishing House.*