

## Where have all the neutral tones gone?

Charting neutral tone decline in Taipei Mandarin, with evidence from  
online phonological simulation

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### OUTLINE

1. Loss of the neutral tone
2. Sound change and online phonological simulation
3. Language games and English phonological awareness

### I. LOSS OF THE NEUTRAL TONE

#### I. BACKGROUND

1. NORTH-SOUTH DISTRIBUTION: frequency of the neutral tone decreases from north to south.

#### *THEORY*

- (a) *Stress-timed* (Altaic languages, English) vs *syllable-timed* languages (Sinitic languages, French)
- (b) Hashimoto (1980: 159-160): neutral tone as the imposition of a stress-timed language pattern on a syllable-timed language (Altaic influence on Sinitic)

2. INDIVIDUAL VARIATION: the higher the frequency, the more likely the occurrence of the neutral tone.

(Problematic for compilers of Modern Standard Chinese dictionaries).

#### *PRODUCTIVITY* (Liu 1997: 150):

- (a) NORTH: instances of the neutral tone are on the increase
- (b) SOUTH: instances of the neutral tone are on the decline

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- (a) What path is the development of the neutral tone taking in the South?
- (b) Is this path of development sensitive to linguistic structure?
- (c) Is there any form of evidence of the native speaker's sensitivity to linguistic structure in this development?

4. LANGUAGE IN QUESTION: *Taipei Mandarin* (not *Beijing Mandarin*; not *Taiwan Mandarin*) [Li 1992: 3]

## II. CLASSIFICATION OF THE NEUTRAL TONE

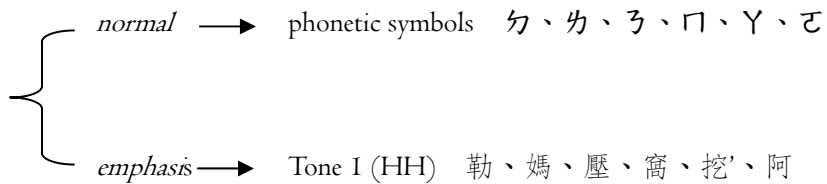


## II. Development of atonal syllables

### II-I

#### GRAMMATICAL WORDS

的、了、呢、嗎、呀、喔



| PARTICLE | <i>normal</i> | <i>emphasis</i> |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|
| 的        | ㄉ             | 滴               |
| 個        | ㄍ             | 郭               |
| 麼        | ㄇ             | 摸               |
| 了        | ㄌ             | 勒               |
| 呢        | ㄋ             |                 |
| 啦        | ㄌㄩ            | 拉               |
| 嗎        | ㄇ             | 媽               |
| 啊        | ㄩ             | 阿               |
| 呀        | ㄩ             | 壓               |
| 喔        | ㄛ、ㄨ           | 窩               |
| 唷        | ㄩ             | 優               |
| 噁        | ㄌ             |                 |
| 哇        | ㄨㄩ            | 挖               |

### II-2

#### REDUPLICATED KINSHIP TERMS

Path 1: *partial reduplication* (see I-2)

Path 2: *rising contour* (T3-T1 or T3-T2) for all (Yin 1989)

## III. Examples

### III-1

NEUTRAL TONE → FULL TONE via *partial reduplication*: examples from the internet

妹妹 → 美眉                      怎麼 → 怎摸  
 姊姊 → 姐街                      什麼 → 省魔  
 弟弟 → 底迪

### III-2

NEUTRAL TONE → PHONETIC SYMBOLS (see APPENDICES I & 2)

I. Phonetic transparency / online phonological simulation

"the conventions that are emerging are a direct reflection of the physical constraints on the medium combined with a desire to create a language that is as 'speech-like' as possible." (Werry 1996: 48)

| ENGLISH  |                  | MANDARIN |       |
|----------|------------------|----------|-------|
| because  | <i>cuz / cos</i> | 妹妹       | 美眉    |
| going to | <i>gonna</i>     | 弟弟       | 底迪    |
| want to  | <i>wanna</i>     | 這樣子      | 醬子、降子 |
| got to   | <i>gotta</i>     | 那樣子      | 釀子    |
| got you  | <i>gotcha</i>    | 什麼       | 省魔    |
| sort of  | <i>sorta</i>     | 馬馬虎虎     | 媽媽呼呼  |

II. Shortening

"features of abbreviation hasten the speed with which messages can be exchanged, making the pace of the exchange more like that of face-to-face conversation. Orthographic reduction and omission of pronouns, etc. also resembles phonological reduction and ellipsis in rapid, informal speech, rendering Chat exchanges 'speech-like' in their degree of informality as well." (Werry 1996: 56)

| ENGLISH  |           | MANDARIN    |      |
|----------|-----------|-------------|------|
| to / too | <i>2</i>  | 掰掰          | 88I  |
| for      | <i>4</i>  | 掰掰嘍         | 886  |
| are      | <i>r</i>  | me too      | 咪兔   |
| you      | <i>u</i>  | thank you   | 3Q   |
| why      | <i>y</i>  | everybody   | AV8D |
| see      | <i>c</i>  | buddy buddy | 8D8D |
| before   | <i>b4</i> | BBS         | 逼逼   |
| any      | <i>ne</i> | homepage    | 烘焙機  |

III. Accent simulation

"language on IRC rarely stays in one form or register for long. Participants tend to play with language, to produce hybrid heteroglossic forms that incorporate all manner of communicative styles". (Werry 1996: 58)

| ENGLISH             |                          | MANDARIN |              |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------|
| -ing (e.g., doing)  | <i>-in (e.g., doin)</i>  | 我        | ㄉ、偶 (台腔)     |
| -r- (e.g., very)    | <i>-w- (e.g., vewy)</i>  | 是        | 素、速 (台腔)     |
| -er (e.g., grammar) | <i>-a (e.g., gramma)</i> | 人        | 倫 (台腔)       |
| to (e.g., want to)  | <i>-a (e.g., wanna)</i>  | 去        | 企、器 (台腔)     |
| -u- (e.g., cool)    | <i>-ew- (e.g., kewl)</i> | 吃        | 粗 (台腔)       |
|                     |                          | 可愛       | 口愛 (台腔)      |
|                     |                          | 可憐       | 口聯、口年 (台腔)   |
|                     |                          | 不難吃、不難看  | 不錯吃、不錯看 (台譯) |
|                     |                          | 很        | 粉 (客腔)       |

### 3. LANGUAGE GAMES AND ENGLISH PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

#### I. THEORY

##### LANGUAGE CONTACT: LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE SCENARIO

(Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 50)

##### STAGE 1

*(casual contact; little bilingualism among borrowing-language speakers)*

RESULT: only (non-basic) vocabulary borrowed

##### STAGE 2

*(intensive contact, including much bilingualism among borrowing-language speakers over a long period of time)*

RESULT: much lexical borrowing; moderate to heavy structural borrowing

(i.e., phonology & syntax)

##### STAGE 3

*(overwhelming long-term cultural pressure from source-language speaker group)*

RESULT: massive grammatical replacement → language death

#### II. BILINGUAL RIDDLES

有一隻熊走過來

第十一本書

羊打電話給老鷹 老鷹接起電話說"喂"

誰家沒有電話?

一把藍色的刀跟一支藍色的槍?

坐什麼椅子最享受?

有備而來 (有 BEAR 來)

不可思議 (BOOK 十一)

陽奉陰違 (羊 PHONE 鷹"喂")

天衣 (天衣無縫 PHONE)

刀槍不入 (刀槍 BLUE)

ENJOY

#### III. BILINGUAL RHYME

(I)

就重來一遍 *So let's start all over again.*

jiu chonglai yibian

[piɛn]

想讓自己 **try again** *I'd like to give myself another chance*

xiang rang ziji try again

[gen]

在落幕之前 *Before the curtain falls*

zai luomu zhiqian

[tɕ<sup>h</sup>ien]

(梁靜茹：轉圈圈 / 一夜長大 詞：余致明 曲：戚小戀)

(2)

**Let's just party all this summer** *Let's just party the whole summer*

Let's just party all this summer \* [əɪ]

你有快樂我才快樂 *I'm happy only if you're happy*

ni you kuaile wo cai kuaile [lɤ:]

**Baby, baby, be my lover** *Baby, baby, be my lover*

Baby, baby, be my lover \* [əɪ]

愛你愛你我非愛不可 *I love you, I love you, I just gotta love you, man!*

ai ni ai ni wo fei ai buke [k<sup>h</sup>ɤ:]

(竇智孔：你有美麗我有愛你 / 小竇智孔 詞曲：小蟲)

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#### WEBSITES

- 網路抱抱 <http://www.seed.net.tw/hug/index6.shtml>

APPENDIX I

FROM:

<http://board2.tacocity.com.tw/USER/shinojo/tile.cgi?page=0&start=11&total=37&user=shinojo&group=USER>  
(Viewed November 2, 2000)

ㄎ~~真ㄉ很久不見ㄉ~~很久沒聯絡ㄉ~~ㄎ~~是發生很多事...  
不過...說來話長...我ㄝ不想多說...已經過ㄉ....不是不想和妳說只是我不願再提起...  
ㄎ~~對ㄉ~~妳啥時要...說ㄍ正確ㄉ時間吧~~ㄎ~~我和米果~~有時間會或許會去和妳要牛排  
ㄉㄉ~~ㄉㄉ~~我們要討ㄉ~~講ㄍ時間吧~~哈~  
不要我們去~~卻吃自己會很想哭ㄉㄟ~~哈哈~~而且車錢粉貴說~~哈哈  
當然值得ㄉ話就不會覺ㄉ貴啦~哈~~這幾天還月底可以ㄉ??  
不過我們是先問妳啦~~不然我們2ㄍ橋好ㄉ~~妳卻不行~~那不是裝笑偽ㄇ~~呵~~所以先看妳  
ㄉ時間再說吧~~  
妳要寫在我板板還是寄 e 都行~~要快點ㄉ~~笨晴不然逾時不候ㄉ~~呵  
就講啦~~再說吧~~  
祝  
順心  
虛筆...

APPENDIX 2

FROM:

<http://board2.tacocity.com.tw/USER/shinojo/tile.cgi?page=0&start=11&total=37&user=shinojo&group=USER>  
(Viewed November 2, 2000)

對呀~偶就想縮姐街都不給偶滴板板灌灌水呀~~(都快枯鼠ㄉ又...)  
不過幸好偶有在虛滴板板留偶滴網址ㄉ~~\*.\*  
唉~~每天上班真滴粉累ㄉㄟ...@@~不過沒法度呀~  
不上班留在家當米蟲都被偶朋友笑...ㄨ~~  
so...我已經想開ㄉ又~而且這是偶做最久的一份工作呀~~  
想說可不可以堅持下去呀~~因為想用這份工作測試自己吧...  
還有呀~~如果姐街有上線滴話~可以來`深情花語聊天坊`的  
(((風信子)))聊天室找偶ㄉ~~因為如果有上線偶都會去那滴...  
所以如果有上來滴話一定要來找偶ㄉ~~^\_\_\_\_\_^  
ps:對呀~~Y姐街和虛滴牛排到底還粗不粗呀???  
(((不然偶自己一個倫粗好ㄉ又...^+++++++^)))