



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

The study of the history of Cantonese: A case study of the question particle *me1*

Prof. Carine Yuk-man YIU
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Date: January 18, 2022 (Tuesday)

Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)

*Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM



Prior registration is required

The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 17 January 2022



Abstract

Since the 1990s, scholars have been drawn to the study of a collection of materials written in Chinese dialects. The materials were published between the 19th and the mid-20th centuries and include dictionaries, textbooks and Bible translations, Chinese classics, plays and novels. Some were compiled by foreigners while some by native speakers. They enable us to have a glimpse into the Cantonese language spoken two centuries ago such as usages that were found at the time but no longer exist nowadays and the development or changes that a word or construction has undergone in the last two hundred years. The first part of the talk will provide an overview of the historical materials that serve as the basis of the study of the history of Cantonese.

The second part of the talk shows how the historical materials can help us trace the development and uncover the origin of a word with the case study of the question particle *me1*. Specially, *me1* was used to mark both biased and unbiased questions two centuries ago and its vowel was rendered as *e* and *i*, facts based on which Yiu (2021) proposes the following developmental path for *me1*: negative marker *m4* + the sentence-final particle *ni1* > *mi1* > *me1*. Meanwhile, *me1* has developed from a question marker to a discourse marker.

Speaker

Carine Yuk-man YIU is Associate Professor in the Division of Humanities, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Her research interests lie primarily in syntax, semantics, typology, historical linguistics and Chinese dialectology. In recent years, she has studied the historical materials written in Chinese dialects such as Cantonese, Hakka, Min, Wu and Mandarin. She is the author of *The Typology of Motion Events: An Empirical Study of Chinese Dialects* (De Gruyter Mouton, 2014) and has published research articles in journals such as 《方言》 [Dialect], 《中國語文》 [Studies of the Chinese Language], *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics*, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, *Lingua and Language and Linguistics*. She is also one of the guest editors of the *Language and Linguistics Monograph* 《早期漢語方言語法》 [Grammar of Early Chinese Dialects] (forthcoming). With the funding support of the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong, she constructed the "Early Cantonese Tagged Database" and "Database of Early Chinese Dialects". Her current project is on the word order and word order variations in the history of Chinese dialects.

All are Welcome

Enquiries

Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, CUHK.
Tel: (852)3943 7911 Fax: (852)2603 7755 E-mail: lin@cuhk.edu.hk