Symposium on Languages in China: Language typology and acquisition

11 March 2024 (Monday)

8:45 -9:00am	Opening remarks and group photo	
9:00-9:30am	Potential dāk 得 in Cantonese: a comparative analysis Giogio Arcodia, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy	
9:30-10:00am	What is Register-Grammar? Feng Shengli, Beijing Language and Culture University and CUHK	
10:00-10:30am	Refining the typological profile of Sinitic Hilary Chappell, CUHK and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), France	
10:30-10:45am	Coffee break	
10:45- 11:05am	A lexical and semantic account for protracted development in heritage Mandarin development at school age Ziyin Mai Maggie, CUHK	
11:05-11:25am	Cross-linguistic influence in sentence-final particles in heritage speakers and adult L2 learners of Mandarin Shanshan Yan, Peking University	
11:25-11:45am	Assessment of bilingual and trilingual children using face-to-face and teleassessment methods Jiangling Zhou, CUHK	
11:45-12:15pm	Some remarks on typology meeting acquisition in Chinese languages Stephen Matthews (HKU) and Virginia Yip (CIJHK)	
12:15-12:30pm	Closing remarks	

Keynote speaker #1 Prof. Giorgio Francesco Arcodia 馬振國

Giorgio Francesco Arcodia (馬振國) is professor of Chinese language and linguistics at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He authored several articles in journals and edited volumes on Sinitic languages, as well as the monographs *Lexical Derivation in Mandarin Chinese* (Taipei, Crane, 2012) and *Chinese Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford, OUP, 2021, with Bianca Basciano). His research focusses on word formation, grammaticalisation, and the typology of Sinitic languages.

<p align="center">Potential dāk 得 in Cantonese: a comparative analysis</p>

<p align="center">Giorgio Francesco ARCODIA (馬振國)</p>

<p align="center">Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy</p>

The morpheme dāk 得 has a broad range of functions in modern Cantonese, including being used as a particle introducing an adverbial construction, as a particle introducing the potential complement and as a verbal (quasi-)suffix (the so-called 'short potential'), indicating that the state of affairs denoted by the verb may happen (e.g. 飲得 yám dāk 'can drink'). In this talk, the uses of dāk 得 in modern Cantonese will be compared with Mandarin de 得, and with parallel acquisitive modals in Lao, Vietnamese, and Zhuang, as representatives of Mainland Southeast Asian areal typology, also with a focus on their modal meanings. What seems to emerge from this comparison is that the differences somehow reflect some clear areal trends: Lao and Vietnamese, the languages located further to the south (in the 'core' of the MSEA area) are strikingly similar, and Mandarin, located further to the north (and away from the 'core') stands out as being more different from the three non-Sinitic languages considered. Zhuang, on the other hand, is somehow in between Lao/Vietnamese and Cantonese, having developed in very close contact with the latter; with respect to the parameters examined for this study, Cantonese most often patterns with non-Sinitic MSEA languages, rather than with its sister language Mandarin. As for the functions of acquisitive modals in the languages considered, they tend to express a wide range of modal meanings, mostly in the non-epistemic domain. Zhuang, Cantonese, and Mandarin, which are spoken mainly in China, tend to show many structural and semantic similarities in this respect; however, there appears to be a much stronger degree of overlap between Zhuang and Cantonese, which is easily explained by the historical circumstances of their development. Again, Mandarin is the language which differs the most from the others, a fact which is in line with its 'hybrid' (Northern Sinitic) areal typology.

Keynote speaker #2 Prof. Shengli Feng 冯胜利

Shengli Feng is Director of the Institute of Zhang Huang Academic Theories, School of Linguistic Science, Beijing Language and Culture University; Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1995. Currently Co-editor in Chief of the Journal of Chinese Languages (JCL, SSCI Index). Formerly served as Yangzi River Scholar at Beijing Language and Culture University (2005), Associate Professor at the University of Kansas and Professor and Director of the Chinese Language Department at Harvard University. Research interests include Qianjia "Logical Certainty", exegesis, prosodic grammar, register grammar, diachronic syntax and literary prosody. Published 16 Chinese academic monographs (including 4 translated into English, Korean, etc.), 2 English academic monographs, and over 200 academic papers in both Chinese and English.

What is Register-Grammar?

Feng Shengli

Beijing Language and Culture University & Chinese University of Hong Kong

This paper argues, following Feng (2010), that register is inherently encoded in grammar, in the sense that linguistic forms are intrinsically generated with the distinctive features (±formal) encoding abstract communicative properties of human languages. Starting from the types of registers and syntactic forms, a unified approach is proposed to integrate forms with distinctive features between syntactic elements, and their functions with the distinctive features [±distance] between participants in face-to-face communications. Relevant facts and cross-linguistic evidence are offered as arguments for the new claim that the "Icicle-Principle" of Form-Function Unity serves as a constructional foundation for the theory of Register Grammar proposed a decade ago.

Keywords: Register Grammar, Linguistic-distance, Form-Function Unity, Icicle-principle

Keynote speaker #3 Prof. Hilary Chappell 曹茜蕾

Hilary Chappell is Vice-Chancellor Visiting Professor at CUHK, specializing in the typology of Sinitic (Chinese) languages, and currently holds the Research Chair in Linguistic Typology of East Asian Languages at one of France's grands établissements – the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) – a graduate school in Paris. She has directed several projects at national and European levels focused on questioning and rethinking the typological profile of Sinitic languages in terms of their variation and diversity. Her European Research Council project led to the creation of a new series *Sinitic languages of China: Typological descriptions*, for which four comprehensive grammars have already been published by De Gruyter Mouton.

Refining the typological profile of Sinitic

Hilary Chappell

Chinese University of Hong Kong & EHESS-CRLAO, Paris

Sinitic languages comprize ten main branches for which there is little intercomprehensibility. If it were possible to calculate the number of distinct dialects in China, Sinitic would undoubtedly prove to be more diverse than its sister group, Tibeto-Burman, claimed to have 260-300 different languages. The typological profile of Sinitic is generally described in terms of features such as lexical tone, simple syllabic structure, and a basic SVO word order that has topic-comment variants. Above all, the current consensus regarding its classification as an isolating or analytic type of language with impoverished morphology overlooks the astonishing diversity of morphological features that can be identified across the hundreds of dialects and varieties. As a whole, these features are relatively little explored from a pan-Sinitic angle, and are certainly less well-known outside of the Chinese linguistics domain.

For its objective, this paper proposes a refinement of the typological profile of Sinitic languages by considering three main types of morphological features : agglutinative, fusional and non-linear, the latter including tone morphemes and tone patterns. An initial example of an entirely common agglutinative-fusional pattern is verb reduplication in the Jin languages for expressing the delimitative aspect : In the Jiexiu dialect of this Sinitic branch, the process combines prefixation by kʌʔ53 on both verb forms with diminutive suffixation on the reduplicant, thereby creating a new fused syllable rhyme.

Jiexiu dialect 介休方言 (Jin, Sinitic)

圪看圪看儿

kʌʔ53-khæ̃35   kʌʔ53-khar35

Pref-look   Pref-look.Dim

'Take a little look.' (Zhang Yimei, 1991: 53)

Invited speaker #1 Prof. Ziyin Mai 麥子茵

Ziyin Mai is Associate Professor at the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). She received BA and MA at Peking University and MPhil and PhD at University of Cambridge, and completed her postdoctoral training at Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre at CUHK. Her current research interests are language acquisition and multilingualism, particularly early multilingual development and heritage language acquisition.

A lexical and semantic account for protracted development in heritage Mandarin development at school age

Ziyin Mai (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This talks reports, compares and summarises findings from three closely linked studies investigating grammatical properties of Mandarin in school-age immigrant children based on the same dataset (Mai, Zhao & Yip, 2022; Deng & Mai, 2024; Shang, Zhao, Yip & Mai, 2024). Mandarin-English bilingual oral narratives were elicited from 27 heritage Mandarin children (age 4-14) and their parents in the UK and analysed for three verbal constructions including the *ba*-construction, spatial prepositional phrases headed by *zai* at pre/post-verbal positions and resultative verb compounds (RVC). The results show that the basic structures of the constructions are largely in place despite general reduction of input in the heritage language compared with monolingual children, whereas the lexicon and semantics are vulnerable and subject to protracted development at this stage. The three studies on school-age heritage children are part of a larger cross-institutional research initiative to compare acquisition and maintenance of Chinese as a first language across monolingual, bilingual and trilingual contexts. At the end of the talk, we will introduce three newly constructed open-access corpora documenting development of Chinese in preschoolers in Beijing, US and Hong Kong.

Invited speaker #2 Prof. Shanshan Yan 闫姗姗

Shanshan Yan is an Assistant Professor at the School of Chinese as a Second Language, Peking University. She obtained her MPhil in Second Language Education and PhD in Linguistics and Acquisition from the University of Cambridge. Her research expertise includes language acquisition, Chinese linguistics, and Chinese as a second language education. She is the author of a monograph *The Right Periphery in L2 Chinese How Sentence-Final Particles are Represented in English-Chinese Interlanguages* published by Routledge in 2023.

Cross-linguistic influence in sentence-final particles in heritage speakers and adult L2 learners of Mandarin

Shanshan Yan (Peking University)

This talk discusses comprehension, judgment and processing of functionalcategories in Mandarin by English-dominant adult L2 and heritage learners, focusing on three sentence-final particles (SFPs): SFP ba (suggestion) and SFP ba (question) (Yan, 2020; Yan & Yuan, 2022), as well as SFP le (change of state, Yan, Mai & Zhao, 2023). Data were collected from three tasks: acceptability judgment, discourse completion and self-paced reading. Results revealed that heritage speakers, who had early and richer input in Mandarin, had advantages over L2 learners in tasks testing syntactic features, but made more errors in those testing discourse features. Findings suggest that acquisition of new functional categories and their associated features in the target language is a complex process affected by a variety of factors in adult L2 acquisition. Cross-linguistic influence is manifested in different ways depending on the grammatical feature being acquired, cross-linguistic mapping relations, the type of learner and the task employed (e.g., online vs. offline).

Invited speaker #3 Dr. Jiangling Zhou 周蒋玲

Jiangling Zhou is a Research Associate in the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre at the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). She obtained her PhD in Linguistics from CUHK. She is an experienced researcher in childhood bilingualism and trilingualism across local and international contexts. Her research interests include first and second language acquisition, early bilingual development and assessment, with a focus on Chinese-speaking children.

Assessment of bilingual and trilingual children using face-to-face

and teleassessment methods

Jiangling Zhou (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Teleassessment through remote testing methods has been developed as an alternative to traditional in-person assessment, with the COVID-19 pandemic amplifying this need (Kronenberger et al. 2021). This talk presents findings from two recent projects conducted by the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre (CBRC), which combined traditional face-to-face assessments and innovative teleassessments developed by CBRC to investigate phonological, lexical, and grammatical development in preschool children. The studies targeted Mandarin-English bilingual children in Singapore and trilingual children exposed to Cantonese, Mandarin, and English in Hong Kong. We examined cross-language associations and the impact of form-similarity and language input on bilingual development.

The results show that teleassessment using tailored procedures offers a viable method for assessing preschool children, especially in contexts that preclude face-to-face assessment. Our findings indicate positive cross-language associations for phonology and grammar, with differential influences of form-similarity on bilingual phonological and grammatical development. Moreover, our results highlight the crucial role of language input in shaping bilingual development. For trilingual children whose input is impoverished, our study demonstrates the effectiveness of a trilingual shared-reading intervention program with Augmented Reality materials in promoting language development in these children.

Keynote speaker #4 Prof. Stephen Matthews 馬詩帆

Stephen Matthews is Professor in Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. He studied Modern and Medieval Languages at Trinity Hall, Cambridge before receiving his PhD in Linguistics from the University of Southern California. His interests include language typology, language contact and bilingualism. He has published on Cantonese, the grammar of Chinese dialects, and contact languages including Chinese Pidgin English. His joint work with Virginia Yip includes *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar*, and *The Bilingual Child: Early Development and Language Contact* which received the Linguistic Society of America's Leonard Bloomfield Book Award in 2009.

Some remarks on language typology meeting acquisition in Chinese contexts

Stephen Matthews (HKU) and Virginia Yip (CUHK)

Recent work by Arcodia, Chappell and others has drawn attention to the typological diversity within Chinese, while Feng's work calls for register features to be encoded in the grammar of each variety. We consider how these parameters of variation may impact questions of language acquisition, particularly under Hong Kong's 'biliteracy and trilingualism' 兩文三語 policy. Ongoing case studies of trilingual development provide examples of the interactions between typological features and acquisition contexts as discussed by Mai based on existing and newly-launched longitudinal corpora. We will also discuss the work presented by Yan and Zhou and their implications.