

**A BOOK REVIEW OF INTEGRATING CHINESE
LINGUISTIC RESEARCH AND LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND LEARNING**

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1. SUMMARY

The volume “Integrating Chinese Linguistic Research and Language Teaching and Learning”, edited by Hongyin Tao, is a collection of papers devoted to integrating linguistic research and Chinese language teaching and learning (henceforth CTL). It contains eleven chapters most of which were presented at the 27th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-27), 2015. All the papers present an analysis of a language component(s) or structure(s) in Mandarin Chinese that poses challenges to learners, followed by pedagogical suggestions or implications. Concrete material development and course design are offered in some of the papers. The volume covers a wide range of topics in CTL and provides useful suggestions for Chinese language teachers. It is a rare volume with concerted efforts to integrate linguistic theory and CTL. It would be of particular interest to researchers and teachers who

aim to integrate linguistic theory and teaching of Chinese as a second/foreign language.

The volume opens with the editor's introduction of the theme of this book: "Integrating linguistic research and pedagogy of the Chinese language", which has received scant attention in the past. The editor stresses the pressing need for integrating these two strands of research in that Chinese has become an increasingly commonly taught second language in the US and elsewhere and that linguistic research should be in the service of language teaching, professional development and teacher training. The editor further illustrates the intricacy and difficulties of such synergy with several studies along this line of research, including the areas of teaching to which Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis can be applied, the author's own work in developing teaching materials based on natural conversations, and the pioneering work by Chao (1948). The remainder of the introduction provides an outline of the papers in this volume.

Chapter 1, "The emergence of verb argument structure in Mandarin Chinese", by Jidong Chen, discusses the information structure in Chinese, a pro-drop language. The author presents a case study of a Mandarin child's longitudinal production of verb argument structures from 1;3-3:4. In general, the discussion corroborates previous findings in terms of argument omission and Preferred Argument Structure (Du Bois 1987): preference of zero argument in the early stage, dominance of transitive verbs, frequent argument omission, theme-oriented arguments across all stages, and preference for one-argument sentences. In light of the findings, L2 teachers should include explicit instruction with authentic usage emphasizing the discourse-pragmatic nature of the Chinese information structure, which would be helpful to learners whose L1 does not allow argument omission.

In Chapter 2, "A corpus linguistics approach to the research and teaching of Chinese as a second language: The case of the *ba*-construction", Hang Du examines the production of *ba*-constructions in spoken and written corpora of native and non-native Mandarin speakers in terms of their frequency of occurrence and effect of study abroad. It is found that while there is a general underuse of *ba* in the non-native corpora, learners who studied abroad in China for one year did make progress in

their proficiency test scores and accuracy rate of *ba*-constructions. The results support 1) the use of corpus linguistics methods as powerful tools for analyzing learner language, and 2) the effect of study abroad. Effective use of native and non-native corpora is also suggested for the development of instructional materials. Learners should be encouraged to actively use corpora to find examples and counter-examples (e.g. contrast between *bu2yao4* and *bu4xiang3* ‘not want to’) to correct their own errors.

Chapter 3, entitled “Facilitating language learning: A generative perspective”, by Yen-Hui Audrey Li, discusses how generative linguistics can facilitate language teaching and learning. Breaking the myth that generative theory stresses minimal input by a set of abstract rules and constraints, the author offers useful examples along with insightful discussion to illustrate the usefulness of generative research in CTL. The paper begins by clarifying misconceptions about generative grammar. Instead of parametric clustering and instantaneous acquisition, current generative theory holds that L2 acquisition involves 1) perceived similarities between L2 and L1, and 2) reassembly of features subject to input-based evidence, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The input should include both text-based grammar and performance-based learning to enable students to both grasp the rules of the language and to apply and integrate them in learning. The author further advocates the use of flipped learning (<http://flippedlearning.org>), illustrating the ideas with time expressions and zero-argument sentences. At last, the author stresses the importance of distinction between linguistic constructions which require explicit teaching and those which require implicit learning. For example, linguistic research has shown that, unlike time expressions or relative clauses, which can be explicitly taught, the non-canonical object construction is more complex and should be learned implicitly. As center in the learning process, learners may benefit more by forming, testing, revising, and confirming hypotheses on their own with input of good quality and quantity.

Chapter 4, “An ERP study of the processing of Mandarin classifiers”, by Zhiying Qian and Susan Garnsey, examines Mandarin classifier-noun sequences with event-related brain potential (ERP) responses given by native Chinese speakers. Three tasks were used: classifier Match, Mismatch, and Missing. Analysis shows a significant difference between

the Match and Mismatch conditions, suggesting that the classifier-noun agreement is processed primarily semantically. An effect of classifier specificity is also noted, with General classifiers resulting in more uncertainty in the processing. In the Missing condition, learner response changes over time with increasing exposure. Pedagogical suggestions include the following: 1) Presentation of contrastive pairs of general vs. specific classifiers to learners, 2) teaching of the parallels between Mandarin and English usages in that classifiers in both languages are semantically based, and 3) emphasis on the need of classifiers before nouns. The study has presented important ERP findings about classifiers with rigid methodology. However, it would be more helpful to language teachers if systematic examples (e.g. contrasting pairs between specific and general classifiers) were provided for pedagogical purposes.

Chapter 5, entitled “Explicit, implicit and metalinguistic knowledge in L2 Chinese”, by Chiara Romagnoli, examines the correlation between metalinguistic knowledge and L2 Chinese proficiency of learners in an Italian university. According to the author, instruction in explicit structure is expected to have a greater effect on explicit knowledge and written proficiency. The results confirm previous findings. First, the explicit scores are significantly higher than the implicit scores. Second, the explicit scores and the written skills correlate highly; however, no significant difference is found between implicit scores and written or oral skills. In addition, *ba*- and *bei*-constructions and the particle *-le* are found to be more challenging to learners. Instructors, therefore, are advised to move from the grammar-translation method to usage-based instruction for students to practice communicative skills. In this paper, only grammatical structures are listed. However, the discussion would be more complete if examples were provided to illustrate the methodology and to provide useful reference materials for language teachers.

Chapter 6, “Metalinguistic awareness and self-repair in Chinese language learning”, by Liang Tao, also explores the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and language learning. The discussion focuses on the effectiveness of metalinguistic awareness in enhancing accuracy of learners’ repairs. The data came mainly from learners’ question-answer interactions. The errors are classified into chunking/collocation, tone production, L1 influence, and general problems (e.g. deictic, number-

related, nominal modification, and the Verb-*le* problems). All of these data demonstrate the subjects' ability to monitor and repair their trouble spots. The author suggests that teachers provide solid linguistic training with more difficult or randomized practices in chunking, word order, and grammatical patterns so as to enhance students' metalinguistic awareness and episodic memory. In short, the study involves a much less investigated area of Chinese L2 research despite the extensive literature on this subject in L1-related studies. It also provides concrete evidence of problematic structures for teachers' and learners' reference.

Chapter 7, "De-stressed words in Mandarin: Drawing parallel with English", authored by Hana Tříšková, discusses de-stressed words in Mandarin and their importance in CTL. The investigation focuses on monosyllabic function words with lexical tones (e.g. articles, personal pronouns, conjunctions), termed "cliticoids" by the author, which are highly frequent in spoken communication (Tao 2015). Chinese, being a tone language, has primarily two levels of stress: normal/full and neutral/reduced syllables. The author first reviews the prosodic features of Mandarin de-stressed words and compares them with English. The de-stressed function words are contrasted with their stressed version with examples and contextual information. Compared with the stabilized stress system in English, Mandarin reduced stress is better described as a tendency. However, it is palpable in everyday colloquial Mandarin. As these forms pose great challenges to L2 learners, instructors should teach the features and the pragmatic aspects of cliticoids in connected speech. To avoid fossilization, consistent corrective feedback on pronunciation errors should also be provided. This is an interesting and significant study in that it addresses the de-stress issue of a tone language, a topic that has been largely neglected in L2 Chinese pedagogy. Understanding what the unstressed forms are and how to implement them in CTL provide a new perspective in phonetic instruction in the language classroom.

Chapter 8, "Prosody and discourse functions of *ranhou* 然後: With implications for teaching Mandarin conjunctions at the discourse level", authored by Wei Wang, analyzes the functions of turn-initial *ranhou* and its prosodic features. In addition to the temporal use, three functions are identified along with examples: turn-constructural unit (TCU) extensions, turn continuation, and new turn initiation. These functions correlate

consistently with their prosodic features. *Ranhou* in a TCU extension has a shorter length and perfectly fits into the pitch contour of the preceding TCU. In a turn continuation context, there is no phonological reduction, and a longer duration is found. Its pitch also matches that of the prior turn. When initiating a new turn, in addition to having no sound reduction, *ranhou* has the longest duration and its beginning pitch is strikingly high, demonstrating an obvious pitch reset. The author then suggests methods and provides examples to implement the findings in teaching, including translation of the above functions into general terms for classroom use and step-by-step exercises. The exercises include 1) perception exercises with concrete examples presented aurally to illustrate the prosodic information, and 2) production exercise eliciting the use of *ranhou* with the functions and prosodies introduced. To sum up, this paper has presented an intriguing observation about the correlation between discourse and prosody. The practical methods proposed have also successfully demonstrated the teachability of discourse functions and prosody.

Chapter 9, entitled “Patterns of plural NP+*dou* (都) expressions in conversational discourse and their pedagogical implications”, by Haiping Wu and Honyin Tao, aims to apply discourse-based findings to the teaching of Plural NP+*dou*. Analysis shows that Plural NP+*dou* ranks highest among *dou*-expressions and that the (inter)subjective use accounts for the majority of its occurrence. The (inter)subject functions seem to form a pragmatic continuum of rapport, ranging from more affiliated uses (e.g. creating solidarity, backgrounding) to less affiliative ones (e.g. persuading, mitigating conflict). Regarding material design, the authors suggest that teachers proceed from the (inter)subjective use and present the *dou*-expressions according to their frequency order. Unmarked/affiliative forms of Plural NP+*dou* should be introduced before the marked/less affiliative use. A sample classroom activity is then provided by the authors to encourage the learners to discover the diverse functions of *dou* and to participate in interactive activities practicing its rapport-building functions. As for evaluation and assessment, the authors suggest specific procedures to incorporate the speaking activities proposed above. As in Chapter 8, this paper has provided useful patterns, teaching material design, and an evaluation method that can be directly

applied in the classroom for the teaching and learning of different uses of *dou*.

Chapter 10, “Prominence marking in second language Chinese tones”, is authored by Hang Zhang. Different from Chapter 7, which focuses on de-stressed words, this chapter discusses stressed words in sentences. Sentence stress in Chinese, expressed mainly by expanding pitch range, intensity, and duration of the focused syllable rather than by changing the general contour of a lexical tone, has caused great difficulty to learners whose mother tongues are non-tonal languages. Eight sentences each containing a narrow focus at a fixed position in an identical tone sequence (e.g. **he1 tang1* ‘drink-soup’) were tested on Japanese and English native speakers. The results show that both groups exhibit a preference for Tone 4 in a focused syllable. However, the English and Japanese speakers differed in the substitution tones, with the former preferring Tone 4 and the latter Tone 3. Pedagogical suggestions include training of learning to preserve lexical tone contours, use of materials containing foci at different prosodic positions, explicit teaching of how to express focal prominence, focused teaching of T2/T3 to English and T2/T4 syllables to Japanese speakers, and directing learners’ attention to the correct variants of T3.

The last chapter, “A multi-dimensional corpus study of mixed compounds in Chinese”, by Zheng-sheng Zhang, examines the stylistic variation of mixed compounds with two synonymous components—classical and non-classical (e.g. 購買 *gou4mai3* ‘to buy’). The study aims to explore whether the co-existence of the compound and each of its components as synonymous expressions is due to stylistic differences. Applying Biber’s (1988) multi-dimensional framework and Correspondence Analysis (Greenacre 1983), the analysis yields surprising results in two dimensions. First, the mixed compounds as a whole are less classical than their classical components but more classical than their non-classical components. Second, a mixed compound tends to be more literate than either of its component morphemes. The literateness of the mixed compound may be due to the association of di-syllabicity with literate style and contrastive parallelism favored in Chinese writing, which also characterizes literateness. The pedagogical benefit from the research is the possible visualization of stylistic differences of the compounds and the component morphemes. For teachers, a more complex picture of stylistic

differences than the written vs. non-written distinction can be offered to the students such as the important role played by mixed compounds in stylistic variation. There are twenty figures presented in the discussion. The elements and information presented in these figures, however, are not fully explained in terms of their relation with the classical/literate dimension. Chinese L2 instructors might find it difficult to apply the data directly in their teaching.

2. EVALUATION

Despite some of the limitations stated above, overall, this book is an outstanding contribution to the field of Chinese linguistics with works that endeavor to integrate Chinese linguistic theory and teaching, addressing in particular linguistic components/structures which are problematic to L2 learners and which have not been adequately presented and taught in traditional textbooks. The topics are diverse and informative, ranging from generative theory, prosodic analysis, neurolinguistics, stylistic variations, to corpus-based and usage-based analyses. All the papers have demonstrated with convincing arguments how linguistic research with different degrees of abstraction can actually be applied to CTL. The analyses offer valuable insights to aspects of Mandarin Chinese that deserve instructors' and learners' attention and provide useful data that can be used in the language classroom. With the increasing importance of the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second/foreign language, this is definitely a volume that should top the reading list of anyone interested in this line of inquiry.

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