Are all lexical-specific changes "lexical diffusion"? Diachronic change of Suzhou Chinese coda /ŋ/ in register-sensitive Differing Readings

OSU-Tsukuba Joint Linguistics Workshop, Columbus, Feb 13, 2019

Yuhong Zhu

• Overview

The Regularity Hypothesis
- Sound change is regular
- Sound change is conditioned by phonetics only

(Classical Lexical Diffusion)
- Sound change propagates gradually through the lexicon
- Other factors (e.g., frequency, syntactic category) play a role

Present Issue
- Suzhou Chinese shows a lexically-determined pronunciation alternation, “Differing Literary and Colloquial Readings” (文白異讀)
- Literary and Colloquial forms follow different courses of change

Research questions
- Is the Differing Readings an exception to the regularity principle? Is it a diffusional change?
- If not, what other factors are in play?

• Differing Literary and Colloquial Readings

- Gives same morpheme/character different pronunciations
- Colloquial: native lexical items, casual register
- Literary: loanwords, technical terms, formal register
- Not a case of polyphony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Suzhou</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>争議</td>
<td>n. dispute</td>
<td>[tsen]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquial</td>
<td>争</td>
<td>v. to quarrel</td>
<td>[tsa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>生物</td>
<td>n. biology</td>
<td>[san]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquial</td>
<td>生</td>
<td>n. life</td>
<td>[sa]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chao 1928, Wang 1955, Shen 2012)

• The Analysis — Phonetics-induced Change

Coarticulatory effects
- Coda tends to agree in place of articulation with preceding nuclei
  - *ŋŋ > an (/l/ is [-back])
  - *ŋŋ > on, *ŋŋ > ŋ /ŋ/, /ŋ/ are all [+back]

- Palatalized onsets palatalize ('front') following nuclei
  - *Cŋŋ > Cn
  - *Cŋŋ > C:ä

Misperception & Reconstruction
- Distorted phonetic signals misperceived & reconstructed in subsequent generations - *Vŋ > V
  - *ŋŋ > â: in Colloquial forms
  - *ŋŋ > ŋ: in Colloquial forms

Literary/Colloquial Split
- Only found in *Bŋ, *aŋ and *Bã; clearly conditioned by phonetic environments
- *Bŋ and *Bã pattern together
- Literary pronunciation appears to be lexically-determined, but should actually be treated as loanwords from Mandarin
- For the group *aŋ (爭)
  - *aŋ > â: in Colloquial forms
  - *aŋ > ŋ: in Literary forms
- For the group *Bñ/Bñ (爭, 孟)
  - A merger between *Bñ and *Bñ (‘Bñ > *Bñ) - *Bñ > B: in Colloquial forms
  - *aŋ (from Mandarin) > an in Literary forms only
- Literary/Colloquial distinction was lost in later generations (not enough vocabulary to keep a robust distinction?)

• The Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reconstruction</th>
<th>Mandarin Example</th>
<th>L-Old</th>
<th>L-Mid</th>
<th>L-Young</th>
<th>C-Old</th>
<th>C-Mid</th>
<th>C-Young</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*ŋŋ</td>
<td>爭</td>
<td>an</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bñ</td>
<td>議</td>
<td>Ban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Cñ</td>
<td>争</td>
<td>Cn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*aŋ</td>
<td>搞</td>
<td>an</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bñ</td>
<td>爭</td>
<td>Ban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Hñ</td>
<td>搞</td>
<td>Hñ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋŋ</td>
<td>搗</td>
<td>ŋŋ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Cñ</td>
<td>搗</td>
<td>Cñ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Onset is shown when relevant.
- C: any onset; B: labial onset; H: glottal onset
- L: literary; C: colloquial;
- Old: oldest generation; Mid: middle-aged generation; Young: youngest generation
- Some irrelevant changes omitted

• Conclusions & Limitations

- All sound change processes are phonetically conditioned and regular
- What appeared to be ‘lexical diffusion’ is actually due to language contact, and is also fully regular
- If Literary Readings were truly diffusional, we would expect diffusion/bleeding (more forms carrying [ŋ] in the lexicon) to overtake; the exact opposite happens in reality
- The constraints/rules operating on the language-internal (Colloquial) domains also apply to language-external (Literary) forms; nothing is ‘exceptional’ to the grammar