The Imposition of Cantonese on Mandarin in the City of Guangzhou

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While many research studies have described Cantonese-Mandarin contact and the languages' mutual influence in Guangdong Province, few of them delve into the linguistic mechanism that triggers Cantonese's material (e.g. words, pronunciations, and/or grammar) transfer to Mandarin. This paper will work to explain this mechanism in Van Coetsem's (1988) framework of "Borrowing and Imposition". The Cantonese-to-Mandarin transfer is a case of imposition, with Cantonese as the linguistically dominant language and Cantonese L1 speakers as the agent of the transfer. Examples both from previous studies and from multimedia materials are used to illustrate that the seemingly discrete phenomena at all lexical, phonological, and syntactic levels can be analyzed through the same imposition framework. The imposition of materials from Cantonese on Mandarin is caused by and compensates for the source language (Cantonese) speakers' lack of proficiency in Mandarin, the recipient language.

1. Background

Guangzhou, also called Canton City, is the capital of Guangdong Province (Canton), China. Cantonese is widely spoken in Guangdong Province, and the Guangzhou accent is regarded as representing standard Cantonese. According to Norman (2008), Cantonese was derived from Late Middle Chinese in the late Tang Dynasty, i.e. approximately the 9th century. From that point forward, Cantonese has been developing as a distinctive and independent Sinitic language and has been unintelligible to speakers of other Sinitic languages.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China's in 1949, Mandarin, another daughter language of Middle Chinese which is used in North China, has been assigned as the official language of the nation. The standard Mandarin is also called *Putonghua*, literally meaning "common speech". In spite of its administrative promotion, from the 1950s to the early 1980s, in Guangzhou, Mandarin was used merely in government and a few other formal circumstances, and Cantonese speakers' Mandarin proficiency was "extremely limited" (Zhang (2001)).

From mid-1980s on, however, due to the Reformation and Opening Policy and

several newly-established economic zones in Guangdong, laborers, technology experts, and intellectuals started to emigrate to Guangzhou and other Cantonese cities. The majority of them were Mandarin speakers. Although to some extent their dialects might be different from each other's, their speech is mutually-intelligible. For the rest of them whose L1 is not Mandarin, they also need to use Mandarin in almost every aspect of daily life to communicate with other immigrants and with local Cantonese speakers.

Some of the latest data show that, by 2008, the demographic balance between immigrants (5.89 million) and local people (7.73 million) was "nearly 1:1" (*Guangzhou Daily*, July 6, 2009). With the immigrant population boom, Mandarin gradually became a more prevalent language. Nowadays, the use of Mandarin can be observed almost everywhere in Guangzhou, from outlying factories and street-corner convenience stores, to central business districts and five-star hotels. Mandarin has been a *lingua franca* in Guangzhou, not only among the immigrants but between them and Cantonese speakers as well.

Meanwhile, Mandarin is required to be taught and used from elementary school to college. Considering the importance of learning Mandarin at a younger age for future social communication and better employment opportunities, parents prefer to send their children to kindergartens where Mandarin is spoken besides Cantonese. Both the need to communicate effectively with immigrants and the mandatory use of Mandarin in education facilitate the bilingualism of Guangzhou's citizens. As Zhang and Lu (2008) put it, "The use of Mandarin as a language in official/business/social-communication and the use of Cantonese as a language in domestic-communication have been established. Guangzhou citizens' bilingualism and the Guangzhou bilingual community have been fairly conspicuous." The large scale of bilingualism also intensifies the contact between Mandarin and Cantonese. While the rapid growth of immigrants triggers the frequent Mandarin-Cantonese contact within communities, the increase of bilinguals also causes the contact to happen in the mental process of first language acquisition.

2. Relevant previous studies and the framework of this paper

The contact between Mandarin and Cantonese has been explored in several papers: Zhang (2001) describes the use and prestige of Mandarin in Guangdong from a psycho-socio-economic point of view. His main point is that large numbers of immigrant laborers cause Mandarin to prevail in Guangdong, and yet the laborers' low social status reduces the prestige of the language.

Zhang and Lu (2007), with an ample corpus, describe mutual word contact among Guangzhou Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hong Kong Cantonese (another variety of Standard Cantonese). The authors focus on the mechanisms of word contact: reasons, means, types, and adaptation. However, no specific discussion on the classification of different types of word contact is included in the paper. All the types are simply referred to as "borrowing".

Cheng (1998) also takes into consideration Mandarin's impact on Cantonese in Guangzhou, although he primarily conducts a comparative study on the discrepancies in phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and lexical use among Cantonese dialects. He notices that Mandarin, as a politically dominant language and a *lingua franca* in business, has been able to function on almost equal footing with Cantonese in Guangzhou. It is the impact of Mandarin that leads to the above-mentioned discrepancies between Guangzhou Cantonese and Hong Kong Cantonese, the latter of which is far from being fully exposed to Mandarin.

Jin (2010) investigates the so-called "Guangzhou-Style Mandarin (Cantonese–Style Mandarin)", which is caused by "interference of Cantonese on Mandarin". She fails, however, to give a clear definition to the term "interference". Besides, she does not distinguish two different types of interference, namely, the interference of Cantonese on Mandarin and vice versa.

To the best of my knowledge, to date, no study has been conducted on Mandarin-Cantonese contact with a particular focus on the agents and/or directions of material transfer in the contact. In the Mandarin-Cantonese case, specifically, there are four different types of transfer: Mandarin to Cantonese with Cantonese L1 speakers as the agents, Cantonese to Mandarin with Cantonese L1 speakers as the agents, Mandarin to Cantonese with Mandarin L1 speakers as the agents, and Cantonese to Mandarin with Mandarin L1 speakers as the agents. These types of transfer represent different factors that may bring about different phenomena and different results of contact-induced changes, even though some of those changes may appear to be similar. Failing to notice the crucial distinction among the four possible types of transfer, the above-mentioned researchers do not fully discuss the mechanisms by which mutual Mandarin-Cantonese transfer happens on a large scale in Guangzhou.

Consequently, in this paper, I intend to apply the framework of "Borrowing and Imposition" (Van Coetsem (1988)) to the analysis of existing data on Cantonese, Mandarin, and their contact. The framework, as Winford (2005) concludes, is that "in all cases of crosslinguistic influence, there is a source or donor language (SL) and a recipient language (RL). The direction of transfer of material is always from the SL to the RL, and the agent of the transfer is either the RL speaker (RL agentivity) or the SL speaker (SL agentivity). In the former case, we have borrowing, in the latter, imposition."

In this paper in particular, Cantonese speakers are the agents of transfer and Cantonese is the linguistically dominant language. I will focus on Cantonese's imposition on Mandarin, which implies that the transfer is from Cantonese to Mandarin when Cantonese speakers use Mandarin with some noticeable features specific to Cantonese. To do this, I will provide examples both from previously published academic literature and from multi-media materials in each section of the subsequent analysis.

I also wish to clarify that, as in Van Coetsem's framework and as Winford (2005) has pointed out, the term "transfer" in this paper is used in a neutral sense, referring to "any

kind of crosslinguistic influence" and any kind of shift of linguistic features.
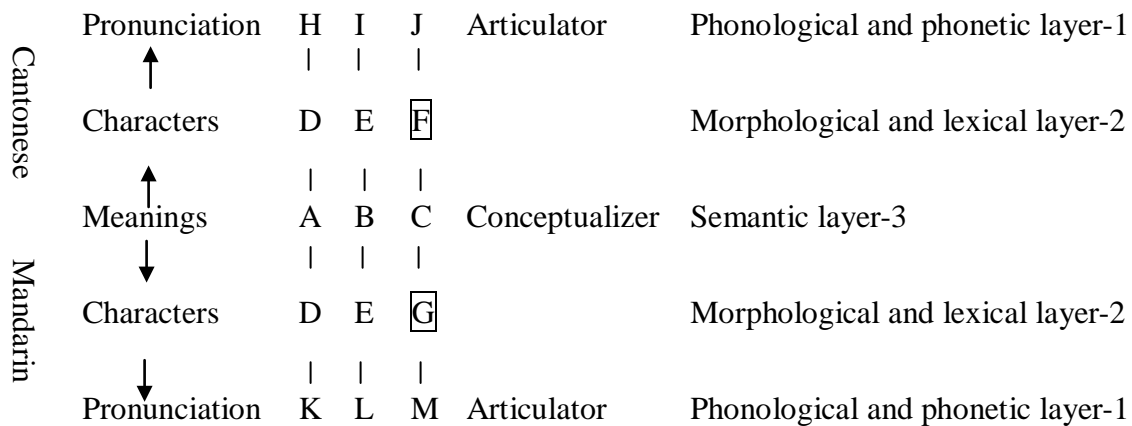
3. Imposition

Owing to the vast population of non-Cantonese speaking immigrants in Guangzhou, local residents need to speak Mandarin in many circumstances. Although the frequency with which they use Mandarin may vary according to their occupations and the communities where they live in, most of the Cantonese speakers, to various degrees, need to communicate with the immigrants in Mandarin. In this process, the locals' lack of proficiency in Mandarin needs to be compensated by imposing some features in Cantonese on Mandarin. Therefore, the direction of this kind of transfer is from Cantonese (SL) to Mandarin (RL), with Cantonese L1 speakers as the agents. In other words, the imposition is via SL agentivity.

There are three kinds of notable Cantonese-to-Mandarin impositions: lexical imposition, phonological imposition, and grammatical imposition. I will examine them in sequence.

3.1 Lexical imposition

When speaking Mandarin, Cantonese speakers often, to a greater or lesser degree, impose words from their L1 on their L2. The result is that, in their speech, while most words are from Mandarin, some Cantonese words will be inserted into an otherwise Mandarin sentence. These Cantonese words, however, are pronounced in Mandarin. To make this clear, the mechanism in which the sounds of Cantonese and Mandarin are produced needs to be illustrated, as shown in the diagram below.
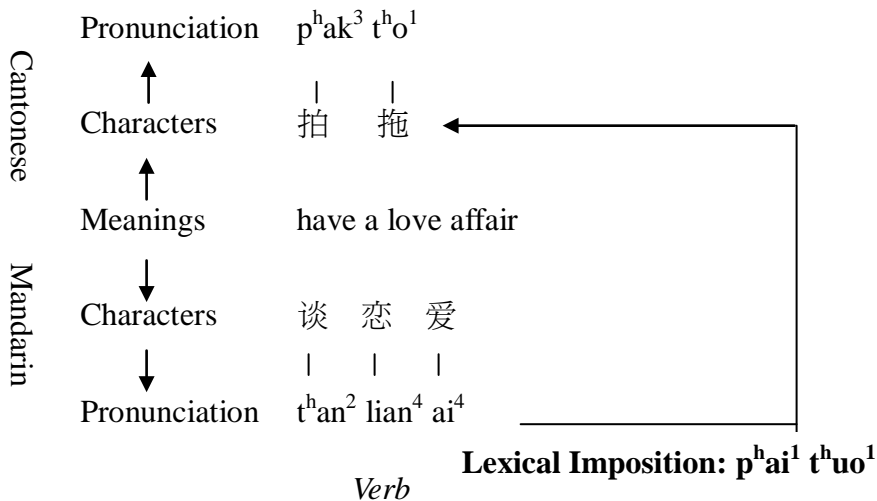
Pronunciation	H	I	J	Articulator	Phonological and phonetic layer-1
Characters	D	E	F		Morphological and lexical layer-2
Meanings	A	B	C	Conceptualizer	Semantic layer-3
Characters	D	E	G		Morphological and lexical layer-2
Pronunciation	K	L	M	Articulator	Phonological and phonetic layer-1

(Cantonese for upper rows; Mandarin for lower rows)

A simplified model of Cantonese/Mandarin meaning-writing-sound relationship

It is critical to know that, as layers 2 and 4 show, because Cantonese and Mandarin are based on the same writing system and share the same ancestor (Middle Chinese), the

two cognates also share a huge part of their morphological strategies, as well as lexicons (e.g. D and E in both languages are of the same written forms and referring to the same meaning A). Take the word D for instance, while the written forms in both Cantonese and Mandarin are the same, both languages have their own way of pronouncing it (H and K, respectively), according to their particular phonological systems. However, discrepancies[1] exist. For example, words F and G both refer to concept C, yet they are formed by different morphemes. With regard to the written forms, F and G use different characters. The corresponding pronunciation, needless to say, is not the same.

Based on the diagram, the lexical imposition of Cantonese on Mandarin can be explained as follows: To express the meaning or concept C, a Cantonese speaker pronounces the Cantonese word F in the method M. In other words, he or she will literally "read" the characters that construct the Cantonese word F using the Mandarin pronunciation. Despite its Mandarin pronunciation, F is still regarded as a Cantonese word. When the speaker brings it into his or her Mandarin speech, the word F is imposed on the Mandarin lexicon.
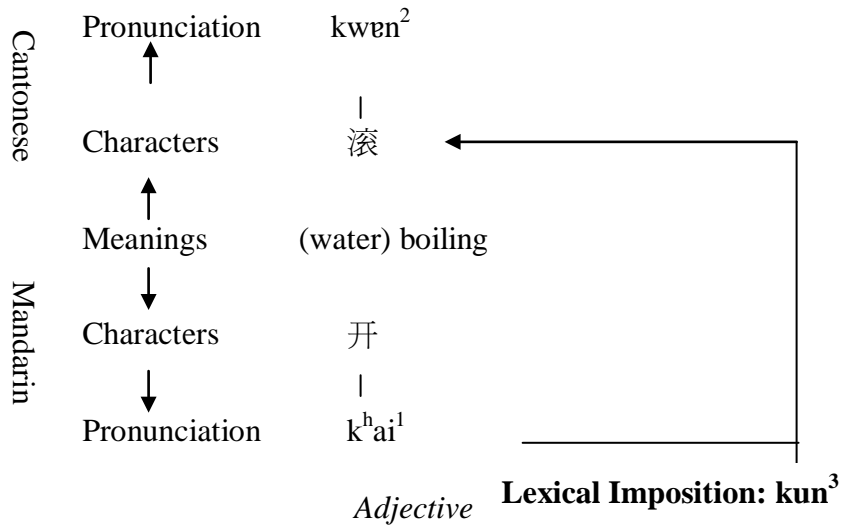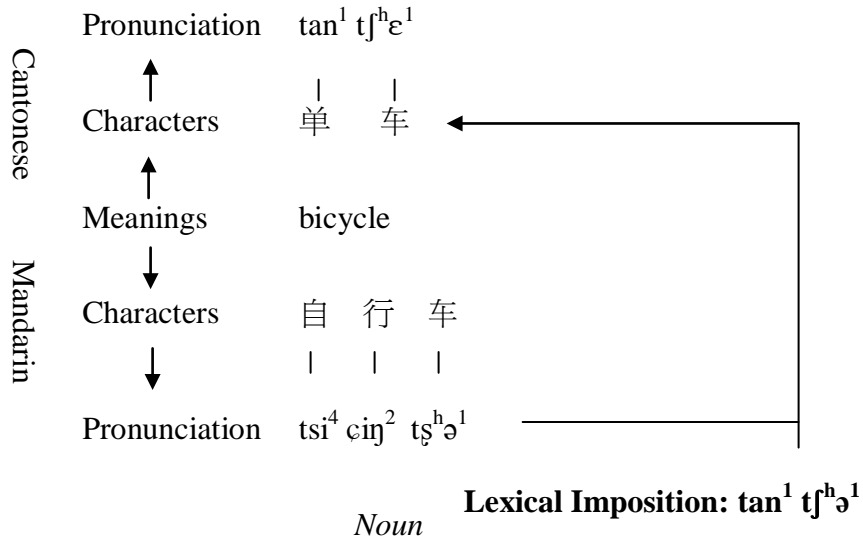
In the light of the mechanism, one can find many examples of this kind of lexical imposition. To name four of them (a verb, a noun, an adjective, and a measure word)[2]:

Cantonese

Pronunciation	pʰak³ tʰo¹
Characters	拍　拖
Meanings	have a love affair

Mandarin

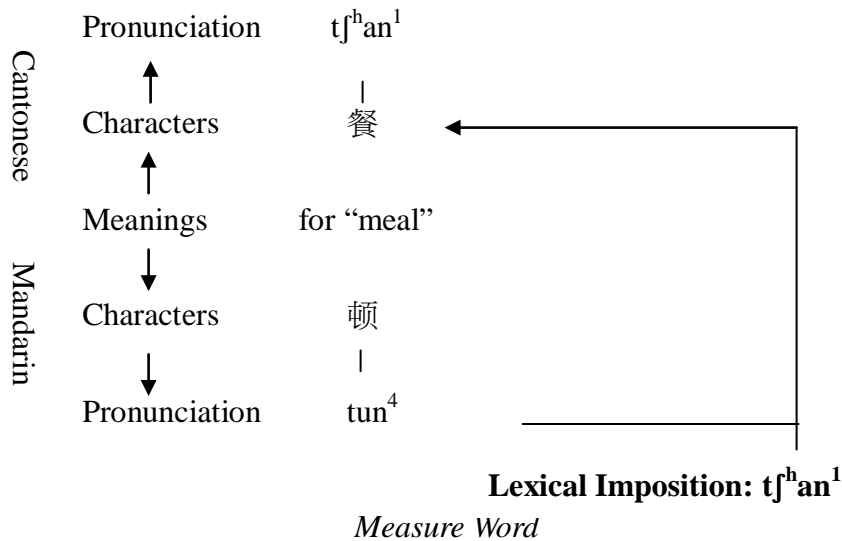| Characters | 谈　恋　爱 |
| Pronunciation | tʰan² lian⁴ ai⁴ |

Lexical Imposition: pʰai¹ tʰuo¹

Verb

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[1] These discrepancies may be caused both by language evolution and/or by the languages' respective historical contact with adjacent languages, e.g. Mandarin vs. Altaic or Tungus Languages, and Cantonese vs. Hmong-Mien or Kra-Dai languages. This paper will not discuss such historical contacts.

[2] The numbers following syllables mark the following tones: for Cantonese, 1-[55], 2-[35], 3-[33], 4-[21], 5-[13], 6-[22]; for Mandarin, 1-[55], 2-[35], 3-[214], 4-[51].
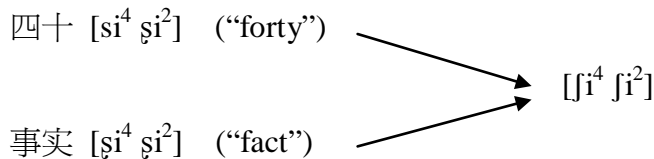
Cantonese

Pronunciation tan^1 $tʃʰɛ^1$

Characters   单   车

Meanings   bicycle

Mandarin

Characters   自   行   车

Pronunciation tsi^4 $ɕiŋ^2$ $tʂʰə^1$

Noun   **Lexical Imposition: tan^1 $tʃʰə^1$**

Cantonese

Pronunciation $kwɐn^2$

Characters   滚

Meanings   (water) boiling

Mandarin

Characters   开

Pronunciation $kʰai^1$

Adjective   **Lexical Imposition: kun^3**

Cantonese

| Pronunciation | tʃʰan^1 |

餐

Characters

Meanings   for "meal"

Mandarin

Characters   頓

| Pronunciation | tun^4 |

Lexical Imposition: tʃʰan^1

Measure Word

To sum up, in speaking Mandarin, Cantonese speakers usually say [pʰai^1 tʰuo^1] to express "have a love affair", [tan^1 tʃʰə^1] to express "bicycle", [kun^3] to express "(a liquid is) boiling", and [tʃʰan^1] to express "a measure word of meal". This method of imposing Cantonese words on Mandarin speech is fairly productive and can be found in many other cases in Cantonese L1 speakers' use of Mandarin.

3.2 Phonological imposition

Compared to lexical imposition, the mechanism of Cantonese phonological imposition on Mandarin is simpler, since the writing system does not play any role here. When Cantonese speakers pronounce a sound in Mandarin that does not exist in their L1, they often try to match the sound with its phonetically closest Cantonese counterpart. The most prominent phenomenon is that many Cantonese speakers cannot correctly distinguish the two sets of consonants in standard Mandarin [ts/tsʰ/s] and [tʂ/tʂʰ/ʂ].

Instead, Cantonese has a set of post-alveolar consonants, [tʃ/tʃʰ/ʃ], which is not found in Mandarin. Therefore, Cantonese speakers tend to impose the post-alveolar consonants on their Mandarin speech to replace the other two sets of consonants. The mechanism is illustrated in the following diagram.

Mandarin Dental		Cantonese Post-Alveolar		Mandarin Retroflex
ts	←	tʃ	→	tʂ
tsʰ	←	tʃʰ	→	tʂʰ
s	←	ʃ	→	ʂ
	Imposition		Imposition	

For instance, many Cantonese speakers have trouble in correctly pronouncing two particular words in Mandarin: 四十 [si⁴ ʂi²] ("forty") and 事实 [ʂi⁴ ʂi²] ("fact"). They will pronounce both as [ʃi⁴ ʃi²]. By changing both dental and retroflex fricatives into their post-alveolar counterparts, the two words that are distinguishable in Mandarin now sound exactly the same in Cantonese speakers' Mandarin speech.

四十 [si⁴ ʂi²]　("forty")

事实 [ʂi⁴ ʂi²]　("fact")

[ʃi⁴ ʃi²]

I also conducted a random investigation of some television programs. I watched a talk show on the Phoenix Chinese Channel[3]. The program presenter is a well-known Cantonese writer who can speak fluent Mandarin. Yet even for him who has had a high proficiency in Mandarin, he cannot differentiate [ts/tsʰ/s] and [tʂ/tʂʰ/ʂ] in his speech either. As many other Cantonese speakers do, he pronounces both as [tʃ/tʃʰ/ʃ].

In addition, it is noteworthy that the two types of imposition can work together. For example, in diagram (3), when Cantonese speakers want to express the concept "bicycle", it takes two steps for them to impose Cantonese features on Mandarin. First, as I mentioned, they pronounce the Cantonese word 单车 in Mandarin, which is [tan¹ tʂʰə¹]. Then, since in their L1 there is no retroflex sound, they choose the most similar consonant— [tʃʰ]—to replace [tʂʰə¹]. The ultimate lexical imposition, therefore, is [tan¹

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3 *Eight-Minute Book Review ("开卷八分钟")*. November 30th, 2010. The Phoenix Television. Station is located in Hong Kong, and its Chinese Channel broadcasts in Mandarin.

tʃʰə¹]. The same process is also at work in the pronunciation of the measure word 餐, where [tʃʰan¹] again replaces [tsʰan¹], the Mandarin pronunciation of this character.

3.3 Grammatical imposition

Since Cantonese grammar is very similar to Mandarin grammar; one can hardly find any radical distinctions that show grammatical imposition most clearly (for example, basic word orders SVO vs. SOV, or analytic features vs. synthetic features). Yet there are still some evidence concerning word order that sheds light on Cantonese grammatical imposition on Mandarin. To name a few instances of this:

First, while in Mandarin some adverbs precede verbs, in Cantonese their counterparts usually follow verbs. When a Cantonese speaker who lacks proficiency in Mandarin tries to construct a Mandarin sentence, it is highly possible that she or he will put this kind of adverb after the verb. An example is the use of the temporal adverb 先 [ʃin1], "first(ly)". Jin (2010) lists its uses in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Cantonese-style Mandarin (hereafter CsM), which is spoken by Cantonese L1 speakers:

Cantonese 我 行 **先** [ŋɔ⁵ haŋ⁴ ʃin¹]

        I go **first**

Mandarin 我 **先** 走 [wɔ³ ɕian¹ dzou³]

        I **first** go

CsM 我 走 **先** [wɔ³ dʒou³ ɕian¹]

        I go **first**

Literally   *"I will go first"*

Apparently, the CsM phrase takes all its words from Mandarin and yet keeps the Cantonese word order "S+VP+(temporal)PP".

The use of the quantitative adverb 多 [tɔ¹] ("more") serves as another example:

(8) Cantonese 食 **多** 一 碗 饭 [ʃɛk⁶ tɔ¹ jɐk¹ wun² fan⁶]

        eat **more** one (MW) bowl rice

     Mandarin **多** 吃 一 碗 饭 [tuo¹ tʂʰiˑ¹ ji⁴ wan³ fan⁴]

        more eat one (MW) bowl rice

CsM   吃 **多** 一   碗   饭   [tʃʰi¹ tuo¹ ji⁴ wan³ fan⁴]

          eat **more** one   (MW) bowl   rice

Literally   *"eat another bowl of rice"*

Above, CsM also keeps the Cantonese word order "VP+(quantitative)PP+O".

Both examples demonstrate how Cantonese, with Cantonese L1 speakers as the agents, imposes the identifiable Cantonese structure "(S+)VP+(temporal/quantitative)PP (+O)" on Mandarin, while almost all the Cantonese phonological and morphological features have changed into their Mandarin counterparts.

Also, grammatical imposition can be detected via the sequence of double objects in a particular sentence. In Cantonese, the usual order is "VP+DO+IO". In Mandarin, it is "VP+IO+DO". The order of CsM, which Jin (2010) also explains, is described by the following diagram.

Cantonese   俾   本   **书 我**   [pei² pun² ʃy¹ ŋɔ⁵]

          give (one) (MW of books)   **book**   **me**

Mandarin   给 **我** 一   本   书   [kei³ wɔ³ ji⁴ pen³ ʂu¹]

          give   **me** /one   (MW of books)   **book**

CsM   给   ∅   本   **书 我**   [kei³ pen³ ʃu¹ wɔ³]

          give   (one) (MW of books)   **book**   **me**

Literally   *"give me a book"*

In this example, CsM grammar is imposed from Cantonese on Mandarin in two senses: first, as in the two prior instances, CsM's structure is basically Cantonese. Second, as in Cantonese, the numeral "one" preceding a measure word is omitted, which is not allowed in Mandarin. Obviously, more than one kind of grammatical imposition can be exerted on Mandarin at the same time.

4. Conclusion

Because of the large-scale immigration of Non-Cantonese speakers to Guangzhou since mid 1980's, Mandarin has been flourishing there over the past decades, and is now the second *lingua franca* in Guangzhou. The frequent, extensive contact between Cantonese and Mandarin in Guangzhou, with the former as the linguistically dominant language and the latter as the politically dominant one, facilitates a mutual transfer between the two languages.

This paper has focused on transfers from Cantonese to Mandarin, which impose

Cantonese's features onto Mandarin. The transfer is conducted by Cantonese speakers and thus it takes place via SL agentivity. In other words, when Cantonese L1 speakers use Mandarin, they create an imposition on Mandarin. Evidence of this imposition can be found in different aspects of Cantonese L1 speakers' Mandarin speech: in lexicon, phonology, and grammar. This can be represented in a single sentence "give me a bicycle", as shown in the last example below.

Cantonese	俾		部	<u>单车</u>	我	[pei² pəu⁶ tan¹ tʃʰɛ¹ ŋɔ⁵]
	give	(one)(MW of bicycle)		**bicycle**	**me**	
Mandarin	给	我	一	辆	<u>自行车</u>	[kei³ wɔ³ ji⁴ liaŋ³ tsi⁴ ɕiŋ² **tʂʰə¹**]
	give	**me**	one	(MW of bicycle)	**bicycle**	
CsM	给	∅	部	<u>单车</u>	我	[kei³ pu⁴ tan¹ **tʃʰəˀ** wɔ³]
	give	(one)	(MW of bicycle)	**bicycle**	**me**	
Literally	*"give me a bicycle"*					

Again, all three kinds of imposition can occur simultaneously in Cantonese-style Mandarin on different layers. On the lexical layer, the Cantonese noun for "bicycle" and its measure word are kept in the L2 Mandarin speech, even though they are pronounced in a Mandarin way. On the phonological layer, [tʂʰ] is replaced by [tʃʰ]. On the grammatical layer, likewise, the Cantonese speakers not only impose their L1 word order "VP+DO+IO" into the Mandarin speech while Mandarin L1 speakers will instead use "VP+IO+DO", but also omit the numeral "one" as it is sometimes permitted in Cantonese. In short, it is imposition that creates the so-called Cantonese-style Mandarin.

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