

Tone group reconstruction in iGeneration Taiwanese

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- (1) $[[k\ddot{u}a\ kin]_{AdvP} [khui\ meng]_{VP}]_{VP}$ 'to open the door quickly'
quickly open door
3 53 55 13 base tones
a. (5 55 33 13) ϕ g-Taiwanese, i-Taiwanese
b. (5 53) ϕ (33 13) ϕ i-Taiwanese

- (2) $[[siek\ sai]_{VP} [[ping\ iu]_{NP}]_{VP}]_{VP}$ 'to get acquainted with friends'
acquaint friend
5 33 13 53 base tones
a. (3 21 33 53) ϕ g-Taiwanese, i-Taiwanese
b. (3 33) ϕ (33 53) ϕ i-Taiwanese

- (3) $[tsit\ [pue]_{CL} [tsui]_{N}]_{CLP}$ 'a cup of water'
one cup water
5 55 53 base tones
a. (3 33 53) ϕ g-Taiwanese, i-Taiwanese
b. (3 55) ϕ (53) ϕ i-Taiwanese

- (4) $[tsit\ [tua\ pue]_{CL} [tsui]_{N}]_{CLP}$ 'a big cup of water'
one big cup water
5 33 55 53 base tones
a. (3 21 33 53) ϕ g-Taiwanese
b. (3 21 55) ϕ (53) ϕ i-Taiwanese

Introduction

The paper is aimed to investigate the reconstruction of tone group in iGeneration Taiwanese, hereafter i-Taiwanese. The iGeneration is loosely referred to people born between 1995 and 2005 (Wallop 2014, Blad 2016, White 2016, among others), also known as Generation Z, Post-Millennials, or Homeland Generation, who grew up with an iPhone (or a smartphone) in hand. The phonological behavior of Taiwanese iGeneration (T-iGen) is worth exploring for three reasons. First, T-iGens spend a great deal of time using their smartphones for communication and pleasure, but lack of face-to-face social contact. Second, the language of T-iGens is often a mixture of Taiwanese and Mandarin in social environments. Third, T-iGens, though understanding Taiwanese, frequently respond in Mandarin, even at home.

Tonal Basics

There are seven base tones in the commonly known 'general Taiwanese' (as termed in Ang 2003), which refers to the accent spoken by the majority of population in Taiwan, hereafter g-Taiwanese. The tone inventory includes 55, 33, 21, 53, 13, 3 and 5. All the tones surface with their sandhi forms in non-domain-final positions respectively.

Tone Group Reconstruction

It has been observed in several works (Cheng 1968, Chen 1987, 2000, Hsiao 1991, Hsu 1994, among others) that the tone group for Southern Min dialects has direct or indirect access to syntactic phrases. Cheng (1968) suggested that Taiwanese tone sandhi is conditioned by NP, VP, S, etc., in which only the rightmost tone retains its base form, while all the preceding tones are changed to their sandhi forms. Drawing on evidence from Xiamen, Chen (1987) posits a cross-categorical generalization that the tone group is marked at the right edge of a non-adjunct XP, but not of an adjunct XP. Selkirk (1986) proposes a set of end-based parameters which mark the break of a phonological phrase (ϕ) at the right or left edge of a syntactic XP or X^{head} . Hsiao (1991, 1995, 2000) and Chen (2000) thus consider the relevant tone group a ϕ .

In the present study, there are at least three patterns that are different from tone sandhi in g-Taiwanese. First, the tone sandhi may be blocked by an adjunct XP, as in (1b). The segmental transcription in the following discussions combines phonetic alphabets and spelling for readers' convenience of pronunciation. In terms of g-Taiwanese, the entire VP in (1) forms a single ϕ , where only the rightmost syllable *meng* 'door' retains its base tone while the preceding syllables surface with their tones, whereby (1a) is derived as the exclusive reading. In i-Taiwanese, however, both (1a) and (1b) are acceptable readings. In (1b) the adverbial phrase (AdvP) may alternatively block tone sandhi and allow *kin* 'quickly' to preserve its base tone. Second, a ϕ -break may be found after a head verb, as in (2b). In (2b), the verb *siek sai* 'to get acquainted' forms a ϕ itself, while the NP *ping iu* 'friend' forms another. Finally, the length of a ϕ (or a tone sandhi domain) tends to be restricted within three syllables. Compare (3) and (4). The i-Taiwanese data show that 12 out of 20 trisyllabic constructions like (3) form a single ϕ , as in (3a), found in 60% of the data, while still 8 out of 20 are parsed into two ϕ 's, as in (3b), found in 40% of the data. On the other hand, 17 out of 20 tetrasyllabic constructions like (4) are parsed into two ϕ 's, as in (4b), found in 85% of the data; the trisyllabic string *tsit tua pue* 'a big cup of' forms a ϕ , where base tone of *pue* 'cup' remains unchanged.

Closing Remarks

In general, tone groups in i-Taiwanese are restructured into smaller domains. T-iGens do not speak tetrasyllabic or longer Taiwanese phrases or sentences often, they tend to break a string into disyllabic and/or trisyllabic fragments and match them with smaller syntactic or prosodic junctures. The tone group reconstruction indicates an interface between syntax and phonology, and a relationship between tone and rhythm.