

## ВАРИАТИВНОСТЬ И ВАРИАЦИЯ ТОНА КИТАЙСКИХ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВЫХ ЕДИНИЦ

В данной статье рассматриваются заданные тоны четырех единиц китайского языка:  $\text{上 shang}$  ‘верх’,  $\text{下 xia}$  ‘низ’,  $\text{前 qian}$  ‘спереди’ и  $\text{后 hou}$  ‘сзади’, вариативность и вариации этих тонов. Установлено, что с помощью нейтрального тона актуализируется пространственная семантика исследуемых единиц китайского языка. Изучение вариативности и вариаций тона данных пространственных языковых единиц открывает новые области для дальнейших исследований пространства в других языках.

*Ключевые слова:* языковые единицы, пространственная семантика, тон, вариативность и вариация тона.

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### THE TONE VARIABILITY AND VARIATION OF CHINESE SPATIAL LANGUAGE UNITS

This article deals with designated tones of 4 language units in Chinese  $\text{上 shang}$  ‘up’,  $\text{下 xia}$  ‘down’,  $\text{前 qian}$  ‘front’ and  $\text{后 hou}$  ‘behind’, variability and variation of these tones. It has been established that the neutral tone allows to convey spatial semantics in the analyzed Chinese units. Research on the tone variability and variation of these spatial language units offers new study spheres to the further research of space in other languages.

*Key words:* language units, spatial semantics, tones, tone variability and variation

Chinese language is a tone language. In Chinese language exists 4 tones, they are level tone, rising tone, falling-rising tone and falling tone; and they can be also called the first, second, third and fourth tone and instead with the marks as “ˊ”, “ˊˊ”, “ˋ”, and “ˋˋ”. Except for these four tones, there is a kind of special tone named **neutral tone** with the mark “0” in Chinese language system. It is a special tone variability or variation phenomenon in Chinese phonetics, which has appeared in many dialects and Mandarins throughout the country [1, c. 230-231]. The neutral tone is generally not treated as a tone because it has no fixed tone mark like the four tone marks appeared in the Pinyin scheme (also as the pronunciations of Chinese pictograph), but the Chinese linguists through the research of Chinese phonetics and phonology, they use “0” as a mark to represent the neutral tone in the Chinese Pinyin scheme.

In this article, it mainly deals with the tone variability or variation of the 4 most frequently used Chinese language units with spatial meanings. They are Chinese language units  $\text{上 shang}$ , ‘on, over, up, top, above, upward, upper, summit.....’,  $\text{下 xia}$ , ‘Under, down, bottom, downward, underneath, beneath, below, lower’,  $\text{前 qian}$ , ‘front, ago, before, ahead, frontward, preceding, former, go forward’ and  $\text{后 hou}$ , ‘after, behind, back, rear, later, afterwards’. Because the tone variability or variation decided these language units express the spatial meaning or not, it is necessary to explore the relationships between the tone and the spatial semantics of these language units. Language unit  $\text{上 shang}$  can be usually read as “shǎng” and “shàng” in Chinese language. While language unit  $\text{下 xia}$  can be usu-

ally read as “xià”, 前 *qian* in most of time is read as “qián” and 后 *hou* is frequently read as “hòu”. The tones of these four language units can be reflected and distributed in the table 1.

Table 1. Chinese language units and their tones distribution

Chinese language units	level tone	rising tone	falling-rising tone	falling tone	neutral tone
	-	ˊ	ˇ	ˋ	0
上 <i>shang</i>	-	-	+	+	+
下 <i>xia</i>	-	-	-	+	+
前 <i>qian</i>	-	+	-	-	+
后 <i>hou</i>	-	-	-	+	+

From the above mentioned table, it shows that 上 *shang* takes up the first place with the most tones, and the rest of the language units are pronounce with two tones. 上 *shang* in Chinese language in most of time pronounced as “shàng” with the falling tone, while in only one situation is read as falling-rising tone is that in the phrase “上声 shǎngshēng ‘the term of the falling-rising tone’(also called the third tone in modern Chinese language)”, for instance, in the examples (1) and (2) [2]show the tones of language unit 上 *shang*.

(1) 他的目光停留在她手指上的钻戒上 [2]。 *Tā de mù guāng tíng liú zài tā shǒu zhǐ shàng de zuán jiè shàng.* / (1a) His eyes lingered **on** the diamond ring **on** her finger.

(2) 上声，汉语词汇，指普通话的第3声 [2]。 *Shǎng shēng, hàn yǔ cí huì, zhǐ pǔ tōng huà de dì sān shēng.* / (2a) Shǎng shēng, a chinese phrase, it refers to the **falling-rising tone** of Chinese Mandarin.

In the example 1, 上 *shang* conveys the spatial meaning, while in the example 2 shows a term without spatial meaning. Therefore, when 上 *shang* pronounced as the falling tone, it could express the spatial meaning.

The other three language units 下 *xia*, 前 *qian* and 后 *hou* can be usually read as falling tone “xià”, rising tone “qián” and falling tone “hòu”. When these four language units are read as their most frequently pronounced tones, they can always express spatial meanings, such as in the following examples.

(3) 大雨倾盆而下 [2]。 *Dà yǔ qīng pén ér xià.* / (3a) The rain was pouring **down**.

(4) 她在炉火前打起盹儿来 [2]。 *Tā zài lú huǒ qián dǎ qǐ dǔn er lái.* / (4a) She dozed off in **front** of the fire.

(5) 我把其中一个垫子放在了他脑后 [2]。 *Wǒ bǎ qí zhōng yī gè diàn zi fàng zài le tā nǎo hòu.* / (5a) I put one of the cushions **behind** his head.

However, from table 1, it also shows that 上 *shang*, 下 *xia*, 前 *qian* and 后 *hou* can be also pronounced as the neutral tone of “shang”, “xia”, “qian” and “hou” are

lack of tone marks in the pronunciation of these four language units, while these neutral tones must be pronounced very softly and shortly at the end of a phrase. The pronunciation sounds like the falling tone, but it is different from it; because in the speech sequence, many syllables often lose their original tone and read as a light and short tone. It is a special tone variability or variation of the fourth tone, and physically the neutral tone part shows that the length of the sound becomes shorter and the intensity of the sound becomes weaker [4, c. 32–37].

There are no certain systematic means to judge the neutral tones in the Chinese language, but some practical ways for recognizing the neutral tones studied. The pronunciation of language unit 上 *shang* is pronounced as neutral tone when it is used as **a noun of locality**, used as **some directional verbs**, and used as **an affix at the end of a word**. The above mentioned three situations of the neutral tone of 上 *shang*, 下 *xia*, 前 *qian* and 后 *hou* can be proved as phonetic variability and variations in the following examples.

When 上 *shang*, 下 *xia*, 前 *qian* and 后 *hou* with other nouns are used as a noun of locality, they can not only be pronounced as neutral tone in the sentence, but also express the spatial meanings, such as in the following examples (6) to (9).

(6) 房间里的墙上挂了一幅画 [5]。 *Fángjiān lǐ dē qiánɡshang guà le yī fú huà*. / (6a) There is one picture hanging on the wall.

(7) 在古桥下有一条小河。 *Zài gǔqiáo xià yǒu yī tiáo xiǎo hé*. / (7a) There is a river **under** the old bridge.

(8) 她在客栈前的水泵旁洗了洗脸 [2]。 *Tā zài kèzhàn qián de shuǐ bèng páng xǐ le xiǎn liǎn*. / (8a) She washed her face at the pump **in front of the inn**.

(9) 他在桌子后的缝隙中找到了钥匙。 *Tā zài zhuozi hou de fèng xì zhōng zhǎo dào le yào shi*. / (9a) He found the key in the gap **behind the desk**.

At the same time, 上 *shang*, 下 *xia*, 前 *qian* and 后 *hou* are used as a directional verb to show the moving tendency of actions, they also can be read as neutral tone and have the same spatial meanings in the following example (10) to (13).

(10) 请把院子的大门关上 [5]。 *Qǐng bǎ yuànzi dē dà mén guānshang*. / (10a) Please **close** the door of the yard.

(11) 小船突突地沿江而下。 *Xiǎo chuán tū tū de yán jiāng ér xià*. / (11a) The boat chugged **down the river** [3].

(12) 汽车突然向前冲去。 *Qì chē tū rán xiàngqián chòng qù*. / (12a) The car leaped **forward**.

(13) 警察命令人群往后退。 *Jǐng chá mìng lìng rén qún wǎnghou tuì*. / (13a) The police ordered the crowd to **stand back**.

On the contrary, although when these four language units are used as an affix at the end of a word or phrase in Chinese, they can also pronounced as the neutral tone, and they could not convey the spatial meaning. They happen to be the phrases or collocations without spatial semantics, and they show the time order or some oral expressions. For instance, in the example (14) - (17) 上 *shang* is followed with the phrase as an affix to compose a new phrase also pronounce as neutral tone but reveal non-spatial semantics.

(14) **实际上**，他是个好人 [5]。 *Shíjìshang, tā shì gè hǎorén.* / (14a) In fact, he is a good man.

(15) **等一下**—我去拿外套 [2]。 *Děng yī xià — wǒ qù ná wài tào.* / (15a) **Hang on** a minute—I'll just get my coat.

(16) **考试前**，我总是紧张得发抖 [2]。 *Kǎo shì qián, wǒ zǒng shì jǐn zhāng de fā dǒu.* / (16a) I always get the shakes **before** exams.

(17) **午餐后**，我和伊丽莎白洗了碗 [2]。 *Wǔ cān hòu, wǒ hé Ān lì sà bái wǔ xǐ le wǎn.* / (17a) **After lunch** Elizabeth and I did the dishes.

From the above examples about the neutral tone could see that it is a kind of special phonetic variability or variation of the language unit *上 shang*, *下 xia*, *前 qian* and *后 hou*. They not only express the spatial semantics with neutral tones, but also provide a certain reference for the further study of various spatial language units in Chinese in the future. Furthermore, it is also possible to explore comparative and contrastive studies of the spatial relationships and unique Chinese language culture reflected by them and other spatial vocabularies in different languages.

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