

Left dominant or right dominant? Problematic sandhi types in Jinshan

1 Abstract

The notion of dominance plays an important role in typologizing the tone sandhi behavior in Sinitic languages. For example, left-dominant sandhi is said to preserve the tone of the word-initial syllable while the non-initial syllables undergo sandhi. In contrast, right-dominant sandhi systems are said to preserve the final syllable's tone, while it is the non-final syllables that undergo sandhi (Ballard, 1984; Yue-Hashimoto, 1987; Zhang, 2007).

The aim of our paper is to examine the diagnostic criteria for dominance in greater depth using citation tone and sandhi data from the Chinese northern Wu dialect of Jinshan (Rose & Yang, 2022). We show some of the problems in applying the concept to Jinshan tone sandhi and argue that the current criteria for deciding the dominance of tone sandhi require refinement.

According to Qian (1992), Jinshan tone sandhi is much more complex than its immediate neighbor Shanghai, which is often cited as a canonical left-dominant variety. We present an auditory and acoustic description of Jinshan disyllabic tone sandhi, based on mean data from three speakers, which shows that Jinshan appears to have both left- and right-dominant sandhi for lexical items. In particular, we show that, unlike the typical left-dominant pattern of urban Shanghai, the tonal shape of Jinshan disyllabic words cannot always be related to the tone of either of the word's constituent syllables (cf. Shen & Rose (2016)).

Figure 1 exemplifies the kind of acoustic data we adduce, and the kind of phonological observations we make. It is of disyllabic Jinshan words with underlying high short [4] tone on the word-initial syllable, and two of the seven tones - high falling [51] and low rise-fall [341] - on the word-final syllable. The figure shows that (1) the tones on the word-final syllable are preserved, and (2) the word-initial short tones undergo sandhi change from short high [4] to short low [2] pitch (indicated by the arrow). As both preservation and sandhi change are accepted dominance criteria, one must identify these as examples of right dominance. However, all and only disyllabic words with short word-initial tones display this behavior, so from this consideration - the tone which actually determines the overall sandhi, the type is left-dominant.

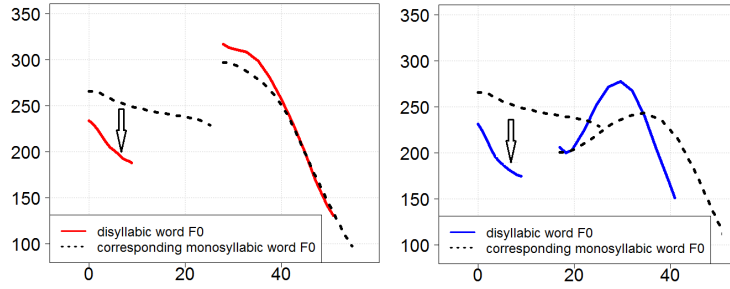


Figure 1: Mean tonal acoustics (F0 as function of absolute duration) for two disyllabic tonal combinations in Jinshan with underlying short high [4] tone on word-initial morpheme. Left = [2.51], right = [2.341]. Dotted lines = F0 of corresponding citation tones. X axis = duration (csec.) Y axis = F0 (Hz).

References

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