

# LINGUISTIC ESSAYS BY YUENREN CHAO

趙元任語言學論文集

趙元任

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商務印書館  
THE COMMERCIAL PRESS

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Edited by  
Zong-ji Wu and Xin-na Zhao

吳宗濟 趙新那 編

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*Y. F. Kao*

~~China as a sample of the~~  
~~typical Pariahs of Old China~~

What is "Chinese"? Cf. 文, 文, 文, 文, 文

*"Longer" written by [unclear] longer*

Extreme case of Paul & Stacy Chis  
 Eric Smith, Collier, Eng, So. Sp. Smith, etc. 2008, 4/10/3

More important is question of the being (leg or  
personal leg). Says him per Leg of person  
for good & comparative Legation of Min. of  
Kantung in his Skizze des Kantonesischen.  
Chinese ist in Wirklichkeit eine große von eng  
verwandten Sprachen.

very natural position.  
Common among  
all writing as usually described is not ~~really~~ really  
a lg, of. Fr. conform, E. conform, G. Licht, E. Light  
But the excellent description was not only not  
ironical, but also anti-ironical. (Aspiration in  
anti-ironical approach in being the classic.)  
Even the so-called far-ther only in a sort of  
new new-gen target is almost more than in  
local form. Then Standard Position. But an  
editor in SK writes in New York Times, it is  
controversial. Even ironical reading, if done offhandedly.

## Foreword

Y. R. Chao (Zhao Yuan-ren) was born in Tianjin, Nov. 3rd, 1892. After reception of traditional Chinese education in his boyhood, he was sent to a high school in Nanking to receive modern education. In 1910, he won a national scholarship and went to Cornell University to study science and mathematics. When graduated in 1914, he was accepted by Harvard for graduate study in philosophy, and received his Ph. D. degree in 1918. In 1919 he began to teach physics at Cornell, and in 1920 he turned to teach mathematics at Tsinghua College in Peking. When Bertrand Russell had his lecturing tour in China, Y. R. Chao was asked to be the interpreter. During the tour, Chao showed exceptional ability in using different local dialects for the translations in southern region. He imitated the accents of those dialects as naturally as the natives, which excited the listeners very much. In his studies and field works of languages and dialects, he had good opportunity to contact with several known scholars, e. g. Daniel Jones, Joseph Vendryès, Antoine Meillet, Bernhard Karlgren, Paul Pelliot, and Henri Maspero. From 1925 to 1928, A Research Institute of Sinology of Tsinghua College (later becoming Tsinghua University) was established, there Chao taught Chinese phonology and started his work on the sur-

vey of Chinese dialects. He was known then as one of the four contemporary masters of Sinology, together with the other three colleagues: Wang Guo-wei, Liang Qi-chao and Chen Yin-ke. At this time Chao also worked on the reform of Chinese Etymology. He joined the Unification of the Chinese National Language Committee. As the result, a system of Guo-Yu Romanization was constructed, and was promulgated by the government in 1928. In 1929, he accepted the position as director of linguistic section of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, which was originally founded in Canton and later moved to Peking and Nanking. He continued his field survey of Chinese dialects, and he was interested in scientific phonetic analyzing. A modern phonetic laboratory was set up in Nanking. In 1937 due to Japanese invasion, Chao moved to Kunming with the Institute and continued his research work until he was invited to be a visiting professor of the University of Hawaii in 1938.

In the United States, after one year in Hawaii as a visiting professor and two years at Yale University, Chao returned once again to Harvard. In 1947, he became professor of Oriental Languages and Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. From 1960 (when he retired) till the end of his long life of 90 years, February 24th, 1982, he stayed sometimes at his home in the west coast and sometimes at his daughter's home in the east coast. During these twenty-two years, plenty of his activities and events should be mentioned. Such as: back to China twice in 1973 and 1981, for returning to his hometown, Changzhou of



Jiangsu, where the residence of his old family has been designated as a memorial spot by the government, and returning to Tsinghua, the Alma Mater by which he was sent abroad to take higher education at his teenage... and also his visiting to several academic units like the Beijing University, the Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, his meeting with the important government officials. Many of his important books and papers were published both in China and overseas during this period.

Although Chao is well known as a linguist, however, scope of his interest and training were very much wider. Even in high school days, Chao studied English, German and natural sciences. In 1910, when he attended the scholarship examination in Tsinghua College, he passed the whole tests of Chinese thesis, mathematics, Greek and Roman history, German, physics, botany, physiology, chemistry. In Cornell and Harvard, he chose courses in a wide range, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, philosophy, psychology, astronomy, languages, and music. At the same time, he took classes and learned composing and piano playing. However, among so many topics, Chao's interest was mainly on linguistics and phonetics. In 1916, although he was already a graduate student of philosophy in Harvard, he was still thinking of his future career. In his November 3rd diary he wrote: "I am 24 years old today, still a hesitator..." However, what he wanted to be was already cited in his January's diary: "I thought that I am essentially a born linguist, mathematician and

musician. . . ” A month later again he wrote: “I might as well be a philologist as anything else.” This might have been the great decision of his career.

What he wanted to do can be answered by his paper “The problem of the Chinese language” published in *The Chinese Students' Monthly* at the same year. He raised three problems: (1) “Scientific study of Chinese philology”, (2) “Chinese phonetics” and (3) “Proposed reforms”. His proposal was so mature and confident that it had all been realized to a great extent through his lifetime.

It is hardly to classify Professor Chao simply as a master of linguisticians and phoneticians, because his knowledge and career were no less than a distinct scientific scholar or a talented musician. In his linguistic works we can find that his phonetic description was as delicate as things under a biological microscope and his word processing was as strict as written by a grammatical teacher. However, they were full of philosophic thought too and rhythmic variation usually mingled with ingenious analogies instead of the usual dry definitions or complicated formulae. Therefore, the connotation in his linguistic works may be compared as vast and fluent as a river rather than a stream.

In this book, it is a collection of Chao's linguistic works written in English, that is the sister volume of another one in Chinese. As his complete works are in preparing by the same publisher, longer works such as the text books of Mandarin and Cantonese, the reports of dialects and the comprehensive gram-

mar research etc. are not included in this issue. Essays are listed according to their publication date instead of category. For the contents of the essays in this volume, readers may find that they are clearly following the three problems of Chinese language he proposed before. The different objects that he paid attention to can be roughly grouped from time to time. In the years between 1920's and 1930's, the reform of Guo-Yu (RP of Chinese) was his focus proposal. Much of the discussions and regulations of Romanization of Chinese RP were published in Chinese. The paper "Gwoyeu Romatzyh or the National Romanization" presented in this issue introduce an outline in English.

From 1930's to 1940's, field survey reports of dialects under Chao's new method of phonetic analysis instead of the traditional pattern of phonological category were published. Around this period, his essays on theoretical and practical analysis of Chinese tones started to influence the old tonemic study. Thus, the difference of functions between word-tone and sentence-intonation in Chinese, and the difference of intonations between Chinese and English, which had puzzled phoneticians in a long time, had then been given a definite and universally true answer.

In 1930, Chao's "A system of tone letters" was presented by the International Phonetic Association in Paris. It had thrown a light on how to construct a system of tone labeling to record any tone values of Chinese dialects. This system denotes five degrees within any tone range of relative value. It is as convenient as the alphabet, better than any other method of tone recording such as

the music score or the hierarchy line, etc. It has been well proved that this system is good for tone contour recording of any tone language.

In 1934, an important essay on phonemic theory appeared in the *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology*, in which Chao adopted large amount of samples and proved that the phoneme inducted from phonetic systems is not unique and more than one solutions can be given. It supplied a new definition for the classical phonemic theory.

As far as we know, scientific research results depend closely upon the development of the experimental methods and apparatus. So in some of Chao's early papers, such as those referring to the description of Chinese tone-sandhi and intonation, he mentioned regretfully that his conclusion was not satisfactory owing to the lack of measuring instruments. Then after many years in another paper, he never forgot to give further amendment for this matter.

Here I would like to mention that the work of collecting and editing of Chao's essays are rather heavy, for the materials covered a period as long as almost a century and were dispersed in space as wide as several continents. Some pieces appeared in old drafts or publications had even been damaged. Thanks to the collecting works by Chao's four daughters and friends, and the editing works by his second daughter, the co-editor, Xin-na Zhao, and the enthusiastic cooperation by the publisher, The Commercial Press—without their help this publishing would have not

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been possible. I, myself, as the only one alive of the author's four assistants in the Institute in Nanking, should have to regret for being an editor just by duty rather than ability.

Zong-ji Wu  
(Phonetic Laboratory,  
Institute of Linguistics, CASS)

## **Editorial Note**

1. This is a collection of 50 linguistic works written in English by Professor Y. R. Chao, in which two papers written in International Phonetic Alphabets are transcribed into English by Professor Zong-ji Wu.
2. The order of papers are arranged according to the publication date.
3. In these papers, the terming style and wording habit of the author are well preserved.
4. Typesetting mistakes found in these papers have been corrected by the editor.
5. All the symbols of the consonantal aspirations given in these papers as “'” are now changed to “‘”.
6. The sources of these papers are mentioned as the following: the name of the earliest publication, volume number, issues number and the date.

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