

Studies in Chinese Language and Discourse

5

Interrogative Strategies

*An areal typology
of the languages of China*

Tianhua Luo

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

DOI 10.1075/scld.5

Cataloging-in-Publication Data available from Library of Congress

ISBN 978 90 272 0185 0 (HB)

ISBN 978 90 272 6659 0 (E-BOOK)

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Studies in Chinese Language and Discourse (SCLD)

ISSN 1879-5382

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Volume 5

Interrogative Strategies. An areal typology of the languages of China
by Tianhua Luo

Acknowledgements

This book is a revised version of my Ph.D. thesis produced at the University of Konstanz in 2013. Substantial changes and revisions have been made, mainly in three aspects: (i) new languages and data have been added – the total number of languages has increased to 140, as one language has been deleted and three new ones have been included; (ii) rewritten – Sections 1.3–4 “material and methodology” have been reorganized to give a better introduction to the methodology; Chapter 2 “survey” used to be overlong and has been completely rewritten and rearranged, notably the sections on non-Sinitic languages; Section 7.1 “universals vs. areoversals” has been completely rewritten to bring together the discussions in the previous chapters; (iii) all the data have been rechecked and corrected in places.

My work in Konstanz and the completion of this work could not have been realized without the help of various people. I am deeply indebted to everyone who helped directly with this project, as well as to all who provided inspiration, support, and encouragement along the way.

First of all, I am particularly grateful to my supervisors Frans Plank and Nicole Dehé. I would like to thank Frans Plank for his invaluable advice on the project and kind support over the years, and thank Nicole Dehé for her constructive comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. Sincere thanks also go to Ka Yin Benjamin Tsou for agreeing to serve as the external examiner on my evaluation committee.

I would like to thank the people at the Department of Linguistics of the University of Konstanz, particularly Aditi Lahiri (ständige Gastprofessorin), Maribel Romero, and Heike Zinsmeister for their useful and informative seminars. Friends in offices G111-112 and G115 deserve special thanks for their constructive assistance, conversation, and laughter. I am especially grateful to Thomas Mayer for his support in general and for plotting the atlas. Thanks to Muna Pohl and Florian Schönhuber, too, for their kind help.

I also wish to sincerely thank Bingfu Lu, Jue Wang, and Elizabeth Zeitoun. I thank Lu Laoshi and Wang Laoshi for leading me into an academic career in linguistics and for their kind support during my years of study. Thanks to Elizabeth Zeitoun for providing me with a detailed list of publications on Formosan interrogatives. I am also indebted to native language informants for having provided me with various linguistic data for my research.

Sincere thanks also go to the reviewer and editor of the SCLD series. I thank the reviewer for her/his insightful comments, suggestions, and careful corrections, and thank the editor, Hongyin Tao, for his kind help with the manuscript.

Part of this work was presented at ICSTLL 43 (Lund 2010), ALT 9 (Hong Kong 2011), and ALT 10 (Leipzig 2013). I am grateful to the participants for their useful comments.

For financial support of my Ph.D. study, I owe special thanks to the China Scholarship Council (CSC) affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. Sadly, my father passed away during my studies in Konstanz and could not witness the completion of this work. I would like to dedicate the present book to his loving memory.

Tianhua Luo

Notational conventions

Abbreviations

Basically, the conventions followed are those given in *The Leipzig Glossing Rules* (Comrie et al. 2008). The following abbreviations are used in the interlinear glosses of language examples. In examples taken from descriptive literature, the glosses are generally the same as those used in their original forms.

| | | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | first person | NOM | nominative |
| 2 | second person | NOMIN | nominalization |
| 3 | third person | NP | noun phrase |
| A | agent-like argument of canonical transitive verb | NUM/Num | numeral |
| ABS | absolutive | OBJ | object |
| ACC | accusative | OBL | oblique |
| Adj | adjective | P | patient-like argument of canonical transitive verb |
| Adv | adverb(ial) | PASS | passive |
| AGT | agent | PFV | perfective |
| AF | agent focus (actor focus) | PIPCQ | Position of interrogative phrases in content questions |
| AP | adjective phrase | PL | plural |
| CL | classifier | Po | postposition |
| COP | copula | PPQP | position of polar question particles |
| D | demonstrative | PQ | polar questions |
| DAT | dative | PREF | prefix |
| DEF | definite | Pr | preposition |
| DISP | disposal (construction) | PRF | perfect |
| ERG | ergative | PROG | progressive |
| F | feminine | PRO(N) | pronoun |
| FP | sentence-/disjunct-final particle | PN | proper name |
| FUT | future | PRT | particle |
| GEN | genitive | PST | past |
| HON | honorific | Q | question particle/marker |
| IMP | imperative | RDP | reduplication |
| INCL | inclusive | S | sole argument of the intransi- tive verb |
| IRR | irrealis | SUFF | suffix |
| LAC | <i>Language Atlas of China</i> (Second edition, 2012) | VP | verb phrase |
| LOC | locative | WALS | <i>The World Atlas of Language Structures Online</i> |
| M | masculine | | |
| NEG | negation, negative | | |





IPA and Standard Chinese *Pinyin*

| Pinyin | IPA | Pinyin | IPA |
|--------|-----------------|--------|---------------|
| b | p | ai | ai, aɪ, ʌi |
| p | p ^h | an | an, ʌn |
| m | m | ang | aŋ |
| f | f | ao | au, aʊ |
| d | t | ei | ei, eɪ |
| t | t ^h | en | ən |
| n | n | eng | əŋ, ʌŋ |
| l | l | ia | ia, iʌ, ia |
| g | k | ian | iɛn, iæn |
| k | k ^h | iang | iaŋ |
| h | x | iao | iau, iəʊ |
| j | tɕ | ie | iɛ, ie |
| q | tɕ ^h | in | in |
| x | ɕ | ing | in̄ |
| z | ts | iong | ioŋ, ɣəŋ |
| c | ts ^h | i(o)u | iou, iəʊ |
| s | s | ong | ʊŋ, uŋ |
| zh | tʂ | ou | ou, əʊ |
| ch | tʂ ^h | u(e)i | uəi, uəɪ |
| sh | ʂ | u(e)n | uən |
| r | ʐ | ua | ua, uʌ |
| | | uai | uai, uai, uʌi |
| a | ʌ, a, ɛ | uan | uan, uʌn |
| e | ɣ, e, ɛ, ə | uang | uaŋ |
| o | o, u | ueng | uəŋ, uʌŋ, uʊŋ |
| i | i, ɿ, ʅ | üan | yan, yɛ, yen |
| u | u, ɣ | üe | yɛ, ye |
| ü | y | ün | yn, ün |
| er | ə | | |

Notes:

- 1. *i* is written as *y* after zero initial and is written as *yi* in isolation;
u is written as *w* after zero initial and is written as *wu* in isolation;
ü is written as *yu* after zero initial and is written as *u* after initials *j, q, x*.
- 2. In this book, most examples of Standard Chinese and other Sinitic languages are given in *Pinyin*, while those of Yongxin Gan (Sinitic) and minority languages are given in IPA.

Tone system of Standard Chinese

| Tone | Symbol | Graph | Pitch | Example |
|----------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------|
| high level | ˉ |  | 55 | <i>mā</i> [ma ⁵⁵] 妈 ‘mother’ |
| high rising | ˊ |  | 35 | <i>má</i> [ma ³⁵] 麻 ‘hemp’ |
| falling-rising | ˋ |  | 214 | <i>mǎ</i> [ma ²¹⁴] 马 ‘horse’ |
| high falling | ˋ |  | 51 | <i>mà</i> [ma ⁵¹] 骂 ‘(to) scold’ |

Notes:

1. This table is adapted from Li and Thompson (1981: 6–9) and Sun (2006: 39–40).
2. ‘Falling-rising’ tone is also known as ‘dipping’ tone.
3. In each tone graph, the vertical line on the right serves as a reference for pitch height, which is divided into five levels: 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.
4. The unstressed neutral tone (*qīngshēng*) is not included in the table. Cf. *dōngxī* ‘west and east’ (*xī* in the high level tone) and *dōngxi* ‘thing’ (*xi* in the unstressed neutral tone).

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Introduction

1.1 The grammar of interrogatives

1.1.1 Interrogative forms

Three sentence types (or types of grammaticalized speech acts) exist, namely declarative, imperative, and interrogative (although exclamatives are also often included in the literature). Strategies for the form of such sentences vary, but the declarative is the default sentence type and is typically left unmarked, the imperative is generally indicated by verbal affix(es), and the interrogative has many different forms. The core issue in the present book is the forms, or “strategies,” used for asking questions, in particular polar questions (also known as yes/no questions). Content questions (also known as *wh*-questions, information questions, or constituent questions) are also covered, but are less central.

Three kinds of interrogative forms should be distinguished at the outset: prosodic, morphological, and syntactic. Cross-linguistically, prosodic question marking is suggested by an intonation contour different from that of declaratives, usually a terminal rising one, at times also falling, or some other contour pattern. The morphological and syntactic interrogative forms, i.e., the non-prosodic question marking, may take a variety of forms, ranging from full or reduced clauses or phrases over independent words or vocal noises to clitics and affixes (Plank 2009).

The inventory of question marking varies among individual languages and individual linguists. For example, in their introductory typological studies on sentence types and/or interrogative strategies, Sadock and Zwicky (1985), König and Siemund (2007), and Dryer (2013a) suggest three different lists of strategies for polar interrogative sentences (S & Z, K & S also include content questions, which is not the topic here; cf. Siemund 2001, Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Liljegren 2013).

- (1) Polar interrogative strategies according to Sadock and Zwicky 1985
 - a. Intonation contour
 - b. Question particles
 - c. Interrogative verb morphology
 - d. Alternative structures
 - e. Word order change

- (2) Polar interrogative strategies according to König and Siemund 2007
 - a. Intonational marking
 - b. Interrogative particles
 - c. Verbal inflection
 - d. Disjunctive-negative structures
 - e. Change in word order
 - f. Special tags
- (3) Polar interrogative strategies according to Dryer 2013a
 - a. Interrogative intonation only
 - b. Question particles
 - c. Interrogative verb morphology
 - d. Interrogative word order
 - e. Absence of declarative morphemes
 - f. No interrogative-declarative distinction
 - g. Question particle and verb morphology

The lists in (1) and (2) are basically the same, except that König and Siemund (2007) note that certain languages spoken in Papua New Guinea (Amele, Kobon) and some Asian languages, e.g., Standard Chinese, use a disjunctive-negative structure to phrase questions (see below; see also Sections 2.1.1.1.5 and 4.1 for discussions of X-neg-X questions in Standard Chinese). Furthermore, (3e)–(3f) are different from (1)–(2) in that Dryer (2013a) reports on certain languages that express questions by omitting certain morphemes used in corresponding declarative sentences, e.g., Zayse (Omotic, Afro-Asiatic; Ethiopia), Kabardian (Northwest Caucasian; Russia; Colarusso 1992:125–126), Puquina (isolate; Bolivia; Adelaar 2004:354), Dinka (Nilotic; Sudan; Nebel 1948:58–61), and Huichol (Corachol, Uto-Aztecan; Mexico).

- (4) Zayse (Hayward 1990: 307; cited in Dryer 2013a)
 - a. *hamá-tte-ten* 'I will go'
 - b. *háma-ten* 'Will I go?'
 - c. *hamá-tt-isen* 'She will go.'
 - d. *háma-ysen* 'Will she go?'
- (5) Huichol (Grimes 1964:27; Palmer 2001:54)
 - a. *pée-t* *lá*
ASSERTIVE-direction go
'He left.'
 - b. *mázá tikuucúu*
deer asleep
'Is the deer asleep?'

In (4), the morpheme *-tt(e)-* is omitted in the interrogatives (4b, 4d), but is retained in the corresponding declarative sentences (4a, 4c). In (5a), an “assertive” marker *pée-* is employed to indicate the sentence is a statement, while the form used as a question is often the unmarked form (5b).

Moreover, there are languages that simply demonstrate no formal marking in polar interrogatives, such as Chalcatongo Mixtec (Mixtecan, Oto-Manguean; Mexico) and Gooniyandi (Australian, Australia; McGregor 1990:485, 382–3, 369–71; see Miestamo 2011). The sentence in (6) can be interpreted as either a declarative sentence or an interrogative sentence, with no difference in intonation associated with the two meanings.

- (6) Chalcatongo Mixtec (Macaulay 1996:126)
ñábaʔa-ro libru-ro(?)
 have-2 book-2
 ‘You have your book./Do you have your book?’

Yet there are a number of languages, e.g., Blackfoot (Algonquian, Algic) and Greenlandic (Eskimo, Eskimo-Aleut), in which both interrogatives and declaratives are marked by special verb morphology, although not identical ones (see Sadock and Zwicky 1985).

The markedness pattern of declaratives and polar interrogatives is summarized in Table 1.1. It is clear that polar interrogatives are cross-linguistically more marked than declaratives.

Table 1.1 Markedness pattern of declaratives (D) and polar interrogatives (Q)

| | Markedness pattern | Frequency | Languages attested |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------|
| (i) | D unmarked, Q unmarked | rare | Chalcatongo Mixtec |
| (ii) | D unmarked, Q marked | common | Germanic, Sinitic, etc. |
| (iii) | D marked, Q marked | rare | Blackfoot, Greenlandic |
| (iv) | D marked, Q unmarked | rare | Dinka, Huichol, Kabardian, Puquina, Zayse |

The major forms for asking polar questions in the languages of China can be found in the three lists (1)–(3) above.

Interrogative intonation only

For languages that can form questions by interrogative intonation only (IIO), the suggestion is that an interrogative involves the same words, morphemes, and word order as the corresponding declarative sentence, but with a distinct intonation pattern as the sole indication that it is a question.