

外语教学指导与学术研究系列丛书

**Phonetic and Phonological
Studies on Tianjin Dialect**

天津方言语音学和音系学研究

——庆祝王嘉龄教授七十寿诞论文集

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Professor Wang Jialing's 70th Birthday

外语教学指导与学术研究系列丛书

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Preface

Tianjin Dialect is one of the most interesting dialects, in particular, for its tone sandhi. It has attracted many phoneticians and phonologists, among whom are found the authors of the MA theses collected here. The theses discuss Tianjin Dialect from the aspects of phonetics, phonology and sociolinguistics. All the authors are Professor Wang Jialing's students.

Professor Wang is a well-known phonologist for his introducing generative phonology to China in the 1980's and his research on the neutral tone in Chinese. His research project *The Phonetic Description and Non-linear Phonological Analysis of the Neutral Tone in Putonghua and Tianjin Dialect* was supported by the National Social Science Fund. The project, according to the evaluation report, took the lead in China. He is currently doing another national project on the neutral tone in Chinese dialects within the framework of the optimality theory.

In his decades of teaching career, Professor Wang trained

many graduates to be linguists, who have written good theses under his insightful, critical and patient supervision. The theses collected in this book are some examples of those good works. As his students and colleagues, we are grateful to his contribution to Chinese phonology and our college, which motivates us to compile this book as a special gift to his coming 70th birthday.

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A Study of Sound Change in Zhongshanmen

Qi Shihe (齐世和)

Abstract

The present study concerns a direct observation of the linguistic behavior of two peer groups with maximally different social characteristics from two middle schools in Zhongshanmen (Zhongshan Gate) New Workers' Housing Estate, Hedong District, Tianjin. The speech sample consists of 20 boys from the two schools. Conducted on a micro-sociolinguistic level, it attempts to use socio-linguistics as a tool in the study of sound change. The study aims at finding the possible correlations between the linguistic behavior and social characteristics of different social groups and the possible direction in which Tianjin Dialect is developing phonetically. The research finds that, linguistically, people with different social characteristics behave differently; most speakers change their pronunciation according to the formality of situation; social ambition, education and the family's social position or background are three important factors which affect teenagers' linguistic behavior, of which social ambition and education are the most important.

1.

1.0. Introduction

The present study, which is on a micro-sociolinguistic level, attempts to use sociolinguistics as a tool for the study of sound change. The work which is reported in this paper concerns the direct observation of the linguistic behavior of two peer groups with maximally different social characteristics from two middle schools in Zhongshanmen (Zhongshan Gate) New Workers' Housing Estate, Hedong District, a relatively small and closely knit community in the city of Tianjin. The study aims at finding the possible correlations between the linguistic behavior and social characteristics of different social groups and the possible direction in which Tianjin Dialect is developing phonetically. This study can be also regarded as a study of ongoing sound change of Tianjin Dialect although it concentrates on only one generation, for “at any level higher than the idiolect (and actually within the idiolect itself) one will find both present and past” (Habick 1980:1).

In the present study, the speech sample consists of 20 boys from the two peer groups. The recorded interviews with the twenty speakers were analyzed for patterns of variation between members from different cohesive social groups. Our data include three speech styles: careful speech, word list reading in Tianjin Dialect, and word list reading in Putonghua, the standard Chinese.

In Chapter 2, previous studies on Tianjin Dialect, especially

on its phonological system, are briefly reviewed. Chapter 3 deals with methodology. In this Chapter, the experimental procedures employed in the investigation are explained in detail. The social characteristics of both teenage groups are analyzed, and the fact that the two groups come from two extremely different schools indicates the social polarization between these groups. In Chapter 4, the acoustic data collected during the investigation are examined. Three variables of Tianjin Dialect, (zh), (r) and (∅) are analyzed, and the different use of these variables between the two peer groups can be seen. Possible explanations for the differences between the peer groups are also provided. Chapter 5 presents the theoretical conclusions that can be drawn from the study.

1.1. Zhongshanmen New Workers' Housing Estate

Zhongshanmen New Workers' Housing Estate, Hedong Direct, Tianjin, is one of the typical residential areas in the city of Tianjin: a large population concentrated in a relatively small area. Formerly, the place belonged to the suburbs of the city. The estate was constructed from rice fields and waste land in the early fifties, not long after the foundation of the People's Republic of China. It now covers an area of about 1.5 square kilometers and is situated in the south east of Tianjin, about 8 kilometers from the Old City.

With the development of the local industry, the first settlers moved here in the early fifties. The present population is about one hundred and twenty thousand, most of whom are factory workers. Cadres and intellectuals, including engineers, teachers,

doctors, etc., constitute less than ten percent of the population. According to Davidson (1984), the dominant dialect spoken in this area is the “New Tianjin Dialect”, i.e. the dialect retaining nearly all the special features of Tianjin Dialect (cf 2.3). The area is chosen for study because of its relative social homogeneity. Although the community is not a self-contained unit, the inhabitants are not so mobile. Thus most of the residents have been living in this area for twenty to thirty years or more.

There are four middle schools in this small area, in two of which the investigations were conducted. Two groups of students were chosen from the two schools respectively. One school is Tuanjiedao (Unity Street) Middle School. It is the least desirable school in this area. The dialect spoken in this school was expected to retain the typical Tianjin Dialect features, and the principal of the school (who himself is a Tianjin Dialect speaker) confirmed this assumption by telling the researcher that his school was the right place to study the “pure Tianjin Dialect”. The other school is No. 45 Middle School. It is the best middle school in the area of Zhongshanmen. Actually, No. 45 Middle School is one of the two best schools in the whole Hedong District. It has very good teaching facilities (boasting a four-story laboratory building which most schools of the city can not possibly have) and has the most qualified and experienced teachers. What is more, only the students with very high grades can be enrolled in this school. Therefore it is obvious that the two schools chosen for study are radically different from each other. Linguistically, students from No.45 Middle School were

expected to behave much differently from students of Tuanjiedao Middle School. Putonghua is supposed to have strong influence over the dialect spoken in No.45 Middle School.

2.

2.0. Previous Works on Tianjin Dialect

Tianjin Dialect is one of the northern dialects of China. Generally speaking, it is the dialect spoken in Tianjin, including its four suburbs, with the city proper as its center (Ling 1984). The dialect now has about 4 or 5 million speakers (Zhao 1984). The first research work to which we can make reference was done by Li (1956) in the middle of the 1950s, and after that, a few articles on Tianjin Dialect appeared in different journals in that decade. The work during that period concentrated on the contrastive analysis of phonology and tone systems between Tianjin Dialect and Beijing dialect, mostly for the purpose of popularizing Putonghua, the standard Chinese dialect. These studies were mainly introspective and impressionist. More studies have been conducted since the beginning of the present decade. These empirical works have dealt with various topics of Tianjin Dialect, and the results indicate that, as compared with the dialect 30 years ago, great changes have taken place in Tianjin Dialect, especially in its sound system.

2.1. The Main Characteristics of Tianjin Dialect

What we mean by the main characteristics of Tianjin Dialects is its unique features, which are different not only from Putonghua

but also from other dialects of Hebei Province (Ling, 1984).

Like any living dialects, Tianjin Dialect has its own phonological features. But according to “A Survey of Hebei Province Dialects” (1961)¹ nearly all Tianjin Dialect features can be found in some other Hebei dialects. For example, the initial retroflex consonants [d̥, t̥ʂ, ʂ] in 中 (zhong “middle”), 常 (cháng “often”) and 山 (shan “hill”) are considered to constitute one of the most salient features of Tianjin Dialect, but nevertheless are also common in dialects of Jinghai, Dacheng, Qingxian, Ningjin, Cangxian, Huanghua, Mengcun, Yanshan, Wuqiao, Qingyun, Dongguang, Nanpi, Jiaohe, Gucheng, Jingxian, Fucheng, Xiongqian, Zhuolu, Longguan, Huailai, Shangdu, Shangyi, Yangyuan, Chicheng, Xuanhua, Qinghe, Xinhe, Qinglong and Changli. It is also a common phenomenon to add a nasal consonant to some vowel initial words such as 爱 (ài “love”), 鹅 (é “goose”), 恩 (en “kindness”) and 呕 (ou “vomit”). The velar nasal /ŋ/ is added to these sounds in the dialects of many regions of Hebei Province. In Tianjin Dialect, the dental nasal /n/ is added, as it also is in dialects of at least 50 counties and cities in Hebei. Thus we can see that these phonological features can by no means be considered unique to Tianjin Dialect.

Since Chinese is a tonal language and its dialects are all tonal dialects, people distinguish one dialect from another basically according to its special tone system (at least in north China). Therefore the main characteristic of Tianjin Dialect, like other Chinese dialects, is its particular tone system. Any study on

Tianjin Dialect should be based on this premise.

2.2. Tone System of Tianjin Dialect

The main characteristic of Tianjin Dialect is its tone system, and naturally, much work has focused on it. It is generally assumed that the principal phonetic feature of tone is found in the domain of pitch, and the variations of the four Chinese tones are usually described by a five-point pitch scale. So “Tianjin Dialect consists of a system of four tonemes, twelve ditonemes and ‘qingsheng’”² (Guo 1981).

However, linguists have different opinions about the pitch variations of the four tones of Tianjin Dialect. Disputes over the pitch variations of the four individual tones of Tianjin Dialect have been going on for many years. Huang (1958) and the study conducted by Hebei Beijing Teachers’ College (1961) held that pitch variations of the four Tianjin Dialect tones can be illustrated as the following:

- 1st tone, low level, 11
- 2nd tone, high rising, 45
- 3rd tone, low rising, 24
- 4th tone, high falling, 42

Shi (1984) and Yang (1984) held different opinions. They suggested:

- 1st tone, low falling, 21
- 2nd tone, high rising, 45
- 3rd tone, low rising, 13
- 4th tone, high falling, 53

There are still other opinions, for instance, Ling (1984) believed that the first tone was a falling rising tone (312). My opinion is that all these tones coexist. They might be either social or regional variations, “since all speakers have a social background as well as regional location”. (Chambers and Trudgill 1980:54)

2.3. Phonology of Tianjin Dialect

It is generally accepted that standard Chinese (Putonghua) is based on the phonology of the Beijing dialect, with its vocabulary based on the northern dialects and its grammar on modern classics of literature.

Since Tianjin Dialect is one of the northern dialects of Chinese, and the city is not far geographically from Beijing, the sound system of Tianjin Dialect is quite similar to that of Beijing dialect. The phonological system of both dialects consist of 23 initials and 35 finals.³ (cf Gao and Shi 1979:94-5) The following is the sound system of both dialects, with the Chinese Pinyin equivalents under each transcription:

Initials

/ḅ/	/p/	/m/	/f/
b	p	m	f
/ḍ/	/t/	/n/	/l/
d	t	n	l

/g/ /k/ /x/
g k h

/dz^y/ /ts^y/ /s^y/
j q x

/ḍ / /ṭʃ/ /ʃ̣/ /ṛ /
zh ch sh r

/d / /tʃ / /ʃ /
z c s

/j/ /w/
y w

Finals

/a/ /o/ /ɛ/ /ai/ /ei/ /au/ /ou/ /an/ /n/
a o e ai ei ao ou an en

/a / /e / /u / /i/ /ia/ /i /
ang eng ong I ia ie

/iau/ /iou/ /ian/ /in/ /ia / /i /
iao iou ian in iang ing