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The Linguistic Society of Hong Kong Newsletter

香港語言學學會通訊

Issue 2, 2012*

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*The Executive Committee has decided to retrospectively regard the last issue of our Newsletter (distributed in March) as "Issue 1 of 2012" so as to better relate the numbering to the calendar year from now on. The current issue is therefore labeled "Issue 2".



Message from the President

Greetings from the ExCom!

This new ExCom has been in service since January 2012. The following picture and table remind you of who we are.



President	CHEUNG Kwan-Hin	PolyU
Vice-President	Peppina Lee Po-lun	CityU
Secretary	Carine YIU	HKUST
Treasurer	Peggy MOK	CUHK
Communication Coordinator	Bit-chee KWOK	CityU
Newsletter Editor	Andy C. CHIN	HKIEd
Member-at-large	PAN Haihua	CityU
Member-at-large	Caesar LUN	CityU

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the out-going ExCom led by Prof. Pan Haihua for their excellent work in the previous two years.

Under the new ExCom, a new work group the **Language Policy Group** (Caesar as convener) has been formed and the old Jyutping Promotion Group has been re-organized into the **Jyutping Group** (Kwan-Hin as convener).

The website of the Society [<http://www.lshk.org>] has been revamped. In particular, mistakes in the on-line version of the constitution have been corrected and there is some additional information on the Jyutping page which we hope you find useful and interesting. Please visit our website and let us have your comments and feedback.

For your information, our Society now has about 65 full members (Life Members and Regular Members) and about 60 Affiliated Members and Student Members.

CHEUNG Kwan Hin
President
September 2012

2012 Annual Research Forum (ARF)

The 2012 Annual Research Forum of the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong
2012年香港語言學學會學術年會
December 1, 2012

Call For Paper

Submission deadline: October 8, 2012 (Monday)

LSHK members are cordially invited to attend and to present papers at the 2012 Annual Research Forum of the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (LSHK-ARF 2012), which will be jointly hosted by [Research Centre on Linguistics and Language Information Sciences](#) and [Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies, The Hong Kong Institute of Education](#) on **December 1, 2012 (Saturday)**.

As is customary ARF practice, there will be parallel sessions, and papers related to any area of linguistics are welcome. Every paper will be allotted 20 minutes for oral presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

Please note that *all* presenters have to be an LSHK member. If you are not yet a member, please apply for the LSHK membership by filling in the application form which can be downloaded from www.lshk.org. Moreover, members who would like to propose a discussion session based on a particular theme or a theme-based parallel session are welcome to send a proposal (maximum two pages) to the LSHK Executive Committee, specifying the theme and the format of the session and target participants.

Abstract submission:

Each member is maximally entitled to one single-author presentation and one joint presentation. Abstracts written in Chinese or English should be limited to one A4 page of no more than 400 words in English or 800 characters in Chinese, and should be saved in the form of DOC or PDF format.

Two copies of the abstract should be submitted: one anonymous copy for review and one includes (1) the name(s) of author(s), (2) affiliation(s), and (3) e-mail address(es). Submission should be sent to: lshk.arf@gmail.com.

For inquiries, please contact us by email at lshk.arf@gmail.com.



Forthcoming Events

October

26-28 [The 45th Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages & Linguistics](#) (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)

November

8-10 [The 26th Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation](#) (Bali, Indonesia)

December

1 LSHK Annual Research Forum (HKIEd)

7-10 The 17th International Conference on the Yue Dialects (Ji'nan University)

8-9 [The 2nd GDUFS Forum on Applied Linguistics](#) (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies)

第 17 届国际粤方言研讨会暨海外汉语方言专题讨论会

2012 年 12 月 7 至 10 日

广州暨南大学

第 17 届国际粤方言研讨会暨海外汉语方言专题讨论会将于 2012 年 12 月 7 至 10 日在广州暨南大学举行。会议热忱邀请世界各地从事粤方言和海外汉语方言研究的学者与学生参加。

本次研讨会的主题是：

- 1) 粤方言研究的回顾与展望；
- 2) 粤方言资源库的建设；
- 3) 粤方言语音、词汇、语法的专题研究；
- 4) 海外汉语方言的专题研究。

Post-Conference Reports

Roundtable Conference on the Globalization of the Chinese Language: Opportunities and Challenges 「漢語國際化的契機與挑戰」 圓桌會議

Date: February 15-16, 2012

Venue: The Hong Kong Institute of Education

The Research Centre on Linguistics and Language Information Sciences (RCLIS) at the Hong Kong Institute of Education jointly organized with the Centre for Greater China Studies (GCS) a 2-day roundtable conference ***The Globalization of the Chinese Language: Opportunities and Challenges*** on February 15 and 16 2012. This roundtable conference provided a platform for Cross-Straits and overseas experts and scholars including the US, Thailand, Shanghai, Taiwan and Hong Kong, to explore the opportunities and challenges in the globalization of the Chinese language. The conference also discussed how to promote the Chinese language and Chinese culture through strengthening academic co-operations between various academic and research institutes within the Greater China region.



The papers presented at the conference covered a wide range of topics, including the relationship between the Chinese language and cognition, challenges of Chinese learning by ethnic minorities, preservation and promotion of Chinese dialects, promotion of the Chinese language and Chinese culture inside and outside of China, understanding the synchronic and diachronic developments of the Chinese language on the basis of overseas Chinese communities and Chinese historical texts.

The program of the conference can be downloaded at:

http://www.rclis.ied.edu.hk/rc2012/roundtable_conference_program.pdf

Contributed by
Andy Chin (HKIEd)

第十二屆粵語討論會 (WOC-12)

日期：2012年2月25日

地點：香港中文大學

由香港語言學學會主辦、香港中文大學中國文化研究所吳多泰中國語文研究中心、中國語言及文學系粵語研究中心協辦的「第十二屆粵語討論會」(WOC-12)已於本年2月25日順利舉行。這次討論會的主題是「粵語句子的界定：比較研究」，發表論文的學者包括：鄧思穎：「從『句子、小句』的劃分看粵語稱呼語和嘆詞的句法地位」、歐陽偉豪：「誰決定句子：語意還是句法？」、張欽良、陳藝媛：「粵語『易位句』和『重複句』的定界問題」、林華勇、吳雪鈺：「廉江粵語的句末語氣助詞與語調的關係探討」、張群顯：「Pitch Contour of Cantonese Monosyllabic Sentences」、李行德作總結。當日討論氣氛熱烈，與會者就粵語句子問題作深入探討。

網址：<http://www.swtang.net/woc2012.php>

香港中文大學
中國文化研究所吳多泰中國語文研究中心提供



Workshop on Innovations in Cantonese Linguistics (WICL)

Date: March 16-17, 2012

Venue: The Ohio State University

The Workshop on Innovations in Cantonese Linguistics (WICL) was held on March 16th and 17th, 2012, at the Ohio State University (OSU). The first event held in North



America devoted solely to Cantonese linguistics, it was organized by OSU's Graduate Association of Chinese Linguistics and the Institute of Chinese Studies, and was sponsored by eight different organizations and departments. The organizing committee included Professor Marjorie K.M. Chan and Tsz-Him Tsui as co-chairs, and Professor Zhiguo Xie, Litong Chen, Yutian Tan, and Jeffrey Pakming Chan as committee members.

WICL focused on variations in Cantonese, as well as technological and methodological innovations in the study of Cantonese. It was also the very first event held in North America that was devoted solely to Cantonese linguistics. Twenty-six presenters from the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, United Kingdom and Italy participated at the workshop. Including faculty and students at Ohio State University and neighboring institutions such as Ohio University, as well as those who specially travel to Ohio to attend the workshop, some eighty participants attended this one-and-a-half-day event. Three keynote speakers were invited to present their work at WICL: Professor Alan Yu (University of Chicago), Professor Anne Oi-Kan Yue (University of Washington), and Professor Benjamin Ka-Yin T'sou (Hong Kong Institute of Education). Besides Professor T'sou, presenters from Hong Kong included Professor Picus Ding (University of Hong Kong), Professors Roxana Suk-Yee Fung, Cathy Wong and Kwan Hin Cheung (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), and Professor Carine Yuk-Man Yiu (Hong Kong University of Science & Technology).

Concurring with its theme of technological innovations, WICL was successful in utilizing video-conferencing technologies, and allowed three presenters to introduce their research from worldwide locations, including one by Professor Andy Chi-on Chin (Hong Kong Institute of Education). The workshop also showcased five different Cantonese corpora, which not only documented the Cantonese language at different diachronic stages, but also suited various synchronic approaches to the study of Cantonese.

WICL concluded with discussions of publication of the WICL proceedings, and future plans for hosting WICL in two (or three) years, potentially to be hosted by Professor Alan Yu at the University of Chicago. In addition, a proposal is made by Professor Dana Bourgerie (Brigham Young University) to revive the website that he had maintained in the past for the Cantonese Language Association. For further information on WICL, go to <http://ling.osu.edu/wicl/>.



Contributed by
Marjorie Chan and Tsui Tsz-Him (The Ohio State University)

Workshop on Stance Phenomena

Date: May 7-9, 2012

Venue: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

In celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as well as to facilitate collaboration and academic exchange between research institutions in the East and Southeast Asian region, an invited workshop on “**Stance and Discourse: Typological, Functional and Diachronic Perspectives**” was organized at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (7th – 9th May 2012). The objective of this workshop is to explore stance marking in different languages and different social domains, in particular public discourse in political, media, healthcare, business and service encounter settings, in addition to informal conversations at home and in the workplace. Research in this area is intended to add to the growing body of literature on stance-taking strategies in Asian languages, and is particularly valuable in helping us to better understand the subtleties of multicultural and multilingual communication.

Among the questions addressed are the following:-

- (a) What do stance markers do?
- (b) How do they interact with each other?
- (c) What is their origin and how do they evolve?
- (d) How are they used in different languages, text types and discourse settings?
- (e) What is the pragmatic motivation for their usage?
- (f) How are they modelled in different theoretical frameworks?

There were 2 keynote speakers (Prof. Walter Bisang from the University of Mainz, Germany, and Dr Mary Shin Kim from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa) and 2 invited speakers (Prof. Winnie Cheng from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Prof. Kaoru Horie from Nagoya University), and 13 other presenters at this workshop. Participants in this workshop came from the United States, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong — with findings reported on a wide variety of Asian language families including Austronesian, Papuan, Kam-Dai, Tibeto-Burman, Sinitic, Japanese and Korean.

Organization of this workshop was a collaborative effort between colleagues from the Department of English (Marco Caboara, Elaine Espindola Baldisera, Kumar Abhishek, Christian Matthiessen, Tak-Sum Wong, Vivien Yang and Foong Ha Yap). This workshop was funded by the Department of English and the RGC GRF Research Project on *Stance Marking across Asian Languages: Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives* (2010 – 2013), Project No. PolyU5513/10H. For more details, please visit: <http://www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/events/stance/index.asp>



Prof. Walter Bisang, from the University of Mainz, Germany, presenting a keynote lecture on *Stance between Grammar and Discourse* at the **Workshop on Stance and Discourse**

Contributed by
Yap Foong-Ha (PolyU)

International Conference on Bilingualism and Comparative Linguistics

Date: May 15-16, 2012

Venue: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The International Conference on Bilingualism and Comparative Linguistics was organized by the Childhood Bilingualism Research Centre, Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, and co-organized by the Research Institute for the Humanities at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from 15-16 May 2012. The Conference was a signature event creating a regional and international platform which raises the visibility of bilingualism and comparative linguistics. An illustrious cast of six keynote speakers and three invited speakers across different fields gave presentations. Professor Patricia Kuhl from University of Washington and Professor William Labov from the University of Pennsylvania are members of the US National Academy of Sciences and American Association for the Advancement of Science. Professor William S.Y. Wang from the Chinese University of Hong Kong is an Academician at the Academia Sinica and internationally renowned scholar in Chinese linguistics and language change and evolution. The Conference also featured three invited panels: (1) *bilingualism and the brain*, (2) *the phonetics and phonology of language in context*, and (3) *learner corpora of modern languages and third language acquisition* which featured ongoing work by colleagues in Linguistics and Modern Languages at CUHK in a concerted effort to construct the first learner corpora where learners' first language is Cantonese, their second language is English and the target languages are Spanish and Korean. The keynote and invited speakers addressed the following topics:

Patricia Kuhl: *The linguistic genius of bilingual babies*

William Labov: *The transmission and diffusion of sound change across 100 years*

William Wang: *The status of linguistics as a science*

Fred Genesee: *Language development in internationally-adopted children from China: a special case of early second language acquisition?*

Audrey Li: *The comparative study of argument structure and the lexicon*

Gillian Sankoff: *What they didn't learn in school: the L2 French of young adults in Montreal*

Bryan Gick: *Why sound change is quantal*

Patrick Wong: *Neural bases of second language learning: multiple pathways to success*

Alan Yu: *Individual differences in context-dependent speech perception and production*

CUHK's Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages stands at the nexus of humanities and sciences, combining knowledge and insights from a wide range of disciplines including psychology, cognitive and neuroscience, engineering and medical and health science to shed light on the study of language and specific aspects of the mind and brain. Working with our collaborators and research teams, we apply scientific methods and techniques to address basic and fundamental questions about how language works and ultimately how the mind and brain work. Bridging humanities and cognitive science, the conference showcased state-of-the art linguistics research from an interdisciplinary perspective. Researchers and students were brought together to share their findings in bilingualism and comparative studies of different languages and got inspired to pursue research with renewed rigour and vigour. The photos and feedback from participants are posted on our website: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/lin/cbrc/cbcl/comments.html>



Contributed by
Virginia Yip (CUHK)

A Dialogue on Sound Change: Past, Present and Future

Date: May 16, 2012

Venue: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

The Dialogue was jointly organized by the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, the Department of Chinese Language and Literature and the Language Acquisition Laboratory at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on 16 May 2012. The Dialogue featured two distinguished speakers, Professor William Labov from the University of Pennsylvania and Professor William S-Y. Wang from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Both are internationally renowned scholars who have made seminal contributions to our understanding of sound change and nurtured generations of students and leaders of our field. It was an unprecedented occasion where these two scholars were engaged in an extended dialogue with each other and with a packed audience, exchanging their current views on theories of sound change and lexical diffusion, with the hindsight of 40 years of empirical research on these topics.

The Dialogue was moderated by Feng Shengli and Thomas Lee with three invited panelists from both sides of the straits to lead the first round of discussion: Prof. Lien Chinfa from National Tsinghua University, Prof. Xu Daming from Nanjing University and Prof. Benjamin T'sou from the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Among the invited specialists were Richard Kayne from New York University, Gillian Sankoff from University of Pennsylvania, Bryan Gick from University of British Columbia and Alan Yu from University of Chicago. The forum generated stimulating discussions where the two speakers responded to questions from invited scholars and researchers who conduct research in language variation and change in relation to the diachronic development of Chinese languages and dialects.

The Dialogue and forum were significant at two levels. First, from the perspective of Chinese Linguistics, sound change in Chinese has played a crucial role since Bill Wang first proposed the theory of lexical diffusion, using evidence from Chinese dialects to show how sound change spreads through the lexicon. Second, for linguistics at large, sound change has been a fundamental issue since the 19th century when the Neogrammarians discovered the regularity of sound change. They were able to argue unequivocally for the position that sound change permits no exceptions, offering systematic accounts of apparent exceptions to sound laws such as the Grimm's Law. But 19th century linguists did not explain how or why sound change took place. Over the past few decades, Bill Labov's work has been pivotal in elucidating the role of social factors in sound change with massive databases.

An edited version of the video of the dialogue together with the transcript will be made available by the organizers as a way to document this landmark event for CUHK and for Linguistics in Hong Kong. The photos and feedback from participants are posted on our website: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/lin/cbrc/cbcl/dialogue.html>.

Contributed by
Feng Shengli, Thomas Lee, Virginia Yip (CUHK)



漢語詞序研討會 Symposium on Word Order in Chinese

日期：2012年5月17日

地點：香港中文大學



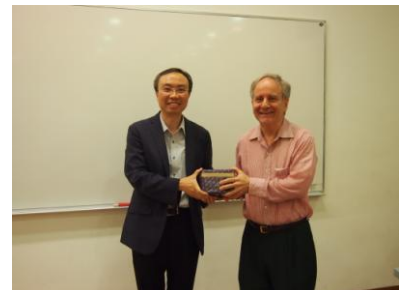
「漢語詞序研討會」(Symposium on Word Order in Chinese) 於2012年5月17日在香港中文大學鄭裕彤樓舉行。這次研討會由香港中文大學中國文化研究所吳多泰中國語文研究中心主辦、中國語言及文學系協辦、聯合書院贊助。舉辦這次研討會的主要目的，是希望從生成語法學的架構，探索漢語詞序的句法問題。紐約大學的Richard S. Kayne教授、國立清華大學的蔡維天教授作大會發言，南加州大學李豔惠教授作總結報告。此外，一共有八篇論文在會上發表，集中討論漢語詞序的句法問題，吸引了近八十個來自不同院校院系的同仁、研究生旁聽，討論氣氛熱烈。有關研討會的詳情，可瀏覽以下網頁：

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ics/clrc/wordorder/>

香港中文大學
中國文化研究所吳多泰中國語文研究中心提供

Linguistics Seminars at CUHK

- (1) Professor Io-Kei Joaquim Kuong (鄭耀基) of University of Macau was invited to T.T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre of the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and gave a talk entitled ***The Grammatical Journey to the East: Étienne Fourmont's Linguae Sinarum Mandarinicae*** (「語法東遊記：十八世紀法國學者福爾孟《中國官話》初探」) on April 26, 2012. The scholars and research students actively participated in the discussion. This talk has enhanced our understanding of the early syntax of Mandarin and the study of it.
- (2) Professor Richard S. Kayne of New York University was invited to T.T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre of the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and gave a talk entitled ***Comparative Syntax and English 'is to'*** on May 16, 2012. This talk focused on linguistic variation and parameters. About 60 colleagues and research students attended the talk and had a lively discussion. Every participant benefited greatly by Prof. Kayne's talk.



Contributed by
T.T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre
Institute of Chinese Studies, CUHK

Members' Activities

Interview

Dr. Adams Bodomo of HKU was interviewed by the Stanford Humanities Center in March 2012 [[LINK](#)].

Publications

Law, Paul. (2012). Some syntactic and semantic properties of the existential construction in Malagasy. *Lingua* 121: 1588-1630.

Abstract

The existential construction with the predicate *-isy* in Malagasy is shown to have an unaccusative structure in which the predicate may take either (i) a DP-complement, with an optional locative adjunct and an optional PP or (ii) an IP-complement. The structure is empirically supported by various facts about adverb placement, coordination, word-order, extraction, certain cases of tense-matching between *-isy* and a following thematic predicate, as well as the lack of the stage-level vs individual-level predicate distinction in the construction. It is argued that the predicate *-isy* introduces an existential quantifier binding (i) a variable that certain DPs or the locative phrase can in principle provide or (ii) the event or unprojected arguments of a thematic predicate. The definiteness effect arises from existential quantification interacting with the structure of headless relative clauses and the constraint barring strong quantifiers in predicate position.

Cantonese Particles and Affixal Quantification by **Lee, Peppina Po-lun** (2012)

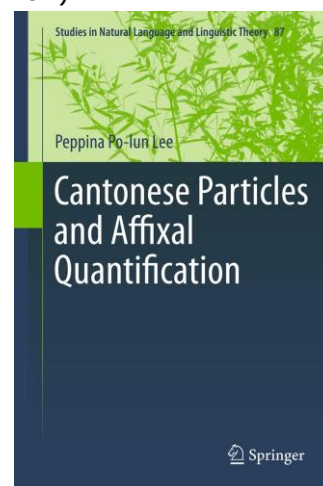
(Series: Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, Vol. 87)

URL: <http://www.springer.com/series/6559>

Synopsis

Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong and its neighboring province, has an unusually rich repertoire of verbal particles. This volume significantly augments the academic literature on their semantics, focusing on three affixal quantifiers, *-sai*, *-hoi* and *-maai*. The author shows how these verbal suffixes display a unique interplay of syntax and semantics: used in a sentence with no focus, they quantify items flexibly, according to an accessibility hierarchy; with focus, focus comes into effect after syntactic selection.

This fresh and compelling perspective in the study of particles and quantification is the first in-depth analysis of Cantonese verbal suffixes. It compares the language's affixal quantification to the alternative determiner and adverbial quantifiers. The book's syntax-semantics mapping geography deploys both descriptive and theoretical approaches, making it an essential resource for researchers studying the nexus of syntax and semantics, as well as Cantonese itself.



粵語研究新資源

粵語研究對象主要集中在口語語料。有紀錄的粵語口語材料可以追溯至約二百年前的十九世紀。這些早期材料反映出在過去這段時間裏，粵語在詞匯、語音、語法等各方面經歷了不少重要演變。這些材料在粵語歷時研究上有不少貢獻。但要有系統和嚴謹地收集和處理口語語料一直是（粵）方言研究的大挑戰，有見及此，語言資訊科學研究中心(RCLIS)通過自然語言處理技術，開發了兩個網上粵語語料庫，希望能為粵語歷時研究提供新資源。

1. 香港二十世紀中期粵語語料庫 (<http://hkcc.livac.org/>)

語料庫的語料是從 21 套五六十年代粵語長片的對白轉寫而成，其中 14 套（約 18 萬字）可供檢索。除了使用「詞匯」和「粵語讀音（粵拼）」作為檢索條件，用戶也可以使用其他條件，如電影生產年份、影星、性別等檢索語料。



2. 合遜《廣東對話》(1850) 網上版 (<http://www.livac.org/hobson/>)

Choose (1) or (2) below:
選擇以下 (1) 或 (2):

(1) Search for a character: 輸入單字

(2) List all character types 總字表 (可點擊字字)

List of 16 chapters 全書共十六章:

- Chapter 1 第1章: On the Character and Religious System of Confucious (儒教)
- Chapter 2 第2章: On the Sect and Doctrines of the Buddhists (釋教)
- Chapter 3 第3章: On the Sect and Doctrines of Taoists (道教)
- Chapter 4 第4章: On the Mohametan Religion (回教)
- Chapter 5 第5章: On Spirits and Demons (神鬼)
- Chapter 6 第6章: On Genii (神仙)
- Chapter 7 第7章: On Metempsychosis (轉輪)
- Chapter 8 第8章: On the Written Language of China (文書)
- Chapter 9 第9章: On Education (教育)
- Chapter 10 第10章: On Degrees (科舉)
- Chapter 11 第11章: On the Chinese Government (政務、財政)
- Chapter 12 第12章: On the Provincial Government (省官)
- Chapter 13 第13章: On the Medical Profession in China (診醫)
- Chapter 14 第14章: On the Marriage Rites of the Chinese (婚嫁)
- Chapter 15 第15章: On the Funeral Rites of the Chinese (喪禮)
- Chapter 16 第16章: Sentences (句子)

《廣東對話》(1850) 由當時倫敦傳道會 (London Missionary Society) 的合遜 (Benjamin Hobson, 1816-1873) 編寫，目的是方便當時到南中國工作的外國傳教士學習粵語，並向他們介紹中國。全書共有十六章，包含多種題材：宗教（儒教、道教、佛教、回教等）、神鬼、神仙、輪迴、教育、政府、習俗禮儀（如婚嫁、喪禮）。較特別的是全書以問答形式編寫。

除了粵語語言學研究之外，這些語料也可以增加我們對不同時代的社會文化歷史等的了解。

GRF Grants – Congratulations!

Principal Investigators	Project Titles
1. Umberto Ansaldo (HKU)	Complexity and simplicity in isolating languages
2. Huang Chu-Ren (PolyU)	World Chineses and their grammatical variations: Empirical studies based on comparable corpora
3. Thomas Lee (CUHK)	Documenting a syntactic change in progress in Cantonese: An exploration of the relationship between language change and language acquisition
4. Benjamin Tsou (HKIEd)	Quadrasyllabic Idiomatic Expressions (QIE's) in Chinese and neighboring languages: An investigation into linguistic and cultural history
5. Wee Lian-Hee (HKBU)	Illuminating the structure of syllables through experimentation using the play language (Verlan)

1. *Complexity and simplicity in isolating languages*

Languages can have different types of grammar. In some languages almost every word consists of one single form (or morpheme), such as Chinese, where there is a transparent one-to-one mapping of word and function; in other languages words can be composed by combining several forms (or morphemes), i.e. there is a one-to-many correspondence of word and function. The former are called isolating (or analytic), and can be said to be morphologically simple; the latter are called inflected (or synthetic), and can be seen as morphologically complex. An example from Mandarin illustrates the nature of isolating morphology tā kàn shū: he read book, 'he reads a book'. On the other hand, take an inflectional language like Italian: un mio amico: one+male my+male friend+singular+male, 'a male friend of mine', in which one word condenses several types of information, such as gender and number, shown in the inflection of the basic word.

Within linguistic theory there is a long-standing tendency to identify languages with abundant morphology (highly inflecting) as representing a higher degree of sophistication or complexity, as well as being more mature or older. It is typically pointed out that Creole languages, which are relatively young in age, are isolating, i.e. lack inflection, and can thus be considered relatively simple. This is however debated in the growing field of linguistic complexity where scholars question whether morphological abundance can be equated to overall complexity. One must consider that many languages of the isolating type are old, e.g. Chinese, Thai etc. Are these languages to be considered 'simpler' or 'younger' than, say, Indo-European ones?

Our project aims to investigate whether complexity of form necessarily entails complexity of function. Based on recent and growing evidence we suggest that we must distinguish at least two types of complexity in language: (1) overt complexity (i.e. morphological), and (2) hidden complexity i.e. functional and inferential complexity. While (1) has been relatively clearly defined and quantified in linguistics, (2) is yet poorly understood. This project aims to develop our understanding of hidden complexity and ways in which to measure it, based on the investigation of isolating languages such as Chinese and Creoles.

2. *World Chineses and Their Grammatical Variations: Empirical Studies based on Comparable Corpora*

The term World Chineses (全球華語), though not as common as World Englishes, is becoming more and more widely used with the increasing popularity of Chinese as a second language and with the Chinese diaspora spreading and growing. The lexical variations among World Chineses, such as region-specific neologism (new words), meaning variations of the same word, and the use of different words to express the same meaning, are easily observed and often studied. However, such studies are typically based on incidental observations and lacks in both coverage and rigor to give a systematic account of the core and variable properties of World Chineses. The availability of comparable corpora (i.e. two or more corpora with similar topics and coverage) of different variants of Chinese enabled corpus-studies of such lexical variations and heralded many possibilities of research on World Chineses. For instance, the LIVAC synchronic Chinese corpus generated exciting and comprehensive studies on lexical variations among different Chinese communities and recently completed Chinese Gigaword Corpus offered additional possibilities. Yet, to better understand the dynamicity of World Chineses and how variants of World Chineses can overcome their differences to communicate efficiently, we need to study grammatical variations of World Chineses. In this study, we propose a comparable-corpus-based approach to study grammatical variations among three of the most dominant form of World Chineses: Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong; while including Singapore Mandarin for some of the studies. An innovative statistical method for automatic comparison and extraction of possible patterns of grammatical variations is adopted. Such variations are then carefully studied by linguists to offer explanatory generalizations and to make possible predictions. We will focus on three sets of constructions anchored by verbs: light verb constructions, VO compounds, and aspectual markers. All grammatical variations will be documented and generalizations will be given. Our study will be the first comprehensive study of World Chineses and will shed light on how



typological characteristics of Mandarin Chinese and its unique orthography contribute to and restrict possible variations. We also expect results of our study to be incorporated in the proposed World Chinese Dictionary.

3. Documenting a syntactic change in progress in Cantonese: An exploration of the relationship between language change and language acquisition

Language is in constant flux, caused by changes in the I(nternalized)-languages in the minds/brains of individuals. Language change is necessarily related to language acquisition, since children plant the seeds of change by hypothesizing grammars that may be different from the adults'. Generative studies over the last fifty years have developed acquisition-based theories and models of language change, addressing issues such as the direction of change, the gradualness vs. abruptness of change, and how innovations may arise and spread through a community of speakers (Halle 1962, Kiparsky 1968, Lightfoot 1991, 1999; Roberts 2007; Niyogi and Berwick 1995; Yang 2000). Empirical studies of language variation and change have provided interesting generalizations on the transition, embedding, and actuation problems of language change (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968; Labov 1972, 1975), such as the irreversibility of change (Shen 1997), the constancy of the rate of change across linguistic contexts (Kroch 1989), and the reality of lexical diffusion in syntactic change (Wang 1969, Yue-Hashimoto 1993, Zhang 1995, 2000).

While previous studies of Chinese have tackled the relationship between language change and language acquisition in the context of sound change (Shen 1997), virtually no attempt has been made in the area of syntax. This project will document in detail an ongoing syntactic change in Hong Kong Cantonese: the insertion of the nominalizer *ge3* between a noun and a sortal classifier, a change relevant to our understanding of how the count-mass distinction is manifested in the language. The innovative structure will be studied against a broad age and time spectrum, using interviews, elicited narratives, grammaticality judgment tasks, naturalistic and experimental data from child language of an earlier period, as well as radio and television shows of different periods.

Framed in a broadly mentalist perspective, the study addresses issues such as (i) the extent to which the variation among age groups (apparent time data) will reflect changes evidenced in speakers from different periods (real time data); (ii) how the syntactic change originates and spreads through the language, with reference to functional load and lexical diffusion; (iii) whether the diffusion of the change can be approximated by a logistic function, and whether the rate of change is constant across contexts; and (iv) whether the ongoing change has been restructuring the Cantonese nominal in a fundamental way. Our detailed documentation of the syntactic change will provide a solid empirical foundation for studying the relationship between grammatical change and language acquisition.

4. Quadrasyllabic Idiomatic Expressions (QIE's) in Chinese and Neighboring Languages: An Investigation into Linguistic and Cultural History

The use of idiomatic language and figurative speech is common in daily communication, and its study is important for understanding language, rhetorics, literacy and cultural history.

This project takes an uncommon approach to explore two major areas of interest below by means of the common but relatively unique and inadequately studied Chinese Quadrasyllabic Idiomatic Expressions (QIE's), e.g. 不三不四 [not-3-not-4: improper, inappropriate], similar to English "neither fish nor fowl" but with much more negative connotations, or 四面楚歌 [4-side-'Chu'-chant: surrounded by enemies]. These QIE's have:

(a) 4 syllables with customary parallel linguistic patterns; (b) richer semantic and cultural content than superficial word meanings; and draw on (c) metalinguistic skills for differentiation between literal vs. figurative meanings, positive vs. negative connotations, and logical deduction. QIE's are also pervasive among Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese (i.e. QIE-prone languages), but NOT among other neighboring languages such as Uyghur, Mongolian or Manchu (i.e. QIE-resistant languages). To understand such drastically divergent developments, we explore the differential sociolinguistic status and penetration of QIE-like structures or resistance to them in these two kinds of languages.

Furthermore, the plentiful QIE's among the QIE-prone pre-literate non-Sinitic languages of Southwestern China such as Zhuang also invite comparison with the above two kinds of languages, and raise new questions on whether they might reflect deeper affinity than contact-induced areal linguistic features when compared with neighboring Cantonese.

Our two major related areas of interest are: (1) As a linguistic artifact, how may QIE's be studied in terms of inter-family or intra-language family transmissions in language history? More specifically, can QIE's be a salient genetic marker of a language family? How does Zhuang, whose native QIE's apparently exceed non-native ones, compare with its neighboring Cantonese, with which it shares considerable other common linguistic features, and which shows some interesting differences from northern dialects? Could southern Chinese and neighboring non-Sinitic peoples share deeper genetic or other links than commonly understood in terms of language evolution?

(2) How and why has the Sinitic civilization made consequential and differential impact on its neighbors? The logographic writing system and QIE's have impacted on Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese for more than a millennium, but why not on the neighboring northern and western

Turko-Altaic tribes, including the powerful Mongol and Manchu conquerors of China? Is adoption of logographic writing system a necessary and/or sufficient condition for QIE's? Are QIE's linguistically more emblematic of Sinosphere than logographic writing system? What are some contributing factors beyond those under Sprachbund (Linguistic Area) such as social structure (including religion)? What bearing do the pre-literate but QIE-prone languages such as Zhuang have on the above hypothesis?

Answers to these questions could also shed more light on the formation and cultural history of Sinitic and other civilizations. They will be enhanced by a new curated database and lengthy treatments of QIE's in relevant cases.

5. *Revealing the Structure of Syllables through Experimentation Using the Play Language (Verlan)*

This project studies the internal structure of syllables with particular reference to Cantonese speakers of English. While the Cantonese syllable is relatively simple (uncontroversially CVC, where C=consonant and V=vowel), English syllables can go up to CCCVCCCC. A natural question that arises is how the extra elements are represented in the Cantonese speakers' mental phonological system when their pronunciations are prima facie similar to the standard, i.e. pronunciations are not transliterations where stick is [sitik], but rather regularly as [stik]. Issues of syllable structure have rarely been studied from an experimental perspective where speakers have to manipulate these phonological elements. This study with Cantonese speakers of English involves experiments that entice the speakers to manipulate entities in the syllable through using a specific play language known as Verlan. In Verlan, speakers attempt to speak in reverse, so that cat would be pronounced [tæk]. To avoid biases, training will be done with Cantonese stimuli and participants will extrapolate their manipulative strategies to English words. With a simpler syllable make-up, Cantonese stimuli would be sufficiently structure-neutral so that results obtained for English syllables are not attributable to any undesirable priming effects from the training. Such a study offers a window into the mental phonological system.

The syllable is the most salient prosodic unit any speaker of a natural language perceives. It is made up of smaller entities called segments, e.g. cat is a monosyllabic word consisting of three segments [kæt]. Since the 1940s, the mainstream belief is that the segments are abstract timing units organized into constituents such as onsets and rimes consisting of nucleus and coda, hence [onsetk[rime[nucleusæ][codat]]. In the 1980s, this Onset-Rime Model (OR-Model) gave way to the Moraic Model (μ -Model) of the syllable where segments are identified by their relevance for contributing to syllable weight. Segments are no longer thought of as timing units and do not form constituents. Though less intuitive, the μ -Model is argued to be superior to the OR-Model in its ability to explain why prosodic patterns do not make reference to fine distinctions of syllable length but instead apply coarsely to a two-(sometimes three) way distinction of heavy and light syllables. The μ -Model and the OR-Model make different predictions about what manipulation speakers can do to syllables. The OR-Model by virtue of the constituencies, predicts that manipulation can be done to groups of segments while preserving order in ways not possible with the μ -Model.

New Linguistics Department

**Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies,
The Institute of Education (HKIEd)**

Department of
Linguistics and Modern Language Studies

語言學及現代語言系

The [Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies](#) (LML) at HKIEd was established in 2012 upon the restructuring of the Faculty of Languages, now re-titled the Faculty of Humanities. It aims to play a leading role in the scientific study of human language, its learning and its use in multilingual contexts, striving for a better understanding of the role of language in mind and in society.

Because of the progress in information technology, human communications have been changing drastically. Now we often find ourselves communicating via multimedia devices that allow multilingual switching. Records of communication can be stored and transmitted instantly with very little limitations. The impacts of these changes to human language system, its learning and its use have yet been fully gauged. LML, avowedly the youngest linguistics department in Hong Kong, will make its best effort in this exciting and challenging scientific inquiry.

With the above undertakings, LML also anticipates synergies between general linguistics and applied linguistics in the curriculum development of language education and language studies.

LML, together with the [Research Centre on Linguistics and Language Information Sciences](#) will jointly host this year's **LSHK Annual Research Forum** in December.