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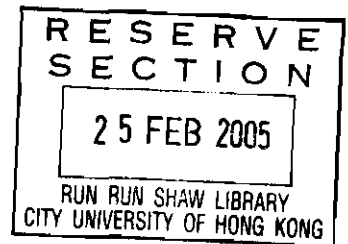
Language Contact and Language Comparison
- the Case of Bai
語言接觸與語言比較 - 以白語為例

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知之爲知之，不知爲不知，是知也。

-----孔子 《論語》

..

We can imagine that this complicated array of moving things which constitutes “the world” is something like a great chess game being played by the gods, and we are observers of the game. We do not know what the rules of the game are; all we are allowed to do is to watch the playing. Of course, if we watch long enough, we may eventually catch on to a few of the rules.

-----R. P. Feynman 1963:2-1

Abstract

This study proposes the **Distillation Method** for the comparative studies on languages in contact, and applies the method to the Bai language, which comes under heavy contact with Chinese. The distillation method consists of the following steps: (i) Intra-comparison; (ii) Inter-comparison; and (iii) Recognition. The intra-comparison may exclude later borrowings and recent innovations in the Bai dialects after their separation from Proto-Bai. The second step, inter-comparison is used to exclude some early borrowings before Proto-Bai. Therefore, the data on the genetic transmission of the Bai language may be made cleaner. In the recognition part, two methods, the **Inexplicability Principle** and the **Rank Theory** can be made use to recognize the inheritance status of the lexical items in the cleaner data. The steps as outlined above must follow this order strictly, otherwise the distillation will not be effective and may result in erroneous eradication of lexical items from the oldest layer as well as wrong inclusion of borrowed or innovative items.

Intra-comparison uses the first-hand data from nine different Bai dialects to reconstruct a Proto-Bai system, including the phonological system, some morphosyntactic structures and some basic words. In principle, Proto-Bai contains only the elements of the Bai dialects inherited from their common ancestor. Nineteen innovations, including phonological innovations, semantic innovations and lexical replacements are selected as criteria for subgrouping the nine modern Bai dialects. Two phylogenetic algorithms, PAUP and PENNY, are used to generate the tree for the nine Bai dialects based on the nineteen characters. This work proposes a subgroup structure for the Bai dialects - Western Bai vs. Eastern Bai.

Inter-comparison mainly stratifies the Sino-Bai related words thus allowing the exclusion of borrowed layers in Proto-Bai from Chinese. The rest of the Sino-Bai related words after this distillation will be accumulated as the “oldest” layer, which

represents the cleaner data.

Two ways, namely, the **Inexplicability Principle** and Chen's (1996) **Rank Theory** are then used to recognize the refined Sino-Bai related words as cognates rather than borrowings.

The comparison between Bai and Chinese does shed new light on Old Chinese phonology: (i) Two categories of *qusheng* (departing tone) in OC, one with -s endings, another without -s endings; (ii) The source of Chongniu Div.4 is proposed to have been derived from *-l-; (iii) Some unknown C- of consonant clusters were made clear, etc.

From the viewpoint of Sino-Bai comparison, some interesting points on the comparative works on Sino-Tibetan languages are addressed. In this thesis, the patterns of simplification of C_{VO}-C- clusters in Bai, Chinese, and Tibetan can be taken as an example to illustrate that more detailed rules are needed to establish the evolution from Proto-Sino-Tibetan. Also, multiple correspondences in Chinese to a category in Written Tibetan alert us into seriously treating stratification.

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