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The phonology of Shaoxing Chinese

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Jisheng Zhang

The Phonology of Shaoxing Chinese

This thesis presents a survey of the central aspects of the phonology of Shaoxing Chinese from a synchronic perspective and on the basis of recent theoretical phonological developments, with the secondary goal of casting some light on current issues in the phonology of Modern Chinese (Mandarin).

In particular, the thesis presents an analysis of syllable structure, focusing on the syllabic status of the prenuclear glide in Shaoxing. It captures this by way of a multiple-specifier X-bar syllable structure, which allows a syllable to be parsed into Onset and Final, instead of Onset and Rhyme. It argues that the prenuclear glide in Shaoxing is neither in the Onset nor in the Rhyme, but located in the specifier position of N''' .

This thesis claims that both voiced initial obstruents and low-register tones, though in complementary distribution, occur in the underlying representation in Shaoxing. It assumes that there are “filler” onsets in the surface representation to satisfy the consonant-tone correlation and that there are also onsetless syllables, which are toneless when unstressed.

The thesis also presents a systematic and explicit formulation of the intricacies of tone sandhi in SX. It assumes that tone sandhi in Shaoxing is realized by tone feature spreading and delinking, and does not involve register features. It presents a metrically-based analysis with a hierarchical constraint ranking that precisely captures the tonal sandhi behaviour and accounts for all the sandhi rules in Shaoxing disyllabic structures.

This thesis is of interest for general phonologists and for phonologists working on Chinese languages.



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