

# Consonant and lexical tone interaction: Evidence from two Chinese dialects

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## **Consonant and lexical tone interaction**

### Evidence from two Chinese dialects

This dissertation provides a comprehensive look at the consonant-tone interaction embedded in a description of the sound system of two under-documented Chinese dialects, namely Lili Wu Chinese and Shuangfeng Xiang Chinese. In the existing literature, consonant-tone interaction generally concerns a [voiceless/H]-[voiced/L] co-occurrence pattern. A high tone usually co-occurs with a voiceless consonant, while a low tone usually co-occurs with a voiced consonant. However, largely because of the high level of homogeneity in the languages sampled, and the lack of access to up-to-date statistical techniques, this [voiceless/H]-[voiced/L] pattern has veiled the full picture of consonant-tone interaction across the world's languages.

Based on a series of phonetic studies of phonological contrasts, there are two key findings that contribute to our understanding of the diversity in consonant-tone interaction. First, voiceless aspirated onsets can also co-occur with low tones. This finding is antagonistic to the [voiceless/H]-[voiced/L] pattern which posits that only contrastively voiced onsets can be in favor of low tones. Second, the realization of consonant-tone interaction is not only specific between languages but also within languages. Speakers of different generations of a given language can utilize phonetic cues differently to signal the same phonological contrasts.

This dissertation will be of interest to experimental phoneticians, laboratory phonologists, as well as to those interested in sound change. Understanding the interaction between consonant and tone also contributes to our knowledge of the sound systems of Chinese dialects and more broadly speaking, phonology-phonetics interface.

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