A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND THEIR CORRELATIONS IN STANDARD CHINESE

Zong-ji Wu, Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Peking, China

This paper attempts to find the distinctive features of Standard Chinese according to the traditional classification in Chinese phonology, and three DF matrices are given for the SC vowels, consonants and tones. It also proposes an "N-binary" concept, according to the dialectic relations between binary and N-ary classifications, and provides a set of phonological correlation patterns revealing in this way the quantitative changes in SC phonemes.

Subjects

As the DF must be adequate for characterizing important phonetic differences between languages, we adopt several extra features from the traditional taxonomy of Chinese phonology in choosing the features for SC, i.e., open/closed and spread/protruded for vowels; aspirated/non-aspirated for consonants, and rising/falling, level/concave, high/low for tones.

Since a segment in the sequence of speech cannot be represented merely by two opposite features, and since the allophones between phonemes are varied almost continuously, we suggest here three patterns to designate these correlations. In the pattern of 7 vowels, 4 pairs of DF are distributed in a triangular diagram to designate such quantitative sound changes relevant to the variations of tongue positioning, jaw-opening and lip-rounding. In consonants, 4 pairs of DF are used to construct a matrix, in which 24 consonants of SC are positioned, to show the quantitative and qualitative changes. As for the tones of SC, 4 tones are sited at each corner of a quadrangle to build up a interwoven network of 16 combinations, in which the allotones of tone sandhi are shown.