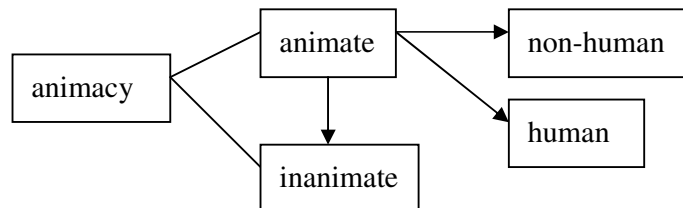Variation of Classifier in Si Xien Hakka in Taiwan

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Classifiers are required between numerals and nouns in Hakka. The relationship between classifiers and nouns is semantically and cognitively constrained rather than arbitrary (Li, 2005; Tai and Wu, 2006; Wu, 2001). Li (2005) proposes that *tsak* is the general classifier in Hakka and it can classify animals, body parts, abstract concepts, objects, transportation, human or spiritual things and abstract objects. However, after more data are observed, it seems that *tsak* does not collocate with all animals and objects. This paper primary aims at investigating the variation of classifier *tsak* construction in Si Xien Hakka, a major sub-dialect of Hakka in Taiwan.

A pilot sample is obtained through 10 native Si Xian Hakka speakers in Miao-Li County, the biggest concentration of Si Xian Hakka people. Five are female, five male, and their ages ranged from 48 to 83 years old. All informants are bilinguals who use Si Xien Hakka and Mandarin, the official language in Taiwan, as their primary languages. None of them are fluent in Southern Min which is a dominant local dialect in Taiwan.

The following cognitive structure explains why *tsak* could collocate with various nouns (Li, 2005). The primary division of Hakka classifier is based on animacy and the distinction between human and non-human is on the basis of animate principle. *Tsak* original mainly refer to animals and its meaning spread to inanimate and human.

Base on the pilot data, however, *tsak* neither collocate with some one dimensional animals (e.g. **yit tsak sha* 'a snake') nor with some inanimate objects (e.g. **yit tsak sam* 'a cloth', **yit tsaki yap* e 'a leaf', **yit tsak pau siok* 'a corn'). The semantic and cognitive meanings of *tsak* spread through linguistic space gradually just like the mechanism of wave theory (Bailey, 1973) and lexical diffusion (Wang, 1969). That is, the meaning of tsak is in the progress of bleaching and it could not classify the nouns mentioned above. Those nouns are collocated with the classifiers which are Hakka-specific (e.g. *yit liang sam* 'a cloth', *yit pi yap* e 'a leaf', *yit kiap pau siok* 'a corn'). Hakka specific classifiers are cognitive salient and marked and they can not be replaced by *tsak* easily.

The evidence of *tsak* undergoes the process of diffusion is tsak could replace liap

without changing referential meaning (e.g. *yit liap/tsak kiu* 'an apple'). *Kiu* 'apple' original collocates with *liap*, but it sometimes could with *tsak*. *Liap* emphasizes the roundish shape of apple but *tsak* does not. *Tsak* just fulfill the classifier construction and its meaning is bleaching.

Mi which is also a Hakka-specific classifier collocates with long-shaped animals. However, some informants use *tiau* which is referring to long inanimate object to replace with *mi*. This replacement could be result form the influence of Mandarin. The counterpart of *tiau* in mandarin is *tiao* which is used to collocate with long entities, regardless animacy. Through languages contact, semantic property of *tiao* in Mandarin influences that of *tiau* in Hakka. *Tiao* in Mandarin could not be replaced with the general classifier and this constraint also applied to *tiau* in Hakka. Thus, general Hakka classifier *tsak* could not be replaced with tiau.

This study is still on-going, more data are needed to observe the different distribution of *tsak*. The diffusion in social space and more detail of diffusion in linguistic space are also to be explored. Besides, most Hakka speakers are bilingual and Hakka classifier construction may be influenced by that in Mandarin. Thus, the issue of influence of language contact also discussed.

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