The rhythmic structure of sentences in the *Textbook of Chinese Conversation* (*TCC*)

Conference on Continuing Professional Development for Chinese Teachers
September 16th – 18th, 2016
Basel, Switzerland

content

0. introduction
1. entries
2. purposes
3. analysis
   – corpus
   – dialogue and monologue
   – linear segmentation a rhythm
4. outputs

0. introduction

Prof. PhDr. Oldřich Švarný, CSc.

- series of textbooks for beginners and advanced students of modern colloquial Chinese
- ***The Learning Dictionary of Chinese Language***

  analysis of Chinese phonological system based primarily on the description of suprasegmental level:

  rhythmical segmentation:

1) linear segmentation of sentences:

- connection of syllables into A SEGMENT, segments into A COLON and cola into sentences

2) seven degrees of syllabic prominence:

- hierarchisation of a syllable's prosodic meaning of

1. **entries**

2007: Leda Publishing House, Czech Republic – *TCC*
* response to the absence of a modern colloquial language textbook for beginners in Czech language environment
* twenty-four lessons and exercises
* three dialogue and one monologue parts
* text in pinyin transcription only
* provisional resignation on the prosodic transcription
* Palacky (PU) and T. Bata Universities, CI at PU Olomouc

absence of transcription is the source of certain limitations

2.1 **purposes**

- deepen the phonological analysis *TCC* by the transfer of its text from pinyin to prosodic transcription
- recording by two native speakers (a male and a female, both university graduates, a native of Beijing, long living in Beijing, aged 35)
- prosodic transcription elaborated by six students of Chinese Philology MA degree at PU Olomouc working as independent assessors guided by Prof. Švarný originally
- quantitative expansion of Prof. Švarný's contribution
- mainly isolated phrases x dialogue
- *Praat* (www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat)

2.2 **questions**

- average length:
  segment – colon – sentence
- changes in their length in the process of recording
- alternation of ictus-bearing and non-ictus-bearing syllables with regard to their prominences
- basic structure of the segment as the bearer of the rhythmic characteristics depending on the prominence of syllables
- rhythmic distribution of within the text:
  acronymic – ascendant – descendant

3.1 **corpus**

the corpus of *TCC*:
* 927 sentences
* 1,620 cola
* 2,617 segments
* 7,720 syllables

* 4,128 syllables (53%) tone syllables
* 2,082 syllables (27%) toneless syllables
* 1,520 syllables (20%) weakened-tone syllables

!!! 47% syllables – reduction of their tone!!!

3.1.1 dialogue

- 718 sentences (77%)
- 1,105 cola (68%)
- 1,705 segments (65%)
- 4,905 syllables (63%)

- 60% syllables x 75% sentences in the **TCC**
  i.e. sentences in the monologue part – more complex
  and longer, monologue fits Prof. Švarný's analysis more
  (length of segment: 3.1 syllables)
- length of the segment in monologue part: 2.61-3.38
- average: **2.87 syllables**

3.1.1.1 linear segmentation

a sentence average length:

- 1.5 cola (i.e. 2 sentences = 3 cola)
- 2.38 segments (i.e. 3 sentences = 7 segments)
- 6.83 syllables

a colon:

- 1.54 segments (i.e. 2 cola = 3 segments)
- 4.44 syllables (i.e. 2 cola = 9 syllables)

a segment:

- 2.87 syllables

3.1.1.2 **rhythm**

- 49% segments with one ictus (70% disyllabic – 17% trisyllabic – 8% other polysyllabic – 4% monosyllabic segments)

- 51% segments with two ictus (50% trisyllabic – 33% tetrasyllabic – 17% other polysyllabic)

- the most frequent segments are: disyllabic segments with one ictus, trisyllabic segments with two ictus, tetrasyllabic segments with two ictus (rest of material 25%)

- 36% of acronymic segments, 23% ascendantal segments and 17% descendental (25% other types)

4 **outputs**

prosodic transcription:

- improving the pedagogical-didactic range of a text qualitatively
- better understanding of suprasegmental level within modern colloquial Chinese phonological system especially
- mapping rhythmic properties of text in Chinese
- phonological-syntactic analysis of the modern colloquial language

general linguistics:

- phonology of tonal languages
- syntax of amorphous language

thank you
for your kind attention

David Uher, PhD

Department of Asian Studies

Faculty of Arts, Palacky University Olomouc

Křížkovského 8, 771 80 Olomouc

Czech Republic

david.uher@upol.cz, daviduher@yahoo.com