

SIS/ANTH 449: Social Transformation of Asia
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Handout #2

Official Languages of East Asia

Official and Minority Languages:

Japan: Japanese 日本語; also Okinawan 沖縄口, Korean, Chinese, Ainu

Korea (North and South): Korean “韓國語, 朝鮮語”

China (PRC): Mandarin 普通话 (dialects: Shanghai 吳語, Fujianese 閩語, Hakka 客家話, Cantonese 粵語, Hunanese 贛語, Jiangxi); large minority languages: *Sino-Tibetan*: Tibetan, Yi, Miao; Thai-Chuang: Chuang; *Altaic*: Korean, Manchu, Mongolian, Uighur, Kirghiz, Kazakh.

Hong Kong SAR: official: Cantonese, English; also Mandarin and Teochew (Min dialect)

Macao SAR: official: Chinese (Cantonese), Portuguese; also English, Mandarin.

Taiwan: Standard Mandarin 國語 (dialects: 64% Fujianese 福建閩南語, 21% Hakka 客家話, rest “mainland”), 2% aboriginal Malayo-Polynesian languages. « native languages now allowed in education and broadcasting »

Vietnam : Vietnamese (Việt ngữ “越語”, Tiếng Việt) 85-90% ; also Chinese, Khmer, Cham, and mountain languages of various affiliations.

Ways of Classifying Languages Typologically

-by syntax (word order and grammar)

-isolating, flexational, agglutinative

-basic word order (SVO with prepositions; SOV with postpositions)

-head directionality parameter (head initial, head final), or branching (left-branching, right branching)

-grammatical speech levels

-by morphology (how words are formed and shaped)

-monosyllabic roots with unchanging form regardless of part of speech

-polysyllabic roots with different endings for different parts of speech

-by phonology (how sounds are put together)

-tone languages

-pitch accent

-vowel harmony

-open/closed syllables

-by writing system:

-logographic (each word root has a unique symbol)

-ideographic (each concept has a symbol which may have various readings)

-syllabic (each phonemic syllable has a unique sign)

-alphabetic (each phoneme has a unique sign)

genetic classification: what languages are descended from common ancestors?

Japanese

typological classification

- agglutinative, SOV, postpositions, left-branching (head final), grammatical speech levels, verbs form passive and causative constructions (miru, mieru, miseru)
- monosyllabic and polysyllabic word roots
- open syllables (only /n/ can close syllables) with pitch accent, but no tone or vowel harmony
- mixed writing system (syllabic/ideographic), two syllabic systems (*hiragana* ひらがな, *katakana* カタカナ), and Chinese characters used both for loan words (*on-yomi* 音読み) and indigenous vocabulary (*kun-yomi* 訓読み); 1800 general use characters (*tōyō kanji* 当用漢字), 92 name characters (need 3,000 or so to be really literate)
- dialects: East, West, Kyūshū, Okinawa; Tōkyō standard

genetic classification

- most likely related to Altaic language family, but classification is controversial
- vocabulary: largely indigenous but with large numbers of Chinese culture terms and Sino-Japanese technical terms, and recent introduction of many English terms both technical and popular

Korean

- agglutinative, SOV, postpositions, left-branching, grammatical speech levels, verbs form passive and causative constructions (matta, mach'ida, mach'uda 맞다, 맞히다, 맞추다)
- monosyllabic and polysyllabic word roots
- open and closed syllables with complex sound changes and vowel harmony
- North Korea—alphabetic writing system
- South Korea—mixed alphabetic with logographic (for Chinese loan words only); tendency to drop logographs except in academic writing
- dialects: main division is between Eastern dialects with pitch accent (Yŏngnam, Hamgy ŏng), and Western (standard) dialects without pitch accent (North-South distinctions less fundamental, and don't correspond with the DMZ)
- genetic classification: generally thought to be most closely related to the Tungusic branch of the Altaic language family
- vocabulary: core vocabulary mostly indigenous but majority of words in dictionary are of Chinese origin (both Chinese and Sino-Japanese technical vocabulary); in North Korea a systematic attempt to coin indigenous technical vocabulary; in South Korea recent introduction of many English terms

Chinese

typological classification

- isolating, SVO, co-verbs rather than prepositions, left-branching, no grammatical speech levels
- monosyllabic word roots
- logographic writing system first systematized around 220 B.C.; classical language (*wenyan* 文言) has given way to form closer to spoken language (*baihua* 白话) in 20th century; ROC syllabic script for pronunciation (invented 1919, official 1937, still used on Taiwan); PRC simplified characters (*jianhuazi* 简化字) introduced in 1956, with *pinyin*

拼音 romanization in 1958 used for teaching purposes

important dialects

- Standard language based on Beijing (known as Mandarin in English but as ‘ordinary language’ [*putonghua* 普通话] in PRC, ‘national language’ [*guoyu* 国语] in Taiwan, and Chinese [*huayu* 华语] in Singapore—mostly open syllables (only n, ng & r as word final consonants) with 4 tones
- Cantonese [*yueyu* 粤语] (spoken in Hong Kong and Guangdong Province)—open and closed syllables (6 final consonants) with 9 tones
- Fujianese [*minyu* 闽语] (spoken in Fujian Province)—open and closed syllables (3 final consonants) and 7 tones
- Shanghai [*wuyu* 吴语] (spoken in the lower Yangtse valley around Shanghai)—2 tones
- Hakka [*kejiahua* 客家话] (spoken in the hills of Guangdong and neighboring areas)

Taiwan: Mandarin standard, majority native Fujianese speakers (also many Hakka, and some Cantonese speakers)

N.B. only Cantonese, among the dialects, is widely written and used officially (in Hong Kong and Macau, with lesser official use in Canton); among overseas Chinese Cantonese is the most common dialect in Vietnam, and in older US Chinatowns (especially San Francisco); Fujianese is most common in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia; recent US Chinese immigrants have often been speakers of Mandarin or other dialects in addition to Cantonese (recent immigrants sometimes distinguish between themselves 新桥 and long-standing immigrants of poorer background 老桥, and these newer immigrants tend to avoid Chinatown living)

genetic classification

- Sinic branch of Sino-Tibetan language family
- vocabulary: almost entirely indigenous with many Sino-Japanese and indigenous loan translations for technical vocabulary

Vietnamese

typological classification

- isolating, SVO, right branching, prepositions, no grammatical speech levels
- monosyllabic word roots
- open and closed syllables with tones (6 in north, 5 in south)
- logographic writing system (*chữ nôm*) official until 20th century; alphabetic writing system with tones indicated by diacritical marks from about 1650 (*quốc ngữ*), official since 1910
- dialects: Northern literary standard (Hanoi), Central (Hue), Southern (Saigon)

genetic classification

- Austroasiatic, most closely related to Muong and Khmer
- vocabulary: indigenous core but majority of words in dictionary (particularly technical words and words of ‘high culture’) of Chinese origin

language comparisons

-syntax:

- isolating: Chinese, Vietnamese
- agglutinative: Japanese, Korean
- SVO: Chinese, Vietnamese
- SOV: Japanese, Korean
- left branching: Chinese, Japanese, Korean
- right branching: Vietnamese
- has grammatical speech levels: Japanese, Korean
- does not have grammatical speech levels: Chinese, Vietnamese

-morphology:

- monosyllabic word roots: Chinese, Vietnamese
- monosyllabic and polysyllabic word roots: Japanese, Korea

-phonology:

- tone language: Chinese, Vietnamese
- vowel harmony: Korean

-writing system:

- alphabetic: Vietnamese (roman alphabet), Korean (hangŭl/chosŏngŭl, also mixed alphabetic logographic)
- mixed syllabic and logographic: Japanese
- logographic: Chinese

-genetic classification:

- Sino-Tibetan Family—Chinese, Tibetan, Burmese, Hmong
- Altaic Family—Korean, Japanese (probably), Manchu, Mongolian, Turkic
- Austroasiatic Family—Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai (maybe)