

On the Phonology Characteristics of Leizhou Dialect in Malaysia

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Abstract

Based on first-hand materials obtained from field investigations in Malaysia, the results show that: firstly, there are 17 initials in the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, including the implosives initial and the [f] initial. The pronunciation of Leizhou dialect in China is already rare, some of which are retained in the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia. Its initial consonant is borrowed from local Hua Yu or other Chinese dialects. Secondly, the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia has 46 finals. The pronunciation and timbre of some of its vowels are similar to the Yue dialect of Malaysia [ɛ] main vowel. Thirdly, there are 8 monosyllabic tones in the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia. The pronunciation and tone of some of its characters are similar to the Xia Yin entering tone of Yue dialect of Malaysia.

Keywords

Malaysia, Leizhou Dialect, Min Dialect, Phonology, Leizhou Peninsula

1. Introduction

The Leizhou dialect mentioned in this article is a Chinese dialect spoken by the majority of early residents on the Leizhou Peninsula in China, and is locally referred to as the “Li dialect”. However, it is not the language of the Li ethnic minority, but a regional sub dialect of the Min dialect, which is different from the Min dialects of Hainan, Chaoshan and Fujian. It is our new discovery that the Leizhou dialect, as a small dialect in China, has also spread overseas, which has been little-known before. We have conducted on-site investigations on the local Leizhou dialect in Malaysia three times and obtained a large amount of first-hand materials. The materials used in this article are obtained from our field investigation, and the pronunciations are Jiang Guangwu, Jiang Guangfu, Chen Heq-

ing, Wu Huijin, Jiang Yuxian, etc.

Regarding the study of Chinese dialects in Malaysia, previous achievements mainly include Xian Weiguo (2005) [1]; Chen Xiaojin (2003) [2]; Chen Xiaojin (2014) [3]; Ma Chongqi (2019) [4]; etc. However, none of the above achievements have yet touched on Malaysia’s Leizhou dialect. Chen Limao (2019) [5] and Chen Limao (2019) [6] have written articles discussing the phonetic characteristics of Malaysian Leizhou dialect, but there has not been a specific discussion on it yet.

There are three reasons why this article chooses Leizhou dialect of Malaysia as the object of investigation and research. Firstly, Leizhou dialect is a small dialect in China. It is in an extremely disadvantaged position abroad. The number of Leizhou people in Malaysia is only a few thousand, which is extremely endangered, unlike the strong Chinese dialects such as Cantonese and Chaozhou dialect in Malaysia. The time for rescuing and investigating Leizhou dialect is even more urgent. Secondly, although Leizhou dialect belongs to one of the Min dialects, it is not completely the same as the Min dialects in Fujian, Hainan, and eastern Guangdong. Thirdly, the author of this article works on the Leizhou Peninsula in China, which is the place where Leizhou people in Malaysia migrated from China. This gives the author a unique advantage in studying Leizhou dialect.

The investigation and study of the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia have positive significance, at least including two aspects. Firstly, there are conducting on-site investigations and studying the specific practices of overseas Chinese dialects; Secondly, there are to compare it with the corresponding Chinese dialects in China, and obtain some evolutionary laws and inspirations from this, providing valuable support for the research of dialectology.

The previous research achievements related to the domestic Leizhou dialect in China mainly include Zhang Zhenxing (1986) [7]; Zhang Zhenxing (1987) [8]; Lin Lunlun (2006) [9]; Chen Yunlong (2012) [10], etc. However, these achievements only study the Leizhou dialect in China and do not involve the Leizhou dialect in Malaysia. So, what is the tone status of the Leizhou dialect in Malaysia? This article compiles field research materials on Leizhou dialect of Malaysia and attempts to answer this question, as follows:

2. The Initials of Leizhou Dialect in Malaysia

There are a total of 17 initials in the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, as follows:

6 肉马放母	p 猫富眉包	p ^h 簿拍浮配	m 毛目物袜	f 缝 <small>缝纫机</small> 封 <small>封面</small> 繁 <small>繁体字</small> 服 <small>服输</small>
	t 胆踏杜除	t ^h 锤铲胎读	n 人南难能	l 栗蜡来撞
	k 敢牙甲茄	k ^h 敲琴壳住	ŋ 颜眼鹅饿	h 火付瓦海
	t ^s 早蛇造租	t ^s 错柴市深		s 沙射西三
	ʔ 话爰字摇			

Explanation:

1) The actual pronunciation of the initial consonant of individual characters with zero initial consonants is close to [ʔ], For example, “委危伊誉荣~胭_鼻”; When pronouncing the zero initial, there is strong friction, and the actual sound value is close to [j], such as “锐”. When pronouncing the initial of a character with zero initial, it has a rounded lip color, and the actual sound value is close to [v], such as “韭菜黄 $k\epsilon u^{52}ts^{h}ai^{21}\emptyset ui^{11}$ ”, the third sound [∅] is treated as a zero initial.

2) The actual sound value band of “以母” of the initial of ancient Chinese characters [ŋ] Nasal timbre, near [hŋ], For example, “叶_叶”.

3) Implosives [ɓ] mainly come from the middle ancient 明 and 微母 characters, while individual characters are 帮 and 疑母 characters, such as “牛 [βu¹¹], 码_{码头} [pɛ⁵²], 马_{马车} [pɛ⁵²], 买 [βɔi⁵²], 卖 [βɔi²⁴]”, while “买 [βɔi³³], 卖 [βɔi²⁴]” are generally pronounced as [vɔi] or [∅uɔi] in Chinese Leizhou dialect. Almost all initials pronounced as [m] in other dialects are pronounced as [ɓ], in addition to being influenced by other local Chinese dialects such as Yue dialect.

4) There are some zero initial sounds with throat stoppage components, such as “一日译”.

5) The initials of Leizhou dialect in Malaysia retain a certain degree of pronunciation that is not found in domestic Leizhou dialect, such as the word “米”. In Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, there are two pronunciations: “pi⁵²米饭 | mi³³”. The former should be pronounced is colloquial reading, while the latter is borrowed from other local Chinese dialects, such as Yue dialect. In the Leizhou dialect of China, the pronunciation of the word “米” has been pronounced in many places [vi³¹], which has triggered the process of lip lightening: p > v. For example, the word “马” is pronounced as [pɛ⁵²] and pronounced as [vɛ³¹] in Chinese Leizhou dialect is Similarly. But when pronouncing the word “Malaysia”, the word “马” was pronounced as [ma⁵²], which was modified according to the pronunciation of the local Chinese Hua YU.

6) In the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, I have not seen [ɿ] initial. Such as the word “烧” is pronounced as [hiɔ¹³] in some Leizhou dialects in China, but In the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, it is pronounced as [siɔ²⁴]. This indicates that there are two possibilities. The first one is in the domestic Leizhou dialect, which may be used in some locations [ɿ] initial may be epigenetic and contact induced. The second one is the domestic Leizhou dialect which originally had [ɿ] initial, after broadcasting overseas, [ɿ] initial has disappeared. The author leans towards the first possibility, as the early Leizhou dialect originated from the Fujian Min dialect, and apart from the Puxian region, there are no such initials in the typical Fujian Min dialect, indicating that the generation of such initials is a later occurrence. It is possible that when broadcasting overseas, the Leizhou dialect did not yet produce such initials.

There is a phenomenon of the ancient origin of the initial in Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, such as the word “牛” being pronounced [βu¹¹] in Leizhou dialect of

Malaysia However, in the domestic Leizhou dialect, the word “牛” is often used [vu¹¹], and the evolution path is: ɓ > V. such as the word “方” is used in Malaysia’s Leizhou dialect being pronounced [paŋ²⁴], in domestic Leizhou dialect, the word “方” is often being pronounced [huan¹³], evolution path: p > h. As the word “我” is used in the Leizhou dialect of Malaysia being pronounced [ɓa⁵²], in domestic Leizhou dialect, the word “我” is often pronounced [ɔua⁵²], and the evolution path is: ɓ > ɔ.

For example, it represents the semantic meaning of “香”, which is pronounced as [p^haŋ²⁴] in Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, this character should be “芳”, while in domestic Leizhou dialect, it is pronounced as [hiɔ²⁴], this word means “香”. Here, the pronunciation of Leizhou dialect of Malaysia is more ancient.

7) The [f] initial is influenced by the local Chinese Hua Yu or other Chinese dialects.

3. The Final Consonants of Malaysian Rayju Dialect

There are a total of 43 vowels in Leizhou dialect of Malaysia, as follows:

	i 余米弟戏气	u 鼠吕鱼师举
a 饱搭插鸭甲	ia 车谢野蚁命	ua 拖大沙带纸
ɔ 鹅饿错毛锁	iɔ 借桥腰钓唱	
ɛ 茶牙虾生白	iɛ 坐井青星静	uɛ 果火瓜月节
	iu 票庙烧州油	ui 灰水推背雷
ai 个来菜海梨		uai 怪坏快拐怀
ɔi 买卖鞋鸡八		
au 帽草包头九	iau 表条臭箫料	
ɔu 步布五芋吴		
iu a 热		
	im 浸心深任音	
am 潭南感含敢	iam 咸尖验欠甜	
	iŋ 浅片见根凳	
eŋ 先庆清肯轻	ieŋ 层	
aŋ 单弹安田贫	iaŋ 间变面认厂	uaŋ 完全选风王
ɔŋ 仓懂通动公	iɔŋ 永容用	uŋ 烟船门粉滚
	ip 立入急竹叔	
ap 杂鸽盒盖暗	iap 夹接业贴碟	
	ik 别结实吉得	
ek 特逼菊曲局	iek 七笔	
ak 达袜勺角壳	iak 雀谷熟烛绿	uak 法发决憋
ɔk 各族福服属	iɔk 玉育	uk 滑律出骨卒

Explanation:

1) The actual sound value of the [ai] vowel is between [ai] and [ɛi], such as: “西左~右(白)戴赖戒~指”.

2) The actual sound values of Most of [au] [ɛu] vowels are close to [ɐu], for example, “导脑劳头”. The actual sound values of Minority [ɛu] vowel are close to [iu], such as “路”.

3) The actual sound values of [ɛu] vowel and [iu] vowel tend to be mixed.

4) The actual sound values of the [au] and [ak] vowels of some words are close to the [ɐ] main vowel of Yue dialect in Malaysia, such as “斗流沟头口藕狗钩沟北”.

5) There is a weakening trend in the final [-p] of the [ip] vowel, such as “竹” [tip5] in “竹笼”.

6) The Tone of Malaysian Leizhou Dialect

There are a total of 8 independent tones in Malaysian Leizhou dialect, which are short tones and have [-p] and [-k] plosive endings in both yin and yang entering tones, as follows:

阴平	阳平	阴上	阳上	阴去	阳去	阴入	阳入
24	11	52	33	21	55	5	1
拖大虾车 胎卖	鹅鱼余泥 皮球	火写土古 女洗	蜡塔甲铁 百格	破夏布户 句菜	作尺限辣 客壁	鸽急达 七吉出	盒十入 袜日直

Explanation:

1) The actual value of level tone with a voiceless consonant is nearly 13, such as “拖佳”. The actual value of level tone with a voiced consonant is nearly 22, such as “才罗培”. There is a downward trend in the end of entering tones of individual characters, such as “俄脐”. The actual value of some characters of level tone with a voiceless consonant has the same tone as level tone with a voiced consonant.

2) Some characters of the Yin departing or going tone and Yin rising tone are pronounced the same as level tone with a voiceless consonant, such as “素吃~娶”. The actual value of Yang departing or going tone is nearly 53, such as “贺币”.

3) There is a phenomenon of confusion between Yin rising tone and Yang rising tone, with some characters of Yang rising tone are pronounced in the same tone as Yin rising tone.

4) Some characters of level tone with a voiceless consonant are mixed with characters, p of level tone with a voiced consonant is pronounced 24.

5) There are some characters of level tone with a voiceless consonant that are mixed with Yin departing or going tone out and are pronounced 21.

From the above, it can be seen that compared with the domestic Leizhou dialect in China, Leizhou dialect in Malaysia has their own characteristics. For example, some initials have lagged behind in evolution, which is consistent with the historical fact that Leizhou dialect in Malaysia survived after being broadcast

over a hundred years ago, thus preserving ancient sounds to a certain extent. Leizhou dialect of Malaysia not only retains its antiquity, but also has innovation. The innovation of its initials mainly comes from the contact and borrowing of local Chinese HuaYu and other Chinese dialects. As for the tone sandhi, phonological and tonal coordination, as well as syllable tables of Leizhou dialect in Malaysia, the author will write a separate paper for further exploration.

In addition, there are also involves tone sandhi, phonological coordination, and syllable tables about the Leizhou dialect in Malaysia. At the same time, the cultural differences between China and Malaysia also have an impact on the Leizhou dialect in Malaysia, but it mainly in terms of vocabulary borrowing. I will write a separate article to further explore this.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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