



• Overview

The Regularity Hypothesis

- Sound change is **regular**
- Sound change is **conditioned by phonetics only** (Osthoff & Brugmann 1878)

Classical Lexical Diffusion

- Sound change **propagates gradually** through the lexicon
- Other factors (e.g. **frequency, syntactic category**) play a role (Wang 1969, Bybee 2017)

Present Issue

- Suzhou Chinese shows a lexically-determined pronunciation alternation, "Differing Literary and Colloquial Readings" ("文白異讀")
- Literary and Colloquial forms follow different courses of change (Qian 1992, Ye 1993)

Research questions

- Is the Differing Readings an exception to the regularity principle? Is it a diffusional change?
- If not, what other factors are in play?

• Differing Literary and Colloquial Readings

- Gives same morpheme/character different pronunciations
- Colloquial: **native** lexical items, **casual** register
- Literary: **loanwords**, technical terms, **formal** register.
- Not a case of polyphony (Chao 1928, Wang 1955, Shen 2012)

	Word	Gloss	Suzhou	Mandarin
Literary	爭論	n. dispute	[tsən]	[tʃən]
Colloquial	爭	v. to quarrel	[tsā:]	
Literary	生物	n. biology	[sən]	[ʃən]
Colloquial	生活	n. life	[sā:]	

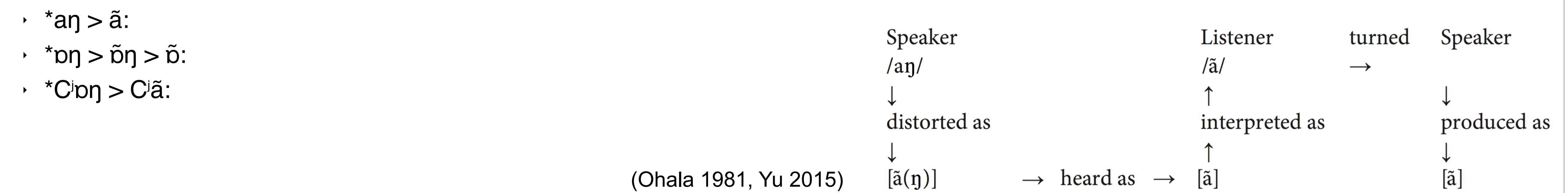
• The Analysis — Phonetics-induced Change

Coarticulatory effects

- **Coda tends to agree in place of articulation with preceding nuclei**
 - *əŋ > ən (/ə/, /n/ are unmarked for back; /ŋ/ is [+back])
 - *oŋ > oŋ, *ɔŋ > ɔŋ (/o/, /ŋ/, /ɔ/ are all [+back])
- **Palatalized onsets palatalize ('front') following nuclei**
 - *C'əŋ > Cɪn
 - *C'ɔŋ > C'ā:

Misperception & Reconstruction

- **'Distorted' phonetic signals misperceived & reconstructed in subsequent generations - *Vŋ > Ṽ**



Literary/Colloquial Split

- Only found in *Bəŋ, *aŋ and *Baŋ; clearly conditioned by phonetic environments
- ***Bəŋ and *Baŋ pattern together**
- Literary pronunciation appears to be lexically-determined, but should actually be treated as **loanwords** from Mandarin
- For the group *aŋ (爭)
 - *aŋ > ā: in Colloquial forms
 - **[əŋ] (from Mandarin) > ən** in Literary forms
- For the group *Bəŋ/*Baŋ (朋, 孟)
 - A merger between *Bəŋ and *Baŋ (*Bəŋ > *Baŋ) - *Baŋ > Bā: in Colloquial forms
 - **[əŋ] (from Mandarin) > ən** in Literary **Old** forms only
 - Literary/Colloquial distinction was lost in later generations (not enough vocabulary to keep a robust distinction?)

• The Data

Reconstruction	Mandarin Example	L-Old	L-Mid	L-Young	C-Old	C-Mid	C-Young
*əŋ	恆 [hən]			ən			
*Bəŋ	朋 [p'ən]	Bən			Bā:		
*C'əŋ	命 [m'ən]			Cɪn			
*aŋ	爭 [tʃən]		ən		ā:		
*Baŋ	孟 [mən]	Bən			Bā:		
*Haŋ	橫 [hən]			Hā:			
*ɔŋ	嘗 [tʃ'ən]	ɔŋ	õ:	õŋ	õ:		
*C'ɔŋ	兩 [l'ən]			C'ā:			
*oŋ, *Cioŋ	絨 [zən], 兄 [eŋ]			Coŋ, Cioŋ			

- Reconstruction taken from Pulleyblank (1984, 1991)
- Onset is shown when relevant.
- C: any onset; B: labial onset; H: glottal onset
- L: literary; C: colloquial;
- Old: oldest generation; Mid: middle-aged generation; Young: youngest generation
- Some irrelevant changes omitted

• Conclusions & Limitations

- **All sound change processes are phonetically conditioned and regular**
- What appeared to be 'lexical diffusion' is actually due to language contact, and is also **fully regular**
 - [əŋ] (from Mandarin) > ən, mirroring the *əŋ > ən change internally in Suzhou
 - If Literary Readings were truly diffusional, we would expect **diffusion/bleeding** (more forms carrying [əŋ] in the lexicon) overtime; the exact opposite happens in reality
- The constraints/rules operating on the language-internal (Colloquial) domains also apply to language-external (Literary) forms; nothing is 'exceptional' to the grammar