Abstract

This paper aims to explore and analyze the unique phonological characteristics of Hainan Qiongshan dialect in comparison with the Middle Chinese phonological system and other Southern Min dialects (in particular Xiamen dialect).

Qiongshan dialect belongs to one of the iconic subgroup of Hainan dialect [fucheng dialect] and can be seen as a representative of Hainan dialect. In Chinese dialectology, Hainan dialect has always been classified as a subdivision of Southern Min dialects. However Hainan dialect also has its unique phonological characteristics, which are absent from other Southern Min dialects. Hence, the phonological analysis of Qiongshan dialect not only helps in the understanding of Hainan dialects but also contributes to the understanding of the phonological characteristic of Southern Min dialects as a whole.

A word list titled "Fang Yan Diao Cha Zi Biao" [Word list for the investigation of Chinese Dialects] which consist of 3818 words, is used in the collection of phonological data from two native speakers of the Qiongshan dialect. In addition, 400 over lexical items were also investigated to further supplement the phonological data collected from the word list. From the data collected, the initials, finals and tonal systems of the Qiongshan dialect are then established. The tone sandhi patterns in disyllabic words are further explored by investigating the pronunciation of frequently used lexicons in colloquial speech.

There are several distinctive phonological features in Qiongshan dialect. Such as having implosives [6],[d] and glottal
fricative [fi] (occurs in front of high vowels [u] and [i]) in the initials, and presence of a high falling tone [51] which originated from entering tones (rusheng).

Besides, Qiongshan dialect is different from Southern Min Dialect (Xiamen dialect) in the following ways. 1) The loss of aspirated consonants [pʰ], [tʰ] and [kʰ], and addition of fricative [f] to replace [pʰ], 2) absence of nasalised finals such as [ä], [ö], [i], 3) absence of glottal stop coda [ʔ], 4) a much simpler tone sandhi pattern in disyllabic words. However, Qiongshan dialect still retains many phonological features of Southern Min Dialects such as 1) having nasal codas [-m, -n, -ŋ] and stop codas [-p -t -k], 2) the absence of the vowel [y] in finals and 3) the widespread presence of literary and colloquial pronunciations for the same syllable.