Abstract

The Southern Min dialect, one of the seven major Chinese dialects, is inappropriately yet commonly known as Hokkien in Singapore. This exercise portrays a picture of the grammar of the dialect used in Singapore. Fieldwork collecting a data of 50 each of three age-groups (namely 20-40 years of age, 40-60 years of age and above 60 years of age) reveals the grammatical features of the dialect, especially those differing from Mandarin.

Besides a concise report of the Southern Min grammar, two syntactic structure, i.e. the A-not-A question and passive structure, are studied in greater detail. Regarding the A-not-A questions, there are different types: VP-neg-VP, VP-neg-V, V-neg-VP and VP-neg. VP-neg is the most popular type. As for passive structure, the passive marker [hɔ] is found of having a duality of function: meaning "give", "to" and "allow" in the active structure, and being a passive marker simultaneously. There are three types of positive structure in the dialect: one with marker (NP₁ - [hɔ] - NP₂ - VP) and two without it (NP₁ - NP₂ - VP and NP₁ - VP).

By studying the dialect itself and comparing with the other dialects commonly used in Singapore, a comprehensive grammar of the Southern Min dialect is portrayed, particularly the syntactic structures of A-not-A questions and passive structure.