PHONETIC TONE SANDHI IN BEIJING DIALECT STAGE SPEECH

I. DEFINITION

The aim of this paper is to present and interpret acoustical data from a variant of the stage speech style of the Beijing Dialect (BD) of modern Chinese which are relevant to phonetic tone sandhi (TS). This term is applied here to the modification of the phonetic properties of a particular tone caused by and only by the immediate proximity of another tone, whether the modification has a phonemic function or not. It does not refer to tone changes involving other factors, such as the morphophonemic variations of the negator postcode.

2. DATA

The data used in this paper were obtained from a continuous section of a 相声 xiàngsheng dialogue called 相面 Xiàngmiàn 'Physiognomy' which had been performed by 侯宝林 Hóu Bǎolín and 郭启儒 Guō Qǐrú and became available commercially on disk sometime in 1965. The section lasting 120 sec. was selected from the introductory part of the dialogue which was relatively clear of audience noise and closer to normal speech style than the main part consisting largely of simulated fortune-telling. Of the two actors referred to as Speaker A (Hóu Bǎolín) and Speaker B (Guō Qǐrú) in the corpus, B plays the straight man's role in the dialogue, and his contribution is therefore limited mainly to cues preceding A's expositions and to isolated interjections. In view of the relatively small amount and nature of the data from B, only the data from A were taken into account in this paper. A
transcript in Pinyin of A's part is given in Appendix 1. In the transcript, dashes indicate where A was interrupted by B.

The Xiàngmiàn corpus is part of a set of data taken from various speech styles of BD which is being prepared by the author and which is intended to serve as the base for various computer-assisted analyses of the prosodic features of this dialect. Another corpus obtained from the normal speech of a female speaker has already been used in this way for the investigation of the general properties of tone and stress [1], and also for a reassessment of the 'Tone 3 + Tone 3' TS issue [2].

The xiàngsheng stage speech style represented by the Xiàngmiàn corpus differs from normal speech in two important respects. Firstly, it is a style which starts from the imitation of normal speech but shapes it subsequently by exaggerating some of its features and suppressing others. Secondly, it is a style which contains an element of editing [3], and thus can be expected to reflect a higher degree of anticipation in phonetic production than normal speech. Since tonal features are among those exaggerated in this style, and since TS can be expected to become regularized by anticipation, the corpus was considered as a potentially interesting source for the present task. It is, however, necessary to point out that the xiàngsheng style is derivative, and that any conclusions drawn from observing data taken from it have to be matched with those based on normal speech before they can be taken as generally valid for BD.

3. ANALYSIS

In the analytical stage, the whole Xiàngmiàn corpus was recorded in consecutive sections on sound spectrograms from a copy of the dialogue on magnetic tape by using a 7029-A Kay Sonagraph equipped with a 6076 C Scale Magnifier and Amplitude Display. Three spectrograms were made for each section: a normal wide-band spectrogram using the 45 Hz band-pass filter, a normal narrow-band one using the 300 Hz band-pass filter, and a magnified narrow-band one using a ten-time magnification of the lowest part of the spectrum. All three spectrograms were recorded with a narrow-band overall amplitude display, and with a trace of a

[3] Although there is some extemporization in xiàngsheng performances, most are carefully rehearsed. On the importance of editing in BD speech for tone production see Kratochvil 1985.