

Strong and Weak Personal Pronouns in Tunxi Hui Chinese

LU Wen

The University of Hong Kong

Tunxi Hui, a very little studied variety of the Hui Chinese, demonstrates a dichotomy of strong and weak personal pronouns. The strong pronouns are formed by suffixing *-le* to the corresponding weak forms. The weak pronouns, furthermore, can be divided into uncliticized ones as proclitics and cliticized alternatives as endoclitics. Phonologically, the strong forms are higher in pitch, longer in duration and clearer in timbre. Syntactically, only the strong forms can occur in isolation or clause final positions, and they are preferred in information discourse focus positions like answers, contrast or cleft sentences. The uncliticized and cliticized weak forms differ from each other in that the former are proclitics while the latter are endoclitics. In terms of distribution, therefore, the uncliticized weak forms are commonly seen in subject positions whereas the cliticized weak forms typically appear in pivotal constructions or double object constructions.

1. Background of Tunxi Hui

Tunxi Hui is a very little-studied Hui variety of Chinese, one of the ten ‘dialect’ groups of Sinitic languages, which has only around 70,000 speakers. Furthermore, the Hui group of Chinese can be divided into five subgroups, and Tunxi Hui belongs to the Xiu-yi subgroup, according to the second edition of the *Linguistic Atlas of Chinese Dialects* (2008). As an under-studied group of Sinitic languages, Hui Chinese is the latest ‘dialect’ group to be established among all Sinitic languages. Hui Chinese also demonstrate exceptionally substantial internal diversity, as has been recorded in the Ming Dynasty text *Huizhoufu zhi* 徽州府志 ‘A history of the Huizhou Provincial Capital’ that

六邑之語不能相通¹. This high level of internal unintelligibility has also been confirmed by the late renowned linguists Luo Changpei and Chao Yuen-ren during their pioneering field work on Hui Chinese in 1940s and 1960s.

In terms of typology, Tunxi Hui is a ‘transitional’ type of Sinitic languages, which showcases intermediate features between the Northern Chinese like Mandarin and the Southern Sinitic languages such as Min dialects and Yue dialects, in line with Hashimoto (1976, 1986), and later Norman (1988) and Chappell (2016)’s distinction of the North-South divide of Sinitic languages. This North-South division is based on a set of phonological, morphological and syntactic features of representative languages from northern and southern groups of Chinese languages, including number of tones, morpheme per word ratio, syllable structure, the inventory of classifiers, relative linear order of modifier and modifiee, the relative order of adverbs and predicate, sequence of comparative constructions, source of markers of passive constructions, relative linear order of direct and indirect objects in double object constructions, etc.

As a transitional Sinitic language, Tunxi Hui has six tones, more than the four tones in Mandarin Chinese but fewer than the nine tones in Cantonese. Besides, Tunxi Hui possesses a merged final stop *ʔ*, simpler than the full set of final stops *p*, *t*, *k* as preserved in Cantonese but more complex than Mandarin which has no final stops.

Morphologically, the ration of monosyllabic words in Tunxi Hui is also higher than Mandarin Chinese. For animal names, Tunxi Hui exhibits head-initial tendency like many Southern Sinitic varieties, with animal names preceding their gender.

Regarding syntax, the source of pretransitive markers in Tunxi Hui varies from either Mandarin or Cantonese, which is grammaticalized from the HELP/GIVE verbs. Topicalization in Tunxi Hui also stands out as the highest in frequency among all types of Sinitic languages. Other syntactic constructions such as passive constructions, comparative constructions and adverbial constructions in Tunxi Hui fluctuate between the Northern Mandarin and the Southern Sinitic languages in that it resembles Mandarin sometimes, and will take after Southern Sinitic languages such as Cantonese at other times.

¹ In English it means ‘The languages of the six counties under the Huizhou Provincial Capital are mutually intelligible.’

To sum up, the major typological features of Tunxi Hui as a transitional Sinitic language are shown below:

Type of Chinese	Northern Type	Transitional type	Southern Type
Example	Mandarin	Tunxi Hui	Hong Kong Yue
Tones	4 tones	6 tones	9 tones
Phonology	no final stops	merged final stop ?	full set of final stops <i>p, t, k</i>
Morphology	more disyllabic words, agglutinating tendency	more monosyllabic words, isolating tendency	more monosyllabic words, isolating tendency
Inventory of classifiers	relatively small	relatively big	relatively big
Animal names	head final	head initial	head initial
Reduplicative pattern	head final	head final	head initial
Pretransitive construction	pretransitive marker grammaticalized from HOLD/TAKE verb	Pretransitive marker grammaticalized from GIVE/HELP verbs	SVCs with TAKE verbs
Passive construction	the SUFFER type	the GIVE type	the GIVE type
Comparative construction	head final	head final	head initial
Adverbial Construction	head final tendency	head initial tendency	head initial tendency
Topicalization	frequent	very frequent	less frequent

Diagram 1 Tunxi Hui as a Transitional Sinitic Language

After a brief overview of the typology, we will focus on the strong and weak personal pronouns in Tunxi Hui.

2. The strong and weak personal pronouns in Tunxi Hui

In the literature, the majority of Sinitic languages are understood to have only one simple paradigm of personal pronouns, except for a few Wu varieties such as Fuyang Wu, which possesses both ‘simple singular pronouns’ and ‘complex singular pronouns’ as stated in Li (2015: 226-247). In this regard, Tunxi Hui is exceptionally distinctive in that it has two paradigms of personal pronouns, with both strong and weak forms of singular personal pronouns, as many Indo-European languages do. They are shown below:

Number	Singular			Plural
	Weak Form		Strong Form	
	cliticized	uncliticized		
1 st person	a^{23}	a^{24}	$a^{24}le$	$a^{24}ian^{44}$
2 nd person	η^0	η^{44}	$\eta^{44}le$	$\eta^{44}ian^{44}$
3 rd person	$k^h\partial^0$	$k^h\partial^{44}$	$k^h\partial^{44}le$	$k^h\partial^{44}ian^{44}$

Diagram 2 Two Paradigms of Pronominal System in Tunxi Hui: Weak and Strong

As can be seen from the above table, the plural personal pronouns are formed by adding a plural suffix $-ian^{44}$ ‘person’ 人². Besides, a strong and weak distinction is made between the singular personal pronouns. Specifically, the strong forms are formed by suffixing $-le^3$ to the uncliticized weak form of the same singular personal pronouns. It can be reasonably suggested that the plural personal pronouns do not need strong counterparts as the singular personal pronouns do, because they are disyllabic, and hence already ‘strong’ forms themselves prosodically.

2.1 The strong forms of singular personal pronouns

The forms $a^{24}le$, $\eta^{44}le$ and $k^h\partial^{44}le$ are believed to be the strong forms because they are prosodically prominent, in terms of not only volume and length, but also and pitch and timbre. In other words, personal pronouns $a^{24}le$ ‘1.SG’, $\eta^{44}le$ ‘2.SG’ and $k^h\partial^{44}le$ ‘3.SG’ display a greater volume, longer duration, higher pitch and clearer timbre

² ian^{44} can stand alone as a free morpheme meaning ‘person’ 人 in Tunxi Hui, which is at the same time the source of its plural marker for personal pronouns. Apart from Hui, some Min varieties of Chinese also make use of the plural marker grammaticalized from the noun meaning ‘person’ 人.

³ The form $(-)le$ is a multi-functional morpheme in Tunxi Hui. As a suffix, apart from its function as forming a strong counterpart of the weak form of singular personal pronouns, it can otherwise function as a nominal affix to nominalize a verb, or to address a particular person with affection.

compared with their weaker counterparts, including both uncliticized and cliticized weak forms, i.e. a^{2^4} ‘1.SG’/ a^{23} ‘1.SG’, η^{44} ‘2.SG’/ η^0 ‘2.SG’ and $k^h\partial^{44}$ ‘3.SG’/ $k^h\partial^0$ ‘3.SG’. It is therefore no wonder that the strong form will be always paired with those situations where prosodically prominent forms are required, for example, in isolation, the clause final position and the focus position in the information structure. The scenarios where strong forms are obligatorily required or preferred are elaborated below:

(i) In isolation, for instance:

- (1) A: $la^{31-5}ka^{\text{h}}$ $a^?$
 which-CL Q
 ‘Who is it?’
 B: $a^{2^4}\eta/*a^{2^4}/*a^{23}$.
 1.SG
 ‘me’

In example (1), since the answer contains only one morpheme, i.e. standing alone, only the strong form $a^{2^4}\eta$ is allowed.

(ii) In clausal final position, for example:

First person singular forms $a^{2^4}\eta/*a^{2^4}/*a^{23}$

- (2) pau^{11} mo^{31} ka^{h} $m\partial^{11-21}S\gamma^{11}$ $t\partial^{11}$ ti^{h} $a^{2^4}\eta/*a^{2^4}/*a^{23}$.
 OM that CL thing carry COV 1.SG
 ‘Please pass that thing to me.’

- (3) η^{44} $\varepsilon i^{11-21}\eta iau^{11}$ kau^{31} $a^{2^4}\eta/*a^{2^4}/*a^{23}?$
 2.SG how-way talk 1.SG
 ‘Why are you scolding me?’

Second person singular forms $\eta^{44}\eta/*\eta^{44}/*\eta^0$

- (4) a^{2^4} kau^{31} pu^{11} ko^{h} $\eta^{44}\eta/*\eta^{44}/*\eta^0$.
 1.SG talk NEG pass 2.SG
 ‘I cannot talk you into it.’

- (5) $k^h\partial^{44}$ $t\epsilon iau^{24}$ $mi\epsilon^{11}$ $ma\partial^5$ $\eta^{44}le/*\eta^{44}/*\eta^0?$ $t^han^{\partial 2}$ pu^{11} $t^han^{\partial 2}$ $a?$
 3.SG just now squeeze 2.SG hurt NEG hurt Q
 ‘He/she just squeezed you? Does it hurt?’

Third person singular forms $k^h\partial^{44}le/*k^h\partial^{44}/*k^h\partial^0$

- (6) a^{24} $t\epsilon^hi\partial^{11}$ $xa\partial^5$ $k^h\partial^{44}le/*k^h\partial^{44}/*k^h\partial^0$.
 1.SG fear 3.SG
 ‘I fear him/her.’

- (7) pau^{11} mo^{31} $p\epsilon^{31}$ cy^{11} $t\partial^{11}$ $ti^{\partial 2}$ $k^h\partial^{44}le/*k^h\partial^{44}/*k^h\partial^0$.
 OM that CL book carry COV 3.SG
 ‘Please bring that book to him/her.’

In the above examples, all the clausal final positions require the strong forms with the suffix *-le*.

In addition to occurring in isolation and the clause final position, there is a third scenario where the strong forms are usually required. Nevertheless, the uncliticized weak form, but not the cliticized weak form, can sometimes be employed in the following as well:

- (iii) In the focus position, including both information focus and discourse focus position, whereby three situations are often included:

(a) Default focus position, like answers:

- (8) A: $la\partial^{24-5}$ $ka^{\partial 2}$ $k\partial^5$ η^{44} kau^{31} $ka?$
 Which-one COV 2.SG speak SFP
 ‘Who told you?’
 B: $k^h\partial^{44}le/k^h\partial^{44}/*k^h\partial^0$ $k\partial^5$ η^{44} kau^{31} ka .
 3.SG COV 2.SG speak SFP
 ‘He/she told me.’

Answers are the default information focus in a clause. Therefore, both the strong

form and the uncliticized weak forms are acceptable in example (8).

(b) In contrast

- (9) $a^2{}^4le/a^2{}^4/*a^{23}$ $te^{hi}{}^5$ ey^{3l} , $k^{h\partial}{}^{44}le/k^{h\partial}{}^{44}/*k^{h\partial}{}^0$ $te^{hi}{}^5$ $ts\partial{}^{44}$.
 1.SG eat water 3.SG eat tea
 ‘I will have water, while he/she will have tea’

Example (9) represents a contrastive construction. Again, the strong form and the uncliticized weak form are grammatical, while the unstressed weak forms are ungrammatical.

(c) With intensification

- (10) $\epsilon i^2{}^4$ $a^2{}^4le/a^2{}^4/*a^{23}$ $teio{}^4$ $k^{h\partial}{}^{44}le/k^{h\partial}{}^{44}/*k^{h\partial}{}^0$ $k^{h\partial}{}^4$ ka .
 COP 1.SG ask 3.SG go SFP
 ‘It is me who ask him/her to go.’

Sentence (10) is a cleft sentence, with the pronoun $a^2{}^4le$ ‘1.SG’ immediately following the copular verb $\epsilon i^2{}^4$ ‘be’ as the discourse focus. Hence, only the disyllabic strong form $a^2{}^4le$ ‘1.SG’ or the monosyllabic uncliticized weak form $a^2{}^4$ ‘1.SG’ can fill this position.

2.2 The weak forms of singular personal pronouns

The weak forms exhibit both an uncliticized and cliticized alternative. Compared with their strong counterparts, the weak forms cannot stand in isolation or appear in the sentence final position, which means they are clitics which always require something to ‘lean on’, typically verbs. Furthermore, the uncliticized and cliticized weak forms differ in their hosts. While the uncliticized weak forms require a morpheme immediately following themselves to lean on, the cliticized weak forms have to be surrounded by morphemes both before and after themselves, with at least one morpheme being a verb. In other words, the uncliticized weak forms are proclitics which need to join with the following morphemes, whereas the cliticized weak forms are endoclitics which need to be surrounded and lean both forward and backward onto.

In this section, we will start with the distinctions between the strong and weak forms, followed by distinctions between the two weak forms.

2.2.1 Weak forms versus strong forms

As mentioned above, the distinction between the strong and the weak forms of singular personal pronouns is more straightforward: the weak forms cannot appear in isolation or the sentence final positions as their strong counterparts do, for example:

- (11) A: $la^{31-5}ka^{42}$ ϵi^{24} $mo^{31}le$ $a^?$
 which-CL COP there Q
 ‘Who is there?’
 B: $a^{24}le/*a^{24}/*a^{23}$.
 1.SG
 ‘me’

In sentence (11), neither the uncliticized weak form a^{24} ‘1.SG’ nor the cliticized weak form a^{23} ‘1.SG’ is possible because weak forms are not allowed to stand alone.

Similarly, sentence final position also prohibits both the uncliticized and the cliticized weak forms of personal pronouns, for example:

- (12) $k^h\partial^{44}$ pu^{11} $xu:\partial^{11}\epsilon i^{31}$ $\eta^{44}le/*\eta^{44}/*\eta^0$.
 3.SG NEG like 2.SG
 ‘He/she doesn’t like you.’

In example (12), the second personal singular form appears in the sentence-final position. As has been explained in the previous section, sentence-final positions only license the occurrence of the strong forms, in this instance $\eta^{44}le$ ‘2.SG’, not the uncliticized weak form η^{44} ‘2.SG’ or the cliticized weak form η^0 ‘2.SG’.

However, the differences between the uncliticized and cliticized weak forms are more subtle. We will discuss them in the next section.

2.2.2 Uncliticized weak forms versus cliticized weak forms

Compared with the strong personal pronouns, the weak personal pronouns are more like clitics which needs to ‘lean on’ something, usually a verb. The uncliticized weak forms and the cliticized weak forms mainly differ from each other in their hosts. The uncliticized weak forms are proclitics which need to lean on the following morphemes. The cliticized weak forms, however, are more of the ‘clingly’ type: they need to ‘lean on’ hosts both before and after themselves, with at least one host being a verb. Here is an example:

(13) a. η^{44}/η^0 $tɛ^{hi}ɽ^5$ pan^{11} $tɛ^{hi}ɽ^5$ $fu:\partial^{11}?$
 2.SG eat not yet eat rice
 ‘Have you had your meal?’

b. $k^h\partial^{44}$ $mɛ^{11}$ η^{44}/η^0 $fu:\partial^{11}$ $tɛ^{hi}ɽ^5$ pan^{11} $tɛ^{hi}ɽ^5?$
 3.SG ask 2.SG rice eat not yet eat
 ‘He/she asked whether you had had your meal.’

In example (13a), although the cliticized weak form η^0 ‘2.SG’ has a host to lean on, it does not have a host to lean forward onto, therefore the uncliticized weak form η^{44} ‘2.SG’ is preferred, which is not as bound or ‘clingly’ as the cliticized counterpart. In example (13b), the cliticized weak form η^0 ‘2.SG’ appears in a pivotal construction, both as the object of the verb $mɛ^{11}$ ‘ask’ in the main clause and the subject in the subordinate clause. Surrounded by two morphemes with at least one being the verb, the existence of the cliticized weak form η^0 ‘2.SG’ is hence justified.

Apart from pivotal construction, the uncliticized weak forms are also seen in double object constructions where they can lean on the morphemes before and after themselves, as in Sentence (14b):

(14) a. η^{44} $tɔ^{44}$ ka^{31} $ka^{\text{ㄟ}}$ $m\partial^{11}$ $ti^{\text{ㄟ}}$ $*k^h\partial^{44}/*k^h\partial^0?$
 2.SG bring this CL thing COV 3.SG
 Intended meaning: ‘Please bring this to him/her!’

b. a^{24} $t^h\partial^{11-21}\eta^{ie^{11}}$ $ti^{\text{ㄟ}}$ $k^h\partial^{44}/k^h\partial^0$ $liau^{24}$ $p^hɛ^{44}$ t^hiu^{31} .
 2.SG yesterday give 3.SG two CL wine
 ‘I gave him/her two bottles of wine yesterday.’

Weak Forms	on		subject positions
Cliticized Weak Forms	Surrounded by other morphemes	Endoclititics	In pivotal constructions; In double object constructions

Diagram 3 Distribution of the Three Forms of Singular Personal Pronouns in Tunxi Hui

The strong forms of personal pronouns, namely $a^2 ʔe$ ‘1.SG’, $\eta^{44}e$ ‘2.SG’ and $k^h\partial^{44}e$ ‘3.SG’, are more free in nature. Technically they can appear in all occasions, especially in isolation, in the sentence final position, and in the discourse focus position.

For instance:

The Strong Forms ($a^2 ʔe$ ‘1.SG’, $\eta^{44}e$ ‘2.SG’ and $k^h\partial^{44}e$ ‘3.SG’)

(15) A: $la^2 ʔ^{4-5}ka^{\text{ㄛ}}$ $k\partial^2 5$ $\eta^{44}e$ kau^{31} $ka?$
 Which-one COV 2.SG talk Q
 ‘Who told you?’

B: $k^h\partial^{44}e$.
 3.SG
 ‘him/her.’

(16) A: $k^h\partial^{44}$ $t\epsilon i^{31}$ $t i \epsilon^{31}$ $t san^{11}$ $t \partial^{\text{ㄛ}}$ $k \partial^{11}$ $a?$
 3.SG how many point clock reach home Q
 ‘When will he/she arrive at home?’

B: $a^2 4$ pu^{11} $\epsilon i^{2 4}$ $t i \partial^2 5$ $\eta^{44} da^{31}$ $t i^{\text{ㄛ}}$ $k^h\partial^{44}e!$
 1.SG NEG know RVC 2.SG call COV 3.SG
 ‘I don’t know. Please call him/her!’

(17) $a^2 4$ kau^{31} pu^{11} $ko^{\text{ㄛ}}$ $k^h\partial^{44}e$.
 1.SG talk NEG pass 3.SG
 ‘I cannot talk him/her into it.’

(18) η^{44} $mau^{11} t\epsilon i^{31}$ $t\epsilon ia?$
 2.SG forget PERF.SFP
 ‘You have forgotten about it?’

ɛiau¹¹ ɬ^hɿ⁴² ɛi²⁴ n⁴⁴e io⁴² tɛ^{hi}ɿ⁵, pu¹¹ ɛi²⁴ a²⁴e io⁴² tɛ^{hi}ɿ⁵.
 last ime COP 2.SG want eat NEG COP 1.SG want eat
 ‘It is you who wanted to eat it last time, not me.’

On the other hand, the uncliticized weak forms of singular personal pronouns, i.e. *a²⁴* ‘1.SG’, *n⁴⁴* ‘2.SG’ and *k^hə⁴⁴* ‘3.SG’, are not as free as their strong counterparts, and they are proclitics which need something to ‘lean backward’ on, usually verbs. The subject positions are one of the positions where they are often observed, since they can most conveniently ‘lean on’ the following verbs as their hosts. For example:

The Uncliticized Weak Forms (*a²⁴* ‘1.SG’, *n⁴⁴* ‘2.SG’ and *k^hə⁴⁴* ‘3.SG’)

(19) *k^hə⁴⁴ tɛio⁴² n⁴⁴e to¹¹ tɛ^{hi}ɿ⁵ tin²⁴.*
 3.SG ask 2.SG more eat a bit
 ‘He/she asks you to eat more.’

(20) *a²⁴ pu¹¹ ɛi²⁴ ti^ɿ⁵ k^hə⁴⁴e.*
 3.SG NEG know RVC 3.SG
 ‘I don’t know about him/her! (You need to check with him/her yourself.)’

(21) A: *n⁴⁴ ɛi²⁴ la^ɿ³¹⁻⁵ka⁴² a?*
 2.SG COP which-CL Q
 ‘Who are you?’
 B: *a²⁴ ɛi²⁴ k^hə⁴⁴ ka len²⁴.*
 1.SG COP 3.SG GEN daughter
 ‘I am her/his daughter.’

Last but not least, the cliticized weak forms of singular personal pronouns, namely *a²³* ‘1.SG’, *n⁰* ‘2.SG’ and *k^hə⁰* ‘3.SG’, are the most bound of all forms. They need to lean on morphemes both before and after themselves, with at least one morpheme as the verb. Hence, they are more like endoclitics in nature and they are the most restricted in distribution. The double object constructions and the pivotal constructions are the most common structures to accommodate the cliticized weak forms, where they can both ‘lean

forward' and 'lean backward' onto, with at least one morpheme being verb, as their host. For example:

The Cliticized Weak Forms (a^{23} '1.SG', η^0 '2.SG' and $k^h\partial^0$ '3.SG')

In a pivotal construction

- (22) η^{44} $\eta^{iau^{11}}$ $k^h\partial^0$ $k^h\partial^{42}$ $ue!$
 2.SG let 3.SG go SFP
 'Please let him/her go!'

In a double object construction

- (23) a^{24} ti^{42} $k^h\partial^0$ $t\epsilon^{hiu^{11}}-\epsilon i^{24}$ $liau^{24}$ $pu:\partial^{11}-t\epsilon iau^{31}$.
 1.SG give 3.SG just two hand
 'I slapped him/her twice on the face.'

3. Conclusions

This study has focused on the strong and weak personal pronouns in an under-studied Hui variety of Chinese, namely Tunxi Hui. While the bi-morphemic strong personal pronouns in Tunxi Hui can stand alone, the mono-morphemic uncliticized and cliticized personal pronouns are proclitics and endoclitics in nature, which must lean on other morphemes, typically verbs. To be specific, the uncliticized personal pronouns need to lean on the following morphemes, whereas the more 'clingly' cliticized personal pronouns require the existence of morphemes surrounding themselves.

The distinct natures of personal pronouns result in different distributions. The strong forms are the most free type, which can appear in most situations, especially in isolation, clause final positions and discourse focus positions. The uncliticized forms prefer the subject positions where they can lean on the following verbs. Finally, the cliticized forms need to be surrounded by other morphemes, and are hence most seen in pivotal constructions and double object constructions.

REFERENCES

- CAO, ZHIYUN (eds.) 2008. *Hanyu Fangyan Dituji* 漢語方言地圖集 (Linguistic Atlas of Chinese Dialects). 2nd Edition. Beijing: Commercial Press.
- CHAPPELL, HILARY M. 2016. 'Linguistic Areas in China for Differential Object Marking, Passive, and Comparative Constructions'. In Chappel, Hilary M. (ed). *Diversity in Sinitic Languages*: 13-52. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HASHIMOTO, M. J. 1976. Language diffusion on the Asian continent. *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages* vol. 3: 49-63.
- HASHIMOTO, M. J. 1986. The Altaicization of Northern Chinese. In J. McCoy & T. Light (eds.), *Contributions to Sino-Tibetan Studies*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 76-97.
- LI, XUPING. 2015. 'Complex Pronouns in Wu Chinese: Focalization and Topicalization'. In Hilary M. Chappell (ed.) *Diversity in Sinitic Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 226-247.
- NORMAN, JERRY. 1988. *Chinese*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.