

# Referential strategies and referential variants in Old Chinese:

Semantics and Pragmatics of Pronominal Reference in Old Chinese

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# Abstract

In Old Chinese, there are three main strategies for introducing referents into the discourse: the use of a fully specified lexical NP, the use of an overt pronoun, and the use of a "zero" pronoun. While these three strategies each come with their own syntactic representations, the choice of selecting one referential strategy over another is constrained by semantic and pragmatic factors such as uniqueness and conversational implicature. Moreover, at the level of the lexicon there exist subsets of personal pronouns with identical phi ( $\phi$ ) features but different, conventionally entailed social meanings, which leads to the question of what differentiates these pronominal forms from forms which lack such distinctions. In this thesis, I explore two questions. The first deals with the different pragmatic interpretations associated with selecting a particular referential strategy in introducing a discourse referent. The second question tackles the semantics and pragmatics of certain personal pronouns in Old Chinese.

*To my family: Mom, Dad, Nekia, Niya, Turtle (Alayah)*

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# Chapter 1

## Strategies and variants

### 1.1 Referential Strategies and Referential Variables

Some linguistic studies of the early twentieth century applied two general levels of structure to many domains of grammar (e.g. morphology, phonology, syntax): *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* relations. The notion goes back at least to De Saussure et al. (1933), who called the latter relation an associative relation, though it is Jakobson (1960)' s term which became popular. The general idea is that there are two axes on which one can study the structure of signs: on the one hand, we can investigate the position of an item X in relation to an item Y in a set of structures Z:

(1) For structures,  $z_0, z_1, \dots z_n \in Z$  :

$$z_0 : X, Y \neq z_1 : Y, X$$

As (1) suggests, the relative ordering of X and Y might be considered syntagmatically significant. Extending this to grammar, one can easily make the parallel with OV versus VO structures in some of the world' s languages, or languages which contrast the positioning of OV and VO for emphasis or contrast. On the other hand, we can examine the alternation of elements  $(x, x_1, \dots x_n) \in X \subseteq Z$  :

(2) X (him, that bastard, Eric, your buddy) is smart.

Where the alterations in (2) evoke interpretations that are truth-conditionally but conventionally different. The variants do not affect the structure of the sentence, nor its truth-conditional content of the utterance. The logical form of (2) is the same no matter the alternate chosen:

$$(3) \quad \exists x(\text{smart}(x))$$

In a way, it seems that logical form generalizes over paradigmatic distinctions in favor of syntagmatic ones. For it is possible for  $X$  to stand in for any entity (so long as the entity is compatible with the semantics of the predicate, *smart*).

In terms of referential pragmatics, the interpretation of pronominal reference can also be thought of as a set of processes which involve subtypes of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure:

- a Referential variants, which are semantically coded (paradigmatic; variants are lexically encoded and have conventionally implicated meaning)
- b Referential strategies, which are inherently pragmatic (syntagmatic; strategies have conversationally implicated meaning)

Languages have referential variants which are encoded differently across languages according to typological factors and sociocultural contexts (for example: kinship terms, status terms, honorifics, switch reference, etc). In general, such items are (socially) deictic. In this essay, I will show how personal pronominal reference in Old Chinese applies referential variants and referential strategies. More specifically, I investigate the following questions:

- (4) a. Question 1 :

What differentiates/accounts for the referential variants in Old Chinese (OC) semantically?

- b. Question 2 :

What differentiates the referential strategies available in OC pragmatically?

## 1.2 Old Chinese

Old Chinese is a fascinating language for many reasons. For instance, it (arguably) has “no [overt] morphology, no affixation, no distinction between finite and non-finite verbs, no marking for complementation, no marking for nominalization, and no grammatical distinction for gender, number, or definite vs. indefinite noun phrases…” (Li 1996) which is to say that the language is at best minimal or “isolating” or “analytic”, as some might call it.

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There are also significant structural differences between Old Chinese and modern varieties as important are the differences which include a lack of numerical classifiers, the considerably free order regarding prepositions, and both subject and object wh-movement, which disappeared sometime during Middle Chinese.

Of special interest in this essay is the fact that Old Chinese has a referential system that operates such that once a referent is overtly introduced just once into the discourse, it suffices to continue the discourse without explicit mention of the referent. This phenomena (by no means exclusive to old Chinese) is called by some zero anaphora, because where in languages like English some overt referring morpheme must be pronounced for grammatical sentences (even after a preceding context, in English we can't say \*Sits on the bus, where we mean \*He sits on the bus,), or in languages like Italian where the subject may be null (i.e. the subject need not be pronounced overtly) but inflection on the predicate gives evidence of the referent (E.g. Parlo, ‘I speak’), Old Chinese leaves these matters to context. For example,

- (5) jian xian si qi yan (*Analects 4.17, adapted from Li*)  
see virtue think equal PREP

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<sup>1</sup>I assume SVO structure in this paper. (Aldridge 2016) discusses in detail why the proposal for a basic OV structure is misleading while also reporting descriptive generalizations of Old Chinese, i.e. that (1) modal and embedding verbs preceded their complements (like modern Mandarin); (2) that matrix yes/no questions form by the addition of the question marker *hū* 乎; and that (3) embedded questions, like in modern varieties, form via sets of alternatives (E.g. A not A). Topicalization is highly productive and makes use of the resumptive pronoun, *zhī* 之.

‘(When one) sees virtue, (one) thinks of equaling (it).’

In 1.2, there is no overt subject of the proposition. There are still other examples in Old Chinese of this following. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the Analects (Li 1997:p.277):

- (6) zi            yue xue    ∅ er    shi    xi            zhi ∅ bu yi    yue       hu  
Confucius say learn ∅ and often practice 3rd ∅ not also pleasant Q-Part  
'Confucius said: "To learn (something) and practice it often, isn't (it) pleasant?"'

In other texts of the period we see the same trend (*Shiji 86: Yu Rang*; Rouzer (2007)):

- (7) ∅ qu er    shi    zhi bo  
∅ go and serve Zhi Bo  
'(He) went [there] and served Zhi Bo'

However, while it would be true to say that zero anaphora is the norm in Old Chinese, it would be misleading to leave it at that. There are other referential strategies in the language, as shown here:

- (8) jian zi            yue **zi**    he    xiao  
Jian master say **son** what laugh  
∅ dui yue **chen** nai you su xiao  
∅ face say **I** just have old joke

Viscount Jian [of Zhao] said, "What are you (=Son) laughing at?" To which [he, a soldier] replied, "Your humble servant (=I) just had an old joke [pop into my head]."

The passage above reveals some interesting properties about Old Chinese. First, while it is true that zero anaphora is quite frequent in the language, we can start to see that there are quite a few different referential strategies available in the language. We have of course zero anaphora, but we also have the tricky situation of pronouns. *Zi* and *chen* are used pronominally here, as they often are in the language, but it is an active question whether these morphemes are personal pronouns or not. As we will see in Section 3, Old Chinese has an equally perplexing set of morphemes which are immediately identifiable as personal

pronouns (as they are the precursors of personal pronouns in modern Chinese varieties) in addition to these pronominally used items.

### **Time period of Old Chinese**

The linguistic divisions of so-called “Archaic” Chinese —sometimes called “Old” (Sun 2006) or “Classical” (Pulleyblank 2010) Chinese —are indeed abstractions, and often arbitrary. (Pulleyblank 2010) sets the “Classical” period as beginning with Confucius (-551 to -479 BCE) and continuing through the Warring States period (roughly 5th-3rd Century BCE) until the unification of the Warring States (Yan, Qi, Zhao, Wei, Han, Chu, Qin) in 221 BCE under emperor Qin Shi Huang . (Forrest 1948) defines the period as starting after what he calls “Proto-Chinese” in 500 BCE (p. 48); and Edith Aldridge alternates between “Old Chinese” and “Archaic Chinese” , (by which she means Late Archaic Chinese; cf. (Aldridge 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015, 2016), vaguely fixing the former from 6th-3rd centuries BCE, while situating the latter from approximately 5th-3rd centuries BCE. (Dobson 1959) states that “[Late] Archaic Chinese is an abstraction. The term is a convenient descriptive label, nothing more. It represents a hypothetical norm for the literary language in use in North China in the fourth and third centuries B.C. ...it is the language of certain portions of the texts of *Mencius*, *Micius*, *Chuang-tzu* , and the *Tso Chuan*, assumed here to be typical of the language of the period” (Dobson 1959: p.xvi). As one might tell, there is an active defining and re-defining of the terms which refer to the linguistic period under investigation. For my purposes, the source of Old Chinese is Chinese of the Warring States Period until the Han Dynasty, where there are considerable changes in the language.

## **1.3 Questions Addressed in this Thesis**

There are two central questions addressed in this thesis, and they focus on two related problems:

- (9) There are three main ways to encode referents into the discourse: lexical NP, overt pronoun, and “zero” pronoun. Call these different choices of reference *referential*

*strategies.*

- (10) Many lexical NPs and pronouns are available for reference to an individual. Furthermore, if either the "lexical NP" or "pronoun" strategy is chosen, there are many pronouns to choose from. The pronouns are then *referential variants* that co-vary with referential strategies in two ways:

Pronouns must be chosen according to who is referred to (i.e. speaker, referent, or addressee)

- a.** Per strategy, the speaker has a choice in which referential variable they choose.

With this in mind, two questions arise:

- (11) Question 1: What differentiates the referential strategies available in Old Chinese on a pragmatic level?
- (12) Question 2: What differentiates/accounts for the referential variables which are employed in the different referential strategies in on a semantic level?

## 1.4 Roadmap

The rest of this essay is as follows: in Section 2, I present specific instantiations of referential strategies within a neo-Gricean paradigm, and apply them to Old Chinese. In Section 3, I discuss what it is I mean by referential variants (giving examples from both Japanese and Old Chinese) and tie this notion to Levinson (1979)'s idea that honorifics are socially deictic. In Section 4, I discuss a possible theoretical account of the difference between referential variants in Old Chinese by expanding on the work of Roberts (2004) and Horn and Abbott (2012). Finally, I conclude in Section 5.

# Chapter 2

## Referential strategies in Old Chinese

### 2.1 What are referential strategies? Some background

The idea of referential strategies takes its inspiration from Grice (1975), which in its own way discussed general strategies speakers use in conversation. The source of these conversational strategies, as I will call them, were presented as four maxims of conversation constrained by the Cooperative Principle (45-47).

(13) Cooperative Principle: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged

(14) Quantity:

Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

a. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(15) Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

Do not say what you believe to be false.

b. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(16) Relation: Be relevant.

(17) Manner: Be perspicuous.

Avoid obscurity of expression.

b. Avoid ambiguity.

c. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

d. Be orderly.

Over time, linguists have modified Grice's original proposal, sometimes reducing the maxims to a smaller set of principles (Horn 1984, 1988, 1989; Atlas and Levinson 1981, Levinson 19??) or even a single principle (Sperber and Wilson 1984), other times expanding them (e.g. Leech 1984). Here I will take at just one of the mainstream reductions conversational maxims in the neo-Gricean tradition, the Levinsonian (1987) approach. I will then look at one neo-Gricean approach that deals explicitly and at length with referential strategies (Huang 1991).

## 2.2 Levinsonian System

Levinson's Q, I, and M Principles, each of which contain both a speaker maxim ("Speaker") and a recipient corollary ("Addressee"). In a sense, the speaker maxim is a dictum that the speaker roughly follows in conversation, and the recipient corollary is the interpretation which follows for the addressee (recipient) after hearing the speaker's utterance. The following expresses the Q, I, and M principles in terms of speaker maxims and recipient corollaries:

(18) Q-principle :

Speaker: Do not say less than is required (given I).

Addressee: What is not said is not the case.

(19) I-principle :

Speaker: Do not say more than is required (given Q)

Addressee: What is generally said is stereotypically and specifically exemplified.

(20) M-principle: Speaker: Do not use a marked expression without reason.

Addressee: What is said in a marked way is not unmarked

The Q-principle operates essentially the same way that Horn (1984)'s Q-principle works, i.e. such that a set of elements  $\langle S, W \rangle$  form a Q-scale (= a Horn Scale), where S and W are contrastive semantic alternates (S being the stronger of the set). This works out to the effect that the Q principle produces upper-bounding conversational implicata, which is to say that a speaker saying that P conversationally implicates (for all they know) at most P (see Huang (2000), Matsumoto (1995) and Horn (1984) for discussion). A useful example is given below, using  $+>$  to signal that something a conversationally implicates b:

(21) Q-scale :  $\langle \text{all, some} \rangle$  Some of Jay' s friends enjoy talking about linguistics.

$+>_Q$  Not all of Jay' s friends enjoy talking about linguistics.

The I-principle, on the contrary, works as a lower-bounding conversational implicature, with the effect that someone saying that P implicates (for all they know) more than P. This principle works on the concept that semantically general linguistic expressions I-implicate semantically specific interpretations (e.g., Huang 1994, 2000a, 2013). There are several such I-Implicatures (see Huang 2000:209-210):

(22) Now you done slipped and fell!

$+>_I$  You done [ "have" in a more standard English variety] slipped *and then* (you) fell.

The last principle (M-principle in (20)), similar to Horn (1984)'s Division of Pragmatic Labor, taragets sets of marked versus unmarked expressions. Take two elements  $x, x'$  which are semantically equivalent but contrast in form (for example,

one form may be more morphologically complex, or used in a different register). In this case, the two operands work under the M operator to the effect that using  $x'$   $+>_M x$ ; that is, in using  $x'$ , the speaker M-implicates that  $x$  is insufficient (i.e. that  $x'$ 's stereotypical interpretation is insufficient for some reason). An example is below: M-scale: Mark, Mr. Woo ; assume the speaker knows and is licensed to use both forms of address, which have the same referent:

- (23) Hi Mr. Woo!  
 $+>_M$  Hi Mark!

Implicatures stemming from the Q, I, and M Principles can clash; what this means is that a single sentence can give rise to more than one implicature. because of this, Levinson (Levinson 1987) introduced two resolution schemes: one resolution scheme resolves conflict between the Q, I, and M principles by an ordering relation so that Q implicatures take precedence over M implicatures, which take precedence of I implicatures ( $Q > M > I$ ).The second resolution scheme serves to account for the fact that complex sentences can come with more than one Quantity implicatures which differ in sentential scope ( $Q_{clausal}$  and  $Q_{scalar}$ ):

- (24) Since Jamaal received cookies from the chaplain's office, then he ate some of them.

$Q_{clausal}$  scale:  $\langle \text{since } p, \text{ (then) } q \rangle, \langle \text{if } p, \text{ (then) } q \rangle$

$+>Q_{clausal}$ : Jamaal ate some of the cookies.

- (25)  $Q_{scalar}$  scale:  $\langle \text{all, some} \rangle$

$+>Q_{scalar}$  Jamaal did not eat all of the cookies.

- (26)  $Q_{clausal} > Q_{scalar}$

Sentential implication:  $+>Q_{clausal}$ : Jamaal may or may not have eaten some of the cookies.

## 2.3 Neo-Gricean approach to anaphora – one model of referential strategies

The Levinsonian system is simply one attempt at efficiently capturing Grice et al. (1975)'s maxims of conversation as constrained by the Cooperative Principle (13); of course, there are other influential approaches such as Horn (1984) <sup>1</sup>. As I mentioned before, these maxims (in reduced form or otherwise) can be thought of more broadly as communicative strategies in my strategies and variants dichotomy, and referential strategies in conversation are merely a subset of communicative strategies. What this means is that in principle, referential strategies are a specific instance of communicative strategies. Huang (1991) is one example of using Grice's maxims (strategies) to model how speakers navigate the choice of selecting and interpreting ways of referring to other individuals in discourse. A Levinsonian, Huang (1991) coaches his approach in the Levinsonian "tripartite" model of implicature, meaning that each of the Q, I, and M principles have extensional application to reference, in this case between use of a zero anaphor, pronoun, or definite description ("lexical NP", Huang (1991)). The general idea is that use of a reduced or semantically general anaphoric expressions favors a coreferential interpretation, while use of a full or semantically specific anaphoric expressions favors a non-coreferential interpretation (Huang 2000:214). Below is the "revised neo-Gricean pragmatic apparatus for anaphora" , as well as components relevant to the apparatus Huang (2004):

- (27) A hierarchy of referentiality for different types of anaphoric expression :
- Anaphors < pronominals < R expressions
- (Anaphors are less referential than pronominals, and pronominals are less referential than R expressions)

The hierarchy (27) is a gradation of referentiality. How can something be more ref-

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<sup>1</sup>In this essay, I used the Levinsonian approach for consistency with Huang (2000); in future work I hope to cover the Hornian system as well as Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986).

referential than another? The idea is that the more informative an item is, the more referential it is. Informativeness in this case is tied to lexical content <sup>2</sup>. R-expressions are more specific in that they specify more properties of an individual (e.g. their name or their title) than a pronominal does, and a pronominal specifies more semantic content (e.g. phi ( $\phi$ ) features) than a [zero] anaphor does.

With this in mind, we can focus on the gist of Huang (1991, 2000)'s casting of the referential strategies involved in languages like Chinese which allow for rampant zero anaphora. Below, I adapt some of the language and make it specific to zeros, pronominals, and definite descriptions:

(28) A revised neo-Gricean pragmatic apparatus for anaphora:

- a. Interpretation principles:
  - b. i. The use of a zero anaphor  $x$  I-implicates a local coreferential interpretation, unless (28b-ii) or (28b-iii)
  - ii. There is an Horn scale  $\langle x, y \rangle$ , where informally  $x$  is semantically stronger[specifies more lexical content] than  $y$ , in which case the use of  $y$  Q-implicates the complement of the I implicature associated with the use of  $x$ , in terms of reference.
  - iii. There is a manner contrast in  $x$  and  $y$ , where informally  $x$  is unmarked with respect to  $y$  or simpler than  $y$ , in which case the use of  $y$  M-implicates the complement of the I-implicature associated with the use of  $x$ , in terms of either reference [i.e. disjoint reference] or expectedness.

As a final (though significant) point, it should be noted that the interpretation procedure does not let the referential strategies go unchecked. The procedure is constrained by background assumptions, a Disjoint Reference Principle (coarguments of a pred-

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<sup>2</sup>The language of R-expressions, and anaphors is especially tied to the argot of Chomsky and Keyser (1982), but essentially these terms correspond to definite descriptions and zeros in my sense.

icate (e.g. a ditransitive predicate) tend to have a disjoint interpretation, (Farmer and Harnish 1987)), information saliency, and constraints on information structure; additionally the typical factors of background, context, and semantic entailment constraints on implicature apply.<sup>3</sup>

To demonstrate how this all works, let us turn to the target language to supply a few examples.  $\emptyset$  indicates a zero.

- (29) Cao Mo wei Lü jiang yu Qi  $\emptyset$  zhan san bai bei  
 Cao Mo make Lu general with Qi  $\emptyset$  war three defeated  
 'Cao Mo became General of Lu,  $\emptyset$  went to war with Qi,  $\emptyset$  lost three times.'  
 (*Shiji, Cike Liezhuan, 1*)

In (29), we have the one overt referent (the subject), introduced by an definite description (a name, Cao Mo), followed by a zero in the next clause and another zero in the clause proceeding. According to (28) the preferred interpretation is a coreferential one. Recall the referentiality hierarchy (27). We have a referential hierarchy of [ $\emptyset$  < pronoun < Cao Mo]. The use of a zero where a pronoun could occur then I-implicates a coreferential interpretation: in saying *that P* with a zero, one I-implicates *more than P* with a pronoun. Both zeros are thus taken to be coreferential Cao Mo.

- (30) Meng zi jian Liang Hui Wang li yu zhao shang  
 Meng master see Liang Hui King stand PREP pond LOC  
 gu hong yan mi lu  $\emptyset$  yue xian zhe yi le ci hu  
 see wild goose elk  $\emptyset$  say excellent NOM also enjoy this Q

'Mengzi saw King Hui of Liang. The king stood by the pond; looking around at the geese and elk,  $\emptyset$  said "Does (the) excellent one also enjoy this?"'  
 (*Mengzi, Liang Hui Wang I, 2*)

In (30) there are three overt referents: Mengzi, King Liang Hui and *xiánzhè* 'sage, virtuous person'. Wáng, 'king (=King Liang Hui)', which appears in the second

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<sup>3</sup>See Farmer and Harnish (1987) for the Disjoint Reference Principle, Stalnaker (1996) for context constraints, Grice (1957) for constraints on non-natural meaning (meaning<sub>n</sub>).

clause, M-implicates that King Liang Hui is coreferential with Wáng; the two contrast in form but have the referent where Liáng Huì Wáng  $+>_M$  (Wáng)’ [(*x*)’ denotes complement] . There is also a zero anaphor, which is the argument of the verb *yuē*, ‘to say’ . The use of a semantically more specific expression after the first clause (i.e. the introduction of King Liang Hui by way of a definite description) implies local non-coreference. In the clause introduced by the zero, the use of a pronoun would obviously be more informative than what is actually given <sup>4</sup>. Hence the zero I-implicates coreferential interpretation with King . The use of *xiánzhe*, another definite description, suggests that *xiánzhe* is not anaphoric and is instead non-coreferential.

Another way of looking these examples would be to invoke (Huang 2000:164-5)’s observation of how references are established, shifted, and maintained in discourse:

- (31) a. Establishment of reference tends to be achieved through the use of an elaborated form, notably a lexical NP.
- b. Shift of reference tends to be achieved through the use of an elaborated form, notably a lexical
- c. (iii) Maintenance of reference tends to be achieved through the use of an attenuated form, notably a pronoun or a zero anaphor

The use of *xiánzhe* in (30) can then be analyzed as a shift of reference, being a lexical NP occurring sentence-finally after an instance of zero anaphora; the zero can be regarded as a maintenance of reference. The zeros in (29) can be seen as a maintaining reference. Either way the problem is approached, results from both approaches confirm each other, and more generally suggest that speakers work out interpretations of reference in ways compatible with a particular referential strategy. Next, I show an instance in which the proposed set of referential strategies is challenged.

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<sup>4</sup>It might be tempting to consider Liáng Huì Wáng semantically stronger than Wáng, given the increased informativeness of the former. But it cannot be the case that the two form a Q-scale, as Liáng Huì Wáng and Wáng are not contrastive semantic alternates, but rather alternates which differ predominately in form. The elements contrast in Fregean sense but not Fregean reference (Frege 1884).

(32) ran zheng suo yi meng wu ru zi qi yu shi  
thus Zheng REL with cheat insult insult self abandon PREP market

fan zhi xian zhe wei lao mu xing wu yang  
violate GEN beggar TOP make old mother fortunate lack illness

**qie** mo jia ye

**QIE** NEG marry SFP

The above example is much more involved, but the interpretation procedure should be the same. However, the use of *qie* has no interpretation in the current procedure. I say this because the referential strategies that we've explored involve zero, pronominals, and definite descriptions. Even if we take *qie* to be a pronominal, we run into the following issue: Even if a speaker intends to use a pronominal, how is the pronominal chosen from a set of plausible pronominals? More over, what do we make of examples like the following, where the glossed 'me' actually is used exclusively by an emperor? Adapted from Aldridge (2016):

(33) Jīn zǐ jiāo guǎrén fǎ tiān hé dé  
now you teach me imitate Heaven spread virtue

‘Now you teach me to imitate Heaven [by] spreading virtue.’ ( *Guanzi 66* )

It is to this problem that we turn next.

# Chapter 3

## Referential variants in Old Chinese

### 3.1 More on Referential Variants

In this section, I expand on the notion of referential variants, with examples from Japanese and Old Chinese. The Japanese data shows the synchronic importance of a theory which accounts for referential variants, and the Old Chinese shows the diachronic importance of these variants.

#### 3.1.1 *Watashi, watakushi, atashi, boku? Ore!*

In many Japanese studies in linguistics, the first person singular form (1SG) is canonically represented by two morphemes, *watashi* and *boku*. Unfortunately, the canonization of these morphemes as exemplars of the first person is misleading and overshadows the fact that there are actually multiple referential variants for the first person singular.

To illustrate this point, I draw on a popular Japanese anime movie known in English by the title *Your Name* (Japanese title: *Kimi no Na wa*, 君の名は), (Shinkai 2016)), which depicts the story of two friends (boy and girl) who change bodies. The catch is that in Japan, assuming the role of the opposite sex and performative gender comes

with consequences for linguistic practice. The most pertinent aspect for this study is the fact that Japanese pronouns for self-reference seem to be divided according to societal expectations of gender roles. Below, notice how the speaker in 34 struggles to find the proper (pragmatically felicitous) pronoun to self refer. The parenthetical remarks are additional information about the nature of the pronouns and the visible responses of the addressees:

- (34) あ、えっと、私...  
A, etto, watashi...  
'Ah, um, I (feminine) ...'  
  
私?  
Watashi?  
  
'I? (feminine)'  
  
あたくし?  
Watakushi?  
  
I (feminine)  
(Visual look of confusion)

During this point in the film, Mitsuha Miyamizu (performatively, the boy, who's name is Taki Tachibana), Mitsuha is grappling with the unexpected struggles of finding the right way of self-referring. The film continues in this vein until Mitsuha finally hones in on the correct way of "performing" Taki (using the pronoun *ore*):

- (35) 僕?  
Boku  
I (masculine)  
  
(huh?)  
  
おれ?  
  
Ore  
  
I (masculine)  
  
(nods)

1SG	Occurence (Tokens)
<i>atashi</i>	84
<i>watashi</i>	18
<i>ore</i>	58
<i>boku</i>	11
Total	171

表 3.1: Referential Variants of Japanese 1SG Set by Frequency

After the fiasco sketched in 35, Mitsuha then tries to play it cool and continue the conversation with the felicitous *ore*. Clearly, there is something to the notion of referential variants. *ore*, *boku*, *watashi*, *atashi*, and *watakushi* are referential variants for the first person singular. They each have the same bare semantics of first person singular pronouns as in English, with additional content conventionally contributed due to the grammaticalization paths these forms have taken (see Pulleyblank 2010:77 for some discussion). It seems that for Japanese, when one decides to use a pronoun to self-refer (since this can also be done without the use of a pronoun), there is still the extra work of deciding just which one to use. Due to these facts and other observations by linguists working on Japanese, Ono and Thompson (2003) suggest conceptualizing these variants as a 1SG set (see 3.1).

## 3.2 Old Chinese Referential Variants

### 3.2.1 Pronominal System

If not clear by now, the pronominal system in Old Chinese is, to say the least, very complicated. In this paper, I divide the pronominal system into two categories: (1) "Plain" Pronouns, which are a closed class, and (2) Pronominally used forms, which are an open class. The distinctions in (2) are then divided up into two subcategories, (2a) honorific terms, which elevate the speaker [relative to an addressee], and (2b)

humble terms, which lower the speaker [relative to an addressee].

First, I list the plain pronouns:

Number	Gloss	Pronouns
1	I, me, my, our	<i>wo, wu, yu, zhen</i>
2	you (sg.), yours (sg.), you (pl.), yours (pl.)	<i>nü, ru, ou, ruo, zi, er</i>
NONE	NONE	*No third person pronouns

表 3.2: Plain pronouns in Old Chinese

subsection Levinson (1979) on Honorifics as Social Deictics

”The deictic interpretation of honorifics and related phenomena correctly predicts limitations to the variety of such systems: every kind of honorific or the like must be anchored to some aspect of the speech event. For example, as far as I know, there are no languages in which it is possible by means of a standard grammatical form to express that the human subject of a sentence is more elevated in social rank than a human object without reference to their rank vis-a-vis a participant.” p206

The key notion from Levinson (1979) are that honorifics, kinship terms, and status terms like ”teacher” or ”master” when used pronominally should be treated as part and parcel of the social context in which it appears. In this way, said terms are socially deictic, and I use the term *socially deictic items* for them. Another preponderant takeaway from Levinson (1979) is that socially deictic items are conventional, and induce conventional implicatures (non-cancelable and non-truth-conditional implicatures that are detachable from what is said). This is a crucial notion, as it relates to the difference among referential variants.

### 3.2.2 Pronominally used items (social deictics)

It would be an exhausting effort (for the writer and the reader) to sift through all of the possible items that are used pronominally in Old Chinese. Here, I list only a few items:

- (36) *guaren*, 'my lonely self', self-referential form for rulers
- (37) *qie*, 'concubine', self-referential and possibly epistolary form used by women
- (38) *zi*, 'master', form of second person address used for equals
- (39) *bixia*, 'below the steps of the throne', form of second person address directed towards rulers (also *zuxia*, below (your) feet)
- (40) *gong*, 'duke', used for superiors that are not emperors (and not just dukes, proper)
- (41) *jun*, 'gentleman', used for equals and superiors
- (42) *xianzhe*, 'excellent one', used for superiors

Given the contrast between “plain” personal pronouns (canonical personal pronouns) and honorifics, it seems that there was a marked difference between using the socially deictic terms and the plain pronouns:

“From an early time [writing on Old Chinese], Chinese people have perceived of the use of pronouns to address equals or superiors as a type of impolite behavior; [similarly], the use of [plain pronouns] to refer to oneself was also a type of immodesty.” (Wang 1958:274)

The idea then would be that if one had the option of referring to a group with a socially exclusive [and polite] term, then that’ s what one should do. Not doing so would have expressed a marked meaning, notably impoliteness. Thus, we observe the interaction of referential strategies and referential variables: on the one hand, the speaker must decide whether to use a pronominal; on the other, they must decide *which* pronominal in particular they want to use. The use of a one referential variant over another then triggers a conversational implicature. The fact that in Old Chinese there are established ways of referring to socially elevated individuals, e.g. to an respected teacher with *zi* instead of [merely] with *ni* (plain pronoun) conversationally implicates disrespect. In the next section, we will explore one potential formal account of these differences among variants.

# Chapter 4

## Differentiating referential variants

### 4.1 An expansion of weak familiarity for pronouns

In Roberts (2004), Craige Roberts offers the following (informal) pronoun resolution scheme:

- (43) Presuppositions of Pronouns (informal): Given a context  $C$ , use of a pronoun  $Pro_i$  presupposes that it has as antecedent a discourse referent  $x_i$  which is
- a) weakly familiar in  $C$
  - b) salient in  $C$ , and
  - c) unique in being the most salient discourse referent in  $C$  which is contextually entailed to satisfy the descriptive content suggested by the person, number and gender of  $Pro_i$ .

In other words, the use of a pronoun in a given context presupposes that the pronoun has a discourse referent as its antecedent, and this discourse referent has the properties of weak familiarity, contextual salience, and contextually entailed uniqueness. Weak familiarity contrasted with strong familiarity, taken as Heim (1982)'s familiarity (i.e. a familiarity as a series of corresponding indices between an  $NP_i$  and a discourse referent in the common ground of discourse,  $i$ ). Weak familiarity contains strong familiarity, as it takes into account discourse referents introduced by linguis-

tic and non-linguistic means, the crucial factor being entailment by context (broadly defined and “perceptually accessible”, Roberts 2003: 298). Salience, depends on the goals of discourse or “Question Under Discussion”, QUD (Roberts 1996). QUDs are a partially ordered set in which an immediate QUD is resolved before a less immediate QUD, thereby restricting the total set of questions under discussion (presumably to streamline cognitive processing load). Immediacy is approached in terms of information structure, where the “attentional state of discourse” can determine the prominence of a QUD (Roberts 2004) As there can be multiple QUDs, the immediate QUD is a locus point for maximal salience. The most salient discourse referent in C (1c) would then be the most immediately salient discourse referent, based on its prominence in the information structure<sup>1</sup> and its (grammatical or contextual) agreement in  $\phi$  features. In more formal terms, the use of a pronoun Pro<sub>i</sub> in the discourse presupposes a single discourse referent  $i$  that is maximally salient in the discourse and is picked out by an assignment function  $g$  from a set of descriptions Desc to a set of possible worlds  $w$ :

$$(44) \quad i \text{ Sal} \quad \forall \langle w, g \rangle \quad \text{Sat}[\text{Desc}(w)(g(i))]$$

$$(45) \quad \forall k \text{ Salient } i[\langle w, g \rangle \text{ Sat}[\text{Desc}(w)(g(k))]] \rightarrow k=i],$$

where  $\text{Desc}(w)(g(i))$  is true iff the individual assigned to  $i$  by  $g$  has the property denoted by Desc in  $w$ , and Salient is a partial order over  $\text{Sal} \times \text{Sal}$  s.t.  $x$  Salient  $y$  iff  $x$  is at least as salient as  $y$ .

The formal representation in (44, 45) is essentially a context restrictor which constrains the use of a pronoun to a context in which the descriptive content of its antecedent discourse referent is uniquely selected from the possible worlds in which the descriptive content of the pronoun (person, number, gender, i.e.  $\phi$  features). While the logical form of is a powerful tool for describing the presupposition of maximal salience that comes with plain pronouns, it is important to remember that plain pronouns do not seem to have any uniqueness effects associated with them. For example, the famous donkey sentence, (3) Every person who owns a donkey beats it.

Does not pick out a particular donkey of the many donkeys one could have in mind. Additionally, it doesn't seem that there is a maximally salient donkey at all, which might be due to quantification over and binding of the pronoun (in addition to the fact that it has nothing in its phi-feature semantics which would allow for a maximally salient donkey).

Logical form captures the plain pronoun examples, but how does it do with socially deictic referential variants? To return to one of our earlier examples, let's see how the formal model could apply:

- (46) Jīn zǐ jiāo guǎrén fǎ tiān hé dé  
now you teach me imitate Heaven spread virtue  
'Now you teach me to imitate Heaven [by] spreading virtue.' ( *Guanzi 66*)

In this model, the context would have to provide an intersection of possible worlds in which there are discourse referents who are in the common ground and whose  $\phi$  features agree with the discourse referents, here *zǐ*, 'you' and *guǎrén*, 'I (emperor)'. What is uncertain is how exactly the context would delimit the set of discourse referents to the entities in question, because these entities crucially have more information that makes them maximally specific, namely their socially deictic (conventional) content. Thus, it is probably the case that socially deictic items would be specified in a way that is more similar than different to definite descriptions. In future work, it will be necessary to investigate this claim.

# Chapter 5

## Final remarks

In this essay, I have presented a partial picture of the referential strategies and variants in Old Chinese. I suggest that referential strategies happen at the level of pragmatic inference, which itself is not specific to any one language. At the same time, I hint at the fact that referential variants are language specific and tied to the social fabric of the speakers of a particular language. It is my hope that future work will examine the interaction between language-specific variants in pronominal forms and their effects on referential strategies that speakers take in conversation. Working on such seminal questions in Old Chinese is a rewarding endeavor, but also one that is full of pitfalls: grammatical judgments are hard to come by aside from historical instruction manuals, and there is little reliable information to be gleaned about the prosody of the language and its relation to disambiguating some of these referential variants. Notwithstanding, this work can continue through research in the field. Chaozhounese, for example, retains several features of Old Chinese and may be used in tandem with other languages in the Sino-Tibetan family which might give clues to original distinctions in Old Chinese. In any case, an understanding of the competition and selection which happens at the level of pragmatic inference allows frees us to adopt a dynamic view of semantic and structural differences in the languages of the world.

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