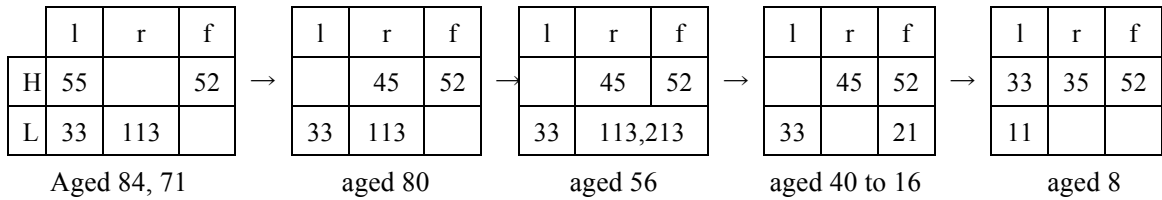


Bidirectional change in tone: Evidence from Chinese

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This paper aims to examine the directionality of diachronic tone change, based on recent changes in a number of Chinese languages. Data is derived from two sources: contemporary data collected from multiple generations of speakers, and a comparison of documents bearing tonal transcriptions from the past 150 years.

Data collected from various generations of speakers of the Libo dialect (Guizhou province, China) show the following tonal changes: 1) 55>45>35; 2) 113>213>212>21>11. From a structural point of view, the changes may be treated as follows (l stands for low, r for rising, f for falling, H for high, and L for low):



These charts indicate that a structural gap enables a tone to shift to the next slot.

The diagram below reflects analysis of a number of documents, and shows that tonal changes occur bi-directionally (numbers plus a/b are the tone categories of each place, M stands for middle):

