

Revisiting Eastern Min tone/vowel interaction

The case of Fuqing

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Abstract: The tone/vowel interaction has been a focused topic in Min linguistics and other related fields for the past three decades. A typical Eastern Min variety in this respect, Fuqing is regarded as having six vowels alternating with four falling tones: vowels lower along with the lowering pitch of tones. This paper, based on audio data from six native speakers, found that the two higher falling tones in Fuqing had merged and the distinction between the words in these tones lies in the vowel height or diphthongization. The lowest falling is not a real falling tone, and its contrast with the next lowest falling tone lies in vowel height, too. The two mid falling tones contrast each other in length, and accompanied with phonation types.

Keywords: tone/vowel interaction, four falling tones, Eastern Min, Fuqing