

Contrastive Analysis on Chinese and Meeteilon Affix

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the special qualities and properties of both Meeteilon and Chinese affixes. With the help of Contrastive Analysis this paper contrasts the Chinese affixes and Meeteilon Affixes in terms of its meaning, source, number, grammatical functions and morphological feature. Both the Chinese and Meeteilon affixes have the qualities of word formation, flexibility and rigid position. It is found that Meeteilon affixes are more productive and active in usage than Chinese.

Introduction:

Derivative word formation is an important method of word formation for both Chinese and Meeteilon. Affix being the basic component for derivative word formation is, therefore, very important. Using Contrastive Analysis many scholars have been actively doing research on Chinese and other major languages like English, Korean, Japanese, and made tremendous research achievement. However, no one is doing research on Chinese and Meeteilon contrastive analysis. The present paper is first of its kind. Understanding the nature, property and unique feature of affixes will help us to understand the derivative word formation of both Chinese and Meeteilon.

1. Nature of Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

In this section this paper is going to contrast Chinese affix and Meeteilon affix in terms of its word formation nature, rigid position, flexibility and quantity as under.

1.1. Word formation Nature of Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

According to modern linguistics theory, the word is smallest unit, which can be used independently, and also the most important grammatical unit of a sentence. The word is made up of morpheme(s). Being the smallest unit formed by the combination of sound and meaning, it can be generally classified into root and affix. Root is the important part of a word; main meaning of the word is derived from it. It can be an independent word or can form a word by combining with each other. Affix whereas, is a morpheme that can only be attached to the root to form a new word. Generally speaking it can't become an independent word by itself. The affix attached before and after the root is called prefix and suffix respectively; the affix that can be inserted between the two roots is known as infix. For example, 'i' of Meeteilon word 'i.ma' (mother), 'i.pa' (father) is a Meeteilon prefix; 第(di) of第一(dìyī, first), 第二(dìèr, second) is a Chinese prefix.; Again, 'k^hoy' of Meeteilon word 'əi.k^hoi' (we), 'mə.k^hoi' (they) is a Meeteilon suffix; 子(zi) of Chinese word 儿子(érzi, son), 男子(nánzi, man) is a suffix. It is self evident that main function of both the Chinese and Meeteilon affixes are to form new words. Both have the capacity to form new word.

1.2. Position of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

Prefixation and suffixation are one of the important types of Chinese and Meeteilon word formation. In Meeteilon affix has rigid character in terms of position. All the Meeteilon prefixes occur before the word. For instance, prefixes like 'i', 'nə', 'mə' never change its position. Many Meeteilon suffixes can simultaneously combine with root to form a new word. Its position never changed. For instance, 'təw.hən.lu.re' (make it done), 'cət.hən.lu.re' (let someone went). Here, the order of two suffixes 'hən' (CAUSATIVE), 'lu.re' (past) is always constant.

Like Meeteilon Chinese prefixes also always occur at the beginning of the word and suffixes at the end. In other words Chinese affix have its own fixed position. Chinese renowned linguist Zhu Dexi (2022) clearly stated that "every affix is fixed positional morpheme".

1.3. Flexibility of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

With the development and changes of society, language also changes accordingly. Such changes can clearly be seen in lexical aspect. Derivation being one of the most important and common method for word formation in a language, plays a vital role during the process of new word formation. New word became more popular and widely used along with new objects and ideas emerged. Such new words again become a productive affix. For instance, '热' (rè, hot) of '汉语热'(hànyǔrè, enthusiasm in

learning Chinese), ‘留学热’(liúxué rè, enthusiasm in studying abroad) and ‘工程’(gōngchéng, project/engineering) of ‘系统工程’(xìtǒng gōngchéng, systemic engineering), ‘信息工程’(xìnxī gōngchéng, information engineering) are becoming widely used suffixes. They are originally used only as independent word in Chinese. Of course while new affixes appear, old affixes were also disappeared.

Unlike Chinese Meeteilon affixes don't have such kind of flexible nature. The simple reason is that in Meetei society most of the new objects or ideas appear along with its foreign origin word, particularly the English words. And Meeteis are extremely fond of using foreign words. As such new affixes are not yet developed.

1.4. Classification of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

From the point of position, Meeteilon has only two affixes: prefix and suffix. Chinese affix is also generally classified into prefix and suffix. Regarding infix different linguists have different opinion. For example, some linguist say ‘不’(bù, not) of ‘看不到’(kànbùdào, can't see) and ‘得’() of “看得见”(kàndejiàn, can see) are considered as infix, but some other don't agree with it. Li & Thompson (1981) considered them as potential infix.

Again from the point of grammatical function, Meeteilon prefix is broadly divided into Pronominal and non-pronominal; and suffix into nominal suffix and verbal suffix. In case of Chinese affix is broadly divided into real affix and quasi affix.

2. Unique features of Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

According to the principle of Universal Grammar, languages in the world certainly have many common features. In addition to these similarities, different languages also have their unique features. every languages have affix, but each has its own uniqueness.

2.1. Source of Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

Meeteilon in its developmental process has witnessed complex social course. At every stage of development it accepts as many as loan words. However, a single affix was not borrowed from foreign language. Thus, all the affixes are originated from its own.

Chinese language in its five thousand long histories has already gone through three different periods i.e. ancient, modern and present. During this long period china had contacted with various foreign countries. However, source of Chinese affix is purely based on ancient Chinese language. And they hardly used direct borrowed foreign word, meaning translation is the principal method for using foreign words. They

mostly used after translating the foreign word. Under the heavy influence of European language like English new Chinese affix is developed by imitating English affix e.g. “化”(huà, -ize) of “现代化”(xiàndàihuà, modernize). Using borrowed Chinese morpheme, some affixes were developed by Japanese and again enter into Chinese as affix. No matter what, the materials they used in affix are all Chinese origin. It is clear that both Chinese and Meeteilon affixes are self originated.

2.2. Quantity of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

In Meeteilon vocabulary, majority of the words are formed through compounding. Meeteilon affix however, is more productive than Chinese in word formation in the sense that all the verbal roots can't form a word without affix. Exact ratio of the Meeteilon words formed by different word formation method like compounding, affixation is not yet established. This is an important research area we need to investigate. However, the total number of affix is less than 90.

In Chinese vocabulary, the ratio of word formed through affixation is extremely low. As per “汉语词语的统计与分析” (Statistics and Analysis of Chinese Words) mono syllable word occupies 16.7% of the whole vocabulary; Compound word occupies 80% of it. The word formed by affixation therefore, will definitely less than 3.3%. It signifies that maximum number of Chinese words is not formed through affixation, but by compounding. Despite having such facts, affixation plays a vital role in Chinese word formation. Besides, due to the qualities of flexibility as discussed above in 1.3, the number of affixes is increasing by and by. The total number of Chinese affixes including real affix and quasi affix are approximately 150.

Despite Meeteilon is an alphabetic writing system and affix is relatively productive, the number of affix is less than the Chinese which is an isolating language. Broadly speaking, both Chinese and Meeteilon belong to Sino Tibetan Language Family. Chinese has few prefix e.g. ‘老’(lǎo, respect), ‘第’(dì, ordinal), ‘初’(chū, first) etc. With the appearance of quasi affix, new prefixes like ‘总’(zǒng, overall), ‘准’(zhǔn, allow) are created. Similarly Meeteilon has tiny number of prefixes e.g. ‘i’, ‘nə’, ‘mə. Number of both Chinese and Meeteilon suffixes is more than prefixes.

2.3. Quality to become word:

Meeteilon is agglutinative language. Derivative words can be formed by more than one root and one affix. In Meeteilon affix can't become an independent word. Around ten affixes can be attached to a root (Indrakumar, 2021).

In Chinese, derivative words are generally formed by combining one root and one affix. However, being an isolating language, Chinese in strict sense has lack of morphological changes. Chinese word formation process is purely based on word order and function word. In Chinese therefore, affix itself can become an independent word. For example, suffix ‘则’(zé, norm) of ‘否则’(fǒuzé, otherwise), ‘得’(dé, to get) of ‘觉得’(juéde, to feel), ‘于’(yú, at) of ‘等于’(děngyú, equal to), ‘地’(dì, land) of ‘猛地’(měngdì, violent/ fierce). Many more examples are also there. They are, therefore, classified as quasi affixes.

3. Semantic function of the Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

The real meaning expressed by affixes in the process of word formation and the same meaning expressed by different affixes are discussed as under.

3.1. Real meaning of Meeteilon and Chinese Affix:

Chinese real affix in strict sense has no real meaning. For example, ‘子’(zi, nominal suffix) of ‘椅子’(yǐzi, chair), ‘巴’(ba, nominal suffix) of ‘尾巴’(wěibā, tail). It means that the meaning of all the derivative words is not the combination of the meanings of root and affix. The meanings of such affix are very weak. Some Meeteilon prefix like ‘ə’ of ‘ə.ma’ (one), ‘ə.ni’ (two) and ‘ə.hum’ (three) has no real meaning. However, most of the Meeteilon suffix has its own real meaning. Grammatical functions or sentence type like number, case, tense, negative, interrogative etc. are expressed through suffixation e.g. ‘təw.de’(don’t do), ‘təw.bra’(did you do) . Here, suffixes ‘de’ and ‘bra’ mean negation and interrogative respectively.

3.2. Affix having same meaning but different form:

Sometimes, different affixes can express same meaning. In other words, the meaning of affix of both languages is absolutely same but has different form. To express the meaning of negation Meeteilon use suffix ‘te’ (negation) or ‘de’ (negation), for example ‘cət.te’ (didn’t go), ‘ja.de’ (not allowed); whereas Chinese use prefix “非” and potential infix “不”, for example “非汉族” (non Chinese), “看不到“ (can’t see) .

4. Grammatical function of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

Affix generally plays vital role to modify the meaning of the root and to change the word class. Meeteilon affix can not only modify the meaning of the root, but also change the word class or indicates

sentence type. For Example, suffix ‘*de*’ (negation) can modify the meaning of the root ‘*ca*’ (eat) and express negation e.g. ‘*ca.de*’ (don’t eat).

Unlike Meeteilon Chinese affix generally, has no function to change the meaning of the root. Zhu Dexi (2002) said “real Chinese affix can only attach to the root, it’s relation with root is only for positional; there is no any relation with root in terms of meaning. Ma Qing zhu (1995) also has same opinion on it. For example, ‘大’ (dà, big) of ‘大雪天’(dàxuětiān, snowy day) and ‘大雨天’(dàyǔtiān, rainy day) can’t modify ‘雪天’(xuětiān, snowy day) and ‘雨天’ (yǔtiān, rainy day). There is no any meaning relation between the two component ‘会计’(kuàijì, accountant) and ‘师’(shī, respect) of the word ‘会计师’(kuàijìshī, accountant). Few affix like ‘者’(zhě, -er) however, can change the part of speech from verb to noun. For example, verb ‘读’(dú, read) can change to noun ‘读者’(dúzhě, reader) .

5. Morphological features of Meeteilon and Chinese affix:

Meeteilon derivative words formed by prefix can’t change word class. For example, ‘*i.ma*’ (mother) is formed by ‘*i*’ (first person) and ‘*ma*’ (mother), the word class of the root ‘*ma*’ remains as it is. Meeteilon suffix has morphological features that help to determine a part of speech. In other word suffix can determine word class. Through suffixation noun can be derived from verb.

Chinese affix, according to Ma Qingzhu (1995) has categorical meaning; except suffixes developed from function word, all the other morpheme that makes the suffixes have no its own basic meaning, but only the extended meaning. Thus, it is little bit hard to determine the word class through affixation in case of Chinese. Although some Chinese suffix has different functions, groups of word formed by same suffix have same word class. For example suffix ‘子’(zi, nominal) of ‘桌子’(zhōuzi, table) can’t change the word class of the root ‘桌’(zhuō, table). It simply acts as symbol of noun.

Conclusion:

From the above analysis it can be clearly seen that Meeteilon affix is more strong and active than Chinese in terms of word formation process. Numbers of Chinese derivative words are naturally less than Meeteilon. Quasi affixes are found more abundantly in Chinese. Every language is unique. As such, through contrastive analysis between Meeteilon and Chinese we can understand more deeply about the nature and structure of derivative words of these two languages. It will definitely help students to remember words, which is most difficult part of learning foreign language, without much effort.

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