The Nature of Chinese Affixations: A Contrastive Perspective

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Based on the previous and recent studies of Chinese affixation, this paper makes a further study on the nature of the Chinese affixation compared with the English affixation, and holds that the Chinese affixation is actually the parataxis mechanism of word-formation and that the inflexibility of the Chinese syllables prevents affixation in English sense from appearing in Chinese.

Keywords: affixation, C-E contrastive study, parataxis of word-formation, phonologic system

Introduction

The Meaning of Affixation

Affixation, which is also called "derivations", refers to the method of adding affixes to the stems of words in western languages. In terms of location, affixes can be divided into prefixes, infixes, and suffixes. From the perspective of function, affixes can be divided into derivational affixes and inflectional affixes; the former is the use of affixes to form new words, and the latter indicates the grammatical meaning of words, or the grammatical form of words into sentences. The essence of affix is to make the root (or stem) of a word change in various forms by adding affixes to express new lexical meanings and certain grammatical meanings. It is a way to describe the morphological changes of words in western languages.

Two Ways of Affixation's Influences on Chinese

We understand two ways of western affixation's influences on Chinese:

One is the introduction of affixation from western languages by the early Chinese scholars, and the other is the influence of former Soviet Union linguists' views on Chinese.

The western concept of affixes can first be seen in *Ma Shi Wen Tong*, i.e., *The Grammatical System of Chinese by Ma*, in which "front addition (qianjia, 前加)" and "rear attachment (houfu, 后附)" are the ideas of western affixes (Ma, 1898). Later appeared "language root (yugen, 语根)", "language family (yuxi, 语系)" (Xue, 1919) and "language tail (yuwei, 语尾)" (Hu, 1930), as well as the "formal words", such as "zi (子), er (儿), tou (头), mian (面), le (了), and zhe (着)" (Hu, 1923), which are also full of western affix ideas. The scholars mentioned above initially introduced the concept of affixes from western languages into Chinese. Based on the introduction, Qu Qiubai (1931/1957) introduces all the concepts of affixes, including roots, prefixes, suffixes, and affixations. In his monograph *The Study of Common Chinese Words*[1] (1931), Qu Qiubai systematically

[1] Qu Qiubai originally used the Chinese term "Ziyan (字眼)" to refer to "word", so as to distinguish it from "character".

constructs a Chinese word formation system based on affixations, puts forward five principles of word formation (see Qu, 1931, pp. 690-691) and concludes:

> Most Chinese characters, which have no meaning alone, are only used as the root (zigen, 字根), the prefix (zitou, 字头), and the suffix (ziwei, 字尾). The Chinese use these characters to create new polysyllabic words, just as the French use Latin roots, initials, and endings to create new French words. (Qu, 1931, p. 687)

Qu Qiubai's views had a great impact on the Chinese language, which can be corroborated from the arguments of some famous linguists.

In his *Modern Chinese Grammar* and his *Theories of Chinese Grammar*, Wang Li holds that Chinese "affixes" mean more than the western ones, and that we have to use the term "sign" instead of "prefix (citou, 词头) " and "suffix (ciwei, 词尾)". But when discussing "new signs", he regards that the "suffix (ciwei, 词尾)", such as "hua (化)", "xing (性)", and so on, "can virtually be called suffixes, because they correspond to the endings of western words" (Wang, 1945, p. 304). Lv Shuxiang uses the term "approximate ending" in one of his monographs *Essentials of the Chinese Grammar* to refer to "the ingredients commonly used to form combinatorial compounds", such as "shi (士)" (医士 doctor, 护士 nurse), "ding (丁)" (园丁 gardener, 门丁 mending), "guan" (茶馆 teahouse, 图书馆 library), "yuan" (戏院 theater, 医院 hospital), etc. (Lv, 1941, pp. 20-21). Lv Shuxiang is very cautious about the use of "affixes". That is why he uses such a cautious term. Later, in another monograph *Questions About Chinese Grammatical Analysis*, he formally proposes the concept and names it "quasiaffix", and asserts that "such quasiprefixes and quasisuffixes can be said to be the first feature of the Chinese affixes" (Lv, 1979, p. 48).

Although the western affix theories have been introduced and developed by some of Chinese linguists and have had a great impact on Chinese studies, people are still very cautious in accepting them. In the field of Chinese studies, such a situation has emerged:

> On the one hand, the linguistic theories of the Soviet Union and the views of Soviet sinologists on the Chinese language were regarded as the only correct, which had to be accepted and adhered to without hesitation. On the other hand, all Western linguistic theories and doctrines are labeled as "unacceptable", and have to be criticized and attacked. The two viewpoints that are most severely attacked at that time were: one is the view that Chinese is a monosyllabic language, which is considered as a slander against the Chinese people; the other is the view that Chinese is an inflectionless language, which is regarded as an assertion that Chinese is a "lower' language". (Pan, Ye, & Han, 2004, p. 72)

To prove that Chinese is a "superior" language, people not only actively sought and discussed prefixes, suffixes, and other morphological elements in Chinese, but also enthusiastically embraced the theories proposed by Soviet linguists. The most influential work is the paper "On the Chinese Language" by the Soviet linguist N. Y. Konrad in 1952. Konrad asserts, "The long-dominant misconception in Sinology about Chinese being monosyllabic and lacking morphology has caused significant harm. It led to the 'absence of grammar' theory regarding Chines, while persistently hindering scientific exploration of its grammatical structure" (Konrad, 1952, p. 26). Surprisingly, Konrad claims to have discovered numerous "suffixes", "prefixes", "quasi-suffixes", and emerging "prefixes" and "suffixes" in Chinese, aiming to support his proposition that Chinese possesses word-formation morphology. He also lists various grammatical category forms as evidence of "Chinese inflectional morphology". By imposing Russian morphological characteristics onto Chinese, Konrad and other Soviet linguists cater to the special requirement of the time. Consequently, throughout the 1950s, Chinese linguistic

circles witness a fervent pursuit of morphological elements in Chinese.

The Independent Thinking of Chinese Linguists

However, after this fervor persisted for nearly three decades, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the Chinese linguists calmly concluded: "Does Chinese have morphological changes? If it does, they are neither comprehensive nor genuine, playing a minimal role in grammatical analysis" (Lv, 1979, p. 11). "The most distinctive feature of Chinese grammar is the absence of strict morphological changes" (Lv, 1980, p. 1).

Research on the Nature of Chinese Affixation in Recent Years

The above are some studies by famous linguists on the nature of Chinese affixes, which have laid a solid foundation for later research. In recent years, some researchers have adopted different research methods, which are also of positive significance. These studies can be summarized from two main aspects: One is the theoretical perspective, and the other is the disciplinary perspective.

In recent years, there are mainly three theoretical perspectives for studying Chinese affixes. Firstly, the nature of Chinese affixes was studied from the perspective of the theory of redundancy and dissociation. It is believed that the nature of affixes is the manifestation of language redundancy at the grammatical level. Affixes have the characteristics of dissociation or semi-dissociation. Their existence is not to satisfy syntactic functions, but to adapt to the disyllabic trend in Chinese or strengthens expressive coloring. A threefold classification and criterion for determining affixes have been proposed: phoneticized affixes (e.g., the unstressed "子" [zi] and the retroflexive "儿" [er]), grammaticalized affixes (e.g., "老-" [lǎo-] and "阿-" [ā-], which function as grammatical markers), and pragmaticized affixes (e.g., "-族" [-zú] and "-吧" [-ba], which rely on context to acquire new meanings) (Han, 2002).

Secondly, a diachronic study of the nature of Chinese affixes from the perspectives of grammaticalization and lexicalization shows that the formation of affixes is the result of the dual effects of grammaticalization and lexicalization. For example, although the affix "化" (huà) is influenced by western languages, its origin can be traced back to ancient Chinese and has been rejuvenated in modern times due to technological needs, reflecting the interaction between semantic bleaching and functional expansion. It is argued that the nature of Chinese affixes lies in expressive needs rather than syntactic structure marking. Through diachronic corpus analysis, the study reveals the grammaticalization paths of affixes, such as "-化" (-huà) and "-性" (-xìng), including social motivations and cognitive mechanisms. This revises western linguistics' biases toward Chinese morphology and emphasizes the core functions of affixes in prosodic adaptation and emotional expression (Cui, 2024).

Thirdly, from the perspective of generative grammar, the syntactic properties of Chinese affixes have been explored. Through analyzing the word-formation of "-子" (such as "桌子" [zhuōzi, table] and "杯子" ([bēizi, cup]), it is found that "子" (zi) is not a nominalization marker as traditionally recognized, but a weak root (Hu, 2024).

In recent years, there have been three main disciplinary perspectives for studying Chinese affixes. Firstly, from the perspective of cross-linguistic comparison and typology, the essential differences between Chinese affixes and Indo-European morphology are analyzed: Chinese affixes place greater emphasis on expressiveness rather than serving as syntactic structure markers, and their development is influenced by the

cognitive patterns of the Han ethnic group. For example, the diverse expressive meanings of "老-" (lǎo-), such as "老外" (lǎowài, foreigner) and "老总" (lǎozǒng, CEO), reflect how socio-cultural factors shape the functions of affixes (Yan, 2021).

Secondly, research conducted from the perspectives of morphology and cognitive morphology proposes that the formation of Chinese quasi-affixes is closely related to cognitive metaphor and metonymy mechanisms, revealing the cognitive pathway of affixes evolving from full words through grammaticalization. The study puts forward the following views:

1. The categorization mechanism of quasi-affixes. For example, "-族" (-zú, clan/group) extends metaphorically by projecting the concept of "family/clan" onto social groups (e.g., "月光族" yuèguāngzú, "moonlight clan" referring to those who spend all their income; "追星族" zhuīxīngzú, "idol-chasing group").

2. The distribution rules of cognitive domains, where the semantic extension of quasi-affixes is governed by the principles of "proximity" and "similarity" (e.g., "-热" (-rè, heat), using physical temperature to metaphorize social phenomena) (Zhang, 2022). Through exhaustive corpus statistics, quasi-affixes are classified into "semantic bleaching type" and "functional marking type", with an exploration of their productivity rules in modern Chinese word-formation (Yin, 2025).

Thirdly, from the perspective of pragmatic functions, some scholars explore the nature of Chinese affixes, regard stative affixes (such as "red 彤彤" and "green 油油") as pragmatic markers, emphasize their functions of emotional expression and stylistic adaptation, and expand the essential connotation of affixations (Ma, 2010).

It can be seen that in recent years, many scholars have noticed the uniqueness of Chinese affixes and conduct some researches. Despite this, the practice of imitating western grammar persists to some extent, and "affixation" remains prevalent in modern Chinese grammatical frameworks. How should we confront this phenomenon? What insights lie behind Lv Shuxiang's assertion that Chinese "lacks strict morphological changes"? What is the true nature of Chinese "affixation"? These issues must be addressed from the perspective of contrastive studies. In Section II of this paper, the author will analyze the essence of the Chinese "affixation" by contrasting it with the English affixation. Understanding the nature of Chinese "affixation" will answer the above questions.

The Contrastive Analysis of the Nature of Chinese and English Affixations

The perspective of contrast between Chinese and English is the proper way to understand the nature of English affixation.

The Nature of English Affixation

Classifications of English affixation. English affixes, part of the broader Indo-European affix system, are categorized by position into prefixes (e.g., dis-, un-, proto-, semi-, pseudo-, etc.), infixes (rare in modern English, e.g., -ee- in feet), and suffixes (e.g., -ful, -ish, -er, -ly, -ate, -ing, -s, -ed, -est, -able, -ible, -ship, etc.).

Functionally, English affixes are divided into derivational and inflectional affixes. Prefixes are exclusively derivational, altering meaning without changing word class. Their function is to form new words. For example:

(a) cover → discover;

(b) fascist → proto-fascist;

(c) important → unimportant;

(d) automatic → semi-automatic;

(e) scientific → pseudo-scientific.

We can conclude the key features of English prefixes from the examples:

1. Minimal meaningful units: They cannot be further anlysed without losing their meanings.

2. Bound morphemes: They cannot stand alone and must be attached to stems.

3. Morphology-dependent semantics: Their meaning is realized only when fused with stems.

That is to say, its association with the stem is still a morphological connection. It can be seen that English prefix is a bound morpheme.

English suffixes are either derivational or inflectional. Most derivational suffixes change word class without altering core meaning, e.g.:

(a) care → careful → carefully → carefulness;

(b) skill → skilled → skillful;

(c) receive → receiver;

(d) move → movement;

(e) perform → performance;

(f) operate → operation.

Most derivational suffixes belong to this category; they only express the part of speech change of the stem, and do not change the lexical meaning of the stem; they cannot be further divided, nor can they be used alone, so they are also bound morphemes.

A few derivational suffixes in English modify both the meaning and the class (e.g., -able, -ible, etc.):

(a) wash → washable (adjective: "washable");

(b) convert → convertible (adjective: "convertible").

The two examples show that "-able" and "-ible" not only turn "wash" and "convert" into adjectives, but also slightly change their meanings. The two suffixes can sometimes be used independently, as in "He is able to speak English". So, such derivational suffixes can be either bound or free morphemes.

Inflectional suffixes, however, neither alter word meaning nor word class. They mark grammatical categories (e.g., plural -s, genitive -'s), ensuring syntactic coherence. For example, "-s" might be a form of the number category or the case category. In "books", the "-s" merely indicates plural number and does not change the part of speech or meaning of "book". In "Tom's book", the "-s" is merely a possessive form and does not change the part of speech or meaning of "Tom". English sentences are precisely realized through the various grammatical category forms of each word within them to achieve their syntagmatic relations (also known as combinatorial relations) and paradigmatic relations (also known as associative relations). In other words, syntagmatic relations reflect the formal consistency between words in a sentence, while paradigmatic relations reflect the grammatical category forms of each word, which are the guarantee for the realization of syntagmatic relations. For instance, in "There are some books on the desk", the plural "-s" in "books" triggers agreement with "are", not with "is". This is the syntagmatic relationship of the sentence (also known as combinatorial relationship). We can also see many grammatical categories from "books": the category of number (plural), the category of finite (generalized), the category of case (nominative), and so on, which is a kind of associative

relationship (paradigmatic relationship) in this sentence. It seems that English inflectional suffixes play a decisive role in sentence organization, and can be regarded as the formal mechanism of word formation into sentences.

A preliminary summary. From the above analysis, although English prefixes have a certain semantic meaning, the manifestation of this semantic meaning is premised on morphological combination. Therefore, the essential attribute of English prefixes is still a linguistic form. English suffixes, whether derivational or inflectional, are fundamentally formal mechanisms aligned with its morphological nature. Therefore, the affixation in English is essentially a formal means of word formation and even sentence construction, which is consistent with the morphological nature of English.

We analyze the essence of English affixation, aiming to use it as a standard to test whether there is a corresponding language entity in Chinese, that is, what is the essence of Chinese affixation?

The Nature of Chinese Affixation

As stated in the introduction of this paper, through the introduction by early Chinese linguists and the influence of Soviet linguists, Chinese grammar has indeed mostly accepted the Western affixations and has been significantly influenced by it. Many current works on "Modern Chinese" and the like still follow the classification criteria of western language affixes and divide Chinese affixes into the following three categories:

(1) Prefix + Root:

lǎo- (老-): lǎoshī (老师 teacher), lǎohǔ (老虎 tiger), lǎoxiāng (老乡 fellow villager), lǎowài (老外 foreigner)

ā- (阿-): ābà (阿爸 father), āmèi (阿妹 younger sister), āyí (阿姨 aunt)

dì (第-): dìyī (第一 first), dìbā cì (第八次 the eighth time), dìyīxiàn (第一线 front line)

(2) Root + Suffix:

-huà (-化): lǜhuà (绿化 greening), jiǎnhuà (简化 simplification), měihuà (美化 beautification), xiàndàihuà (现代化 modernization)

-zi (-子): dāozi (刀子 knife), xiùzi (袖子 sleeve), zhuōzi (桌子 table)

-ér (-儿): tóur (头儿 head), huār (花儿 flower), niǎor (鸟儿 bird)

-yuán (-员): dǎngyuán (党员 Party member), jiàoyuán (教员 teacher), yǎnyuán (演员 actor/actress), hǎiyuán (海员 seaman)

-dù (-度): tòumíngdù (透明度 transparency), shēndù (深度 depth)

-xìng (-性): dǎngxìng (党性 Party spirit), lǐxìng (理性 rationality), shèhuìxìng (社会性 social nature)

-tóu (-头): chútou (锄头 hoe), mántou (馒头 steamed bun), shétou (舌头 tongue)

-qì (-气): shénqì (神气 spirited, imposing), jiāoqì (娇气 squeamishness), yángqì (洋气 having a western style), tǔqì (土气 rustic, unrefined)

-zhě (-者): xuézhě (学者 scholar), zuòzhě (作者 author), biānzhě (编者 editor)

(3) Infix:

-dé- (-得-): lái de jí (来得及 be able to make it in time)

-bù- (-不-): lái bù jí (来不及 not be able to make it in time)

-lǐ- (-理-): yāo lǐ yāo qì (妖里妖气 in a strange and coquettish manner)

Based on the three categories, we find that there are indeed some "affixes" in Chinese that carry the

connotations similar to those in western languages. According to our analysis of the essence of English affixes in the first part of this section, the "affixes" in Chinese do have a certain "morphological" meaning as well. That's why we can call them "affixes", and that is also the reason why the Chinese and foreign linguists in the 1950s are keen to search for the "morphology" of Chinese. Then, are the "affixes" in Chinese and English really the same? Let's not be hasty in answering the question. As long as we conduct a necessary analysis of the "affixes" in Chinese, the answer to the question will naturally become clear.

A Contrastive Analysis of the Quantity of "Affixes" Between Chinese and English

The words formed by adding affixes account for the largest proportion in the total number of English words. According to statistics (Pyles & Algeo, 1982), the words formed by the derivation in English account for 30% to 40%, the words formed by the compounding include 28% to 30%, the words formed by the conversion account for 26%, the words formed by other secondary word-formations (such as abbreviation, initialism, etc.) account for 8% to 10%, and still other methods account for 1% to 5%. Therefore, the "affixation" is the mainstream in English, and it reflects the hypotactic mechanism of the English language.

However, the proportion of words formed by "affixation" in Chinese is too small. According to the statistics in *Statistics and Analysis of Chinese Words* compiled by the Language Teaching and Research Institute of Beijing Language Institute (1985), we can infer that monosyllabic simple words in Chinese account for 16.7% of the total number of Chinese words, while compound words account for 80% of the total number of Chinese words. The remaining proportion, which is only 3.3%, represents words formed by other word-formations. Among them, the number of words possibly formed by affixation is extremely small, definitely less than 3.3%. This statistical result illustrates at least the following two issues:

1. If "affixation" is the mainstream of word formation in English, then the mainstream of word formation in Chinese is compounding (accounting for 80%), and compound words precisely reflect the paratactic mechanism of the Chinese language;

2. on the contrary, the proportion of derivative words in Chinese (words formed by affixation) is so small that it can almost be ignored, and it cannot determine the nature of the Chinese language, because the nature is always based on a relatively large quantity.

Let's analyze the combination of English and Chinese word formation statistics. A common point is that the nature of both languages can be concluded from their word formations. If we only consider English, we have to admit that words formed by affixation (derived words) indeed account for the largest proportion of various word formations. However, the proportion of words formed by the other two English word formations (i.e., compound words accounting for 28% to 30%, and words formed by conversion accounting for 26%) is also very large. If we add the two together, it is far greater than that of derived words. This causes a question: It seems that English compound words are the same as those in Chinese, both being formed by the combination of two or more morphemes (roots), while words formed by English conversion only involve a change in word class, with the word form remaining unchanged. So, can we still say that the word formation reflects the hypotactic mechanism of English? Regarding this issue, the author plans to write another article specifically comparing and analyzing Chinese and English compound words. Here, let's put forward a preliminary conclusion: Chinese compound words focus on parataxis, while English compound words focus on hypotaxis; since words formed by English

conversion involve a change in word class, it is also a change in form, while Chinese has no concept of "conversion". Therefore, we can still say that the word formations of Chinese and English can reflect the organizational mechanisms of their respective languages.

A Contrastive Analysis of the Quality of "Affixes" Between Chinese and English

In fact, the quantitative analysis is also aimed at explaining the qualitative issues. We have already taken "quantity" as the breakthrough point and analyzed some "qualitative" issues. In this section, we will take the essence of the affixation in English as a reference and conduct a detailed analysis of the essence of the "affixation" in Chinese, so as to better understand Mr. Lv Shuxiang's assertion: "The most prominent feature of Chinese grammar is the absence of morphological changes in the strict sense" (1980, p. 1).

According to the above analysis, we can make further deductions. The reason why various affixes can be added to English roots is that the variability of English syllables is at work. The characteristic enables English roots to undergo various changes in phonetic forms, so as to achieve the purpose of word formation. This can be regarded as the mechanism of English affixation. In contrast, the "affixation" in Chinese completely lacks such an essence.

"Compulsory" and "non-compulsory". We will still start the discussion from the aspect of "morphology". We believe that, first of all, we should distinguish this pair of attributes of affixes: "compulsory" and "non-compulsory". English affixes complete word formation through "morphology". Without affixes, it is impossible to achieve the goal. Therefore, English affixes are compulsory. In English, whether they are derivational affixes or inflectional ones, they must be used. That is to say, whether it is word formation or the expression of grammatical categories in English, it must be realized by adding affixes. So, English affixes are "rigid" and must be used. Only when affixes are used in English can we know the part of speech, grammatical category, and part of the meaning of a word. In contrast, in Chinese, it is the opposite. Only when we know the meaning of a word can we judge its syntagmatic and associative relationships in a sentence, and thus deduce its "part of speech" and "grammatical category". Precisely because of this, in many cases, there is no need to use "affixes" in Chinese. And when "affixes" must be used, in most cases, they are not really used in the sense of "affixing", and it is likely to be the filling of syllables, because the unique phonological system of Chinese makes its syllables play a grammatical role under certain circumstances.

For example, in modern Chinese, we often say "lǎohǔ" (老虎 tiger), which seems to use the prefix "lǎo-" (a prefix in this context). But we will never regard "huánán lǎohǔ" (华南老虎 South China tiger) and "dōngběi lǎohǔ" (东北老虎 Northeast tiger) as "words". As words, we just say "huánán hǔ" (华南虎 South China tiger) and "dōngběi hǔ" (东北虎 Northeast tiger). If we say "huánán de lǎohǔ" (华南的老虎 the tiger in South China) and "dōngběi de lǎohǔ" (东北的老虎 the tiger in Northeast China), then they are no longer "words" and should be considered differently. Another example is that the word "péngyou" (朋友 friend) in both "sān gè péngyou" (三个朋友 three friends) and "péngyoumen" (朋友们 friends) implies a "plural" meaning. Moreover, in certain situations, "péngyoumen" can be replaced by "péngyou", and the suffix "-men" (indicating plural) is not necessarily required. However, in English, both are expressed in the plural form "friends". It can be seen that the grammatical categories in Chinese do not necessarily have to be expressed by relying on "affixes", and the word formation in Chinese does not necessarily require the participation of "affixes". Therefore, the "affixes" in Chinese are non-compulsory.

"Bound" and "free". The pair of attributes of affixes, "compulsory" and "non-compulsory", is closely related to another pair of attributes of affixes: "bound" and "free". By "compulsory", it means that an affix must be "compulsorily" attached to a root. Such an affix is then "bound". English affixes are like this. Therefore, they can be understood as bound forms attached to roots in the process of secondary derivational word formation (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 218). If both affixes and roots are regarded as morphemes, English affixes are bound morphemes attached to free morphemes (roots) (Marchand, 1969, p. 129). From this, we can deduce that when we say English affixes are "compulsory", the essence is "bound", that is, all English affixes are bound morphemes. Here, we need to take out the suffix "-able" mentioned above and explain it again: As a bound morpheme, "-able" is a suffix; as a free morpheme, it can be used independently, and it is a root, which is free. English roots are basically free, and bound roots are extremely rare (such as "-ceive" in "receive").

The "affixes" in Chinese cannot be easily described by using the terms "bound" and "free", which has been noticed by many linguists. Lu Zhiwei (1951, p. 5) already proposed that the distinction between "bound" and "free" is not entirely applicable to Chinese. Lv Shuxiang (1962) also pointed out that it is difficult to apply the concepts of "bound" and "free" in Chinese. In fact, hardly anyone has seriously used the terms "bound" and "free" to describe Chinese. The reason is that the "affixes" in Chinese are based on meaning. If we apply the terms of linguistic structure from western languages to meaning, it is inevitable to encounter difficulties, and it may even be unfeasible. Therefore, "non-compulsory" indicates that when to use and when not to use the "affixes" in Chinese depend on the deeper meaning to be expressed (for example, to distinguish the different meanings between "South China tiger" and "the tiger in South China"), and it is reflected in the "form" under certain conditions, that is, it is governed by the unique phonological system of Chinese, rather than simply being a matter of bound and free morphemes.

It is not just the author who believes that talking about "affixes" in Chinese is a kind of "forced application" and "imitation". As early as the middle of the 20th century, many scholars had a critical attitude. Zhang Jianmu believes that Chinese affixes

> are often not derived from the internal laws of the Chinese language, but rather an illusion generated by isolating one or several words and comparing them with characters of the same meaning in European languages, especially English and Russian, and then based on the meaning. (1955, p. 26)

Xiao Tianzhu (1984) theoretically and positively criticized a series of terms including "root", "affix", "derivation", etc. He believes that these statements rigidly transfer the concepts of inflectional languages to Chinese, a non-inflectional language.

> The root theory can be barely used to explain affixed compound words, but it has no explanatory power for monosyllabic words, which account for the majority of Chinese vocabulary, and the so-called compound words. The combination of "roots" without corresponding "affixes" is meaningless. (p. 34)

Despite the criticism, after all, language elements similar to the "affixes" in English do exist in Chinese to a certain extent. We cannot completely ignore the fact. On the contrary, we should realistically recognize the different meanings of "affixes" in both Chinese and English. The affixes in English are a matter of structure, and their forms are manifested in various changes of grammatical forms. In contrast, the "affixes" in Chinese are a matter of emphasizing meaning over structure, and their forms are dominated by the phonological system. From form to meaning, the affixes in English are completely different from the "affixes" in Chinese. The

affixes in English are relatively easier to explain clearly, while the "affixes" in Chinese seem to have more implications. Then, we will continue to explore the connotations of the "affixes" in Chinese in the following part.

"Affixes", "roots", and "root words". Regarding "affixes" and "roots", there have been three different understandings in the field of Chinese grammar. The first two are represented by two great grammarians, Zhu Dexi and Lv Shuxiang, and the third is represented by Sun Changxu. Zhu Dexi (1982, p. 28) advocated that "affixes" correspond to "roots", which is the same as the meanings of a series of terms such as "root", "affix", and "derivation" in western languages. The criticism in the field of Chinese grammar is also aimed at this view. However, Lv Shuxiang (1979, p. 94) put forward different terms to represent the "affixes" in Chinese. He believes that according to the word-formation characteristics of Chinese, "affixes" do not correspond to "roots", and what corresponds to "roots" is "root words". Then what is a "root word"? "An independent word that can serve as the root of other words is a 'root word'" (Zhang, 1956, p. 49).

For example, in the word "renmin" (人民 people), both "人 (ren)" and "民 (min)" are "roots", but "人 (ren)" is also a "root word" at the same time, because it can also "derive" other words, such as "人们 (renmen)", "人员 (renyuan)", "人缘 (renyuan)", and so on.

In Sun Changxu's (1956, p. 21) view, there seems to be some "confusion" between "affixes" and "roots": He advocates that "roots" are more like the qualified components in a restrictive structure. Taking the word "rexin" (热心 enthusiasm) as an example, words of the same family include:

"liangxin" (良心 conscience);

"xiaoxin" (小心 carefulness);

"yexin" (野心 ambition);

"danxin" (担心 worry);

"haoqixin" (好奇心 curiosity);

"tongqingxin" (同情心 sympathy);

… etc.

And words of a different family include:

"reli" (热力 heat);

"rechao" (热潮 upsurge);

"reqi" (热气 heat);

… etc.

According to Sun Changxu's view, when we say they are of the same family, it is because "xin" (心 heart) is the "qualified component", and "xin" is the "root". Here are two issues worthy of consideration. One is, in the examples he lists, is "xin". Is it always the "definitive component"? This may not reflect the actual situation of the Chinese language. The other is: Is it better to understand "xin" as a "root" or as an "affix"? Sun Changxu believes that words composed of "re-" (热-) are not words of the same family because they do not belong to the same root as "rexin" (热心 enthusiasm). This kind of analysis, to a large extent, makes the "form" (expressed in terms of roots) and the "meaning" (expressed in terms of words of the same family) extremely chaotic and difficult to understand. There are more difficult-to-grasp concepts in Sun Changxu's view (see Sun, 1956, pp. 101-119). The author has no intention to make comments on Mr. Sun's view. On

the contrary, his view is taken as a representative of different understandings of "affixes" and "roots" in the field of Chinese grammar. At the same time, the author is being honest and pointing out the difficulties in understanding.

Briefly speaking, Zhu Dexi's view is purely "western-style", overly emphasizing the homogeneous language elements between Chinese and western languages, that is, there are indeed some "affixes" in Chinese that are homogeneous with those in western languages. The problem is that this tiny bit of "homogeneous elements" has been infinitely magnified, which is perhaps a common problem in imitative grammar. Sun Changxu's view is really difficult to understand, no wonder it has had little influence. In contrast, Mr. Lv Shuxiang's view is in line with the characteristics of Chinese word formation. He and Zhang Shilu use the term "root word" not simply to replace "affix" or "clitic", but to endow this language element with a meaning unique to Chinese: While word formation in western languages is mainly derivative, with "root" corresponding to "affix", word formation in Chinese is mainly compound, and what corresponds to "root" is "root word", and the "root word" can be used independently or to form words (Lv, 1979, p. 94).

Therefore, if one insists on claiming that there are "affixes" in Chinese, then one must pay attention to the unique meaning of Chinese "affixes", that is, they are "root words".

Single function or multifunction. Another linguist, Chao Yuenren (1968, pp. 112-133), makes a detailed discussion on the "prefixes" and "suffixes" in Chinese in *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese* (translated by Lv Shuxiang, 2001). He more aptly distinguishes the "affixes" that are of the same nature as those in western languages from the "affixes" unique to Chinese. By synthesizing these contents, we can summarize the following points:

1. Chao Yuenren (1968, p. 113) believed that "There are not many strict prefixes. In addition to 阿 a-, all may appear elsewhere as full words. These prefixes do not have neutral tone phonetically, since neutral tone never occurs at the beginning of a word". This point coincides with Lv Shuxiang's view.

2. Chao Yuenren believed that

   The suffixes in Chinese are empty morphemes. Most of them are pronounced in the neutral tone and appear at the end of a word, indicating the grammatical function of the word. The suffix of a word, or simply called a suffix, is different from the suffix of a phrase, or called an auxiliary word. In a few cases, the same syllable can be a suffix sometimes and an auxiliary word at other times. For example, the two "了" (le) in "吃了饭了" (chī le fàn le). Another example is the two "的" (de) in "我的" (wǒ de) and "一定不会下雨的" (yī dìng bù huì xià yǔ de). (1968, p. 114)

This shows that the functions of Chinese "suffixes" are rarely as single as those of western language suffixes, but are often "compound", serving multiple purposes.

3. Chao Yuenren (1968, pp. 112-133) also distinguished between typical affixes and affixes with relatively concrete meanings. The former includes:

"阿" (ā), "老" (lǎo), "第" (dì), "初" (chū), "子" (zi), "儿" (ér), "头" (tou), "巴" (ba), and "们" (men).

In fact, this kind of affixes are not so "typical", and in the view of Guo Shaoyu (1938), it is the syllables that play a role. The latter can be further divided into "affixes with a wide range of combination", such as:

"禁" (jīn), "可" (kě), "好" (hǎo), "难" (nán), "自" (zì), "敝" (bì), "令" (lìng), "舍" (shè), "贵" (guì), "者" (zhě), "人" (rén), "来" (lái), "然" (rán), "师" (shī), "士" (shì), as well as emerging affixes, such as "不" (bù), "单" (dān), "多" (duō), "泛" (fàn), "准" (zhǔn), "伪" (wěi), "反" (fǎn), "化" (huà), "的" (de), "性" (xìng), "论" (lùn), and "观" (guān).

These affixes have corresponding relationships with translations.

When we consider Chao Yuenren's viewpoints together with our discussions interspersed among them, we find that there are basically no "affixes" in Chinese in the sense as in western languages. Even the "typical affixes" identified by Mr. Chao are of the "compound" type, not to mention other affixes and those with "relatively concrete meanings". In addition, in terms of function, Mr. Chao believes that suffixes "indicate the grammatical function of the word". In this regard, the suffixes in Chinese are similar to the inflectional suffixes in English (and other western languages), because the inflectional suffixes in English and other western languages indeed only indicate grammatical functions. Suffixes like "-过" (guò), "-着" (zhe), "-了" (le) in Chinese do seem to be similar to "inflectional suffixes", but the "suffixes" in Chinese do not merely "indicate the grammatical function of the word"; they have more usages. Regarding this point, *A Discourse Grammar of Mandarin Chinese* written by Chaucer Chu (1998) had a special discussion. From Chu's discussion, we can deduce that the functions of the so-called "inflectional suffixes" (let's call them that just for now) in Chinese not only involve the word-formation and sentence levels, but also the discourse level, rather than just being a marker of the grammatical inflection of words (as in English and other western languages). We can briefly give an example to illustrate this. After elaborately discussing the aspect marker "-着" (zhe) in Chinese, Chaucer Chu (1998; 2006, pp. 50-51) summarizes the meanings and usages of "-着" (zhe):

Specifically, semantically, the basic meaning of the Chinese aspect marker "-着" (zhe) is "continuation". However, this meaning is typical only when it is used in conjunction with activity verbs (Chu, 1987). When it is used with momentary verbs, this meaning extends from the event itself to the state after the event. This explains the situations where so-called "posture verbs" and "disposal verbs" are followed by: "-着" (Li & Thompson, 1981; Ma, 1985; Chu, 1987). In fact, this understanding can also be applied to many other momentary verbs. This extended function is what we call the staticizing effect. For stative verbs, whether to use "-着" or not is mainly due to syntactic or pragmatic reasons rather than semantic purposes.

…

Syntactically, the basic function of "-着" (zhe) is to indicate subordination, which can explain a large number of phenomena that originally seemed to have no relation at all. It explains the following: (1) Simple sentences with "-着" are incomplete; (2) despite semantic redundancy, "-着" can be used after stative verbs; (3) "-着" can be used after co-verbs; (4) clauses with "-着" can function as adverbials of manner, although this is not the basic function of "-着"; (5) "-着"can serve as the background; (6) When "-着" is used in combination with "呢" (ne), it indicates emphasis.

…

In this section, we can clearly see that the suffix "-着" (zhe) intersects with the types of verbs semantically, and also intersects with semantics, syntax, and pragmatics in terms of its functions. The combined effect of these intersecting relationships has propelled grammar from the sentence level to the discourse level.

It can be seen that the usage of Chinese "affixes" is diverse, involving structural, semantic, pragmatic and other usages, exhibiting the characteristics of being "compound". In terms of language structure alone, Chinese "affixes" can also extend to different levels such as words, sentences, and discourses.

At this point, we have a clear understanding of the essence of the "affixation" in Chinese, and we should draw an appropriate conclusion.

Summary and Conclusion

Different Meanings Between Chinese and English "Affixations"

Let's return to Mr. Lv Shuxiang's assertion: "The most prominent feature of Chinese grammar is the absence of morphological changes in the strict sense". Indeed, the "affixation" in English and other western languages, which has a very singular morphological meaning, does not exist in Chinese in the strict sense. However, we do not intend to draw such a conclusion, so as to avoid being caught up in unnecessary disputes again regarding the existence of the "affixation" in Chinese. We believe that it is not inappropriate to use the term "affixation" in the context of Chinese. What is important is to understand the different meanings of the "affixation" in Chinese and English, and not to mistakenly assume that just because the terms are the same, their connotations are also identical.

Theoretical Basis of the Nature of Chinese Affixations

In the "Introduction", we provide an overview of the upsurge in the Chinese grammar community in China during the 1950s to search for morphological features in Chinese. This, from the negative side, demonstrates that Chinese "has no morphological changes in the strict sense" and that Chinese is a semantic language.

In the second part of this paper, we analyze the "affixation" of Chinese and English from the perspective of "quantity", and conclude that words formed through the "affixation" constitute the main body of the English vocabulary rather than that of Chinese. Taking the connotations of affixes in English and other western languages as a reference, we also conduct a "qualitative" analysis of the "affixation" in Chinese, and explore in detail the various meanings and usages of Chinese "affixes". Overall, we find that the meanings and usages of English "affixes" are relatively simple, while those of Chinese "affixes" are complex. The profound insights expressed by different scholars on this issue have laid a theoretical foundation for the conclusion we are about to draw. Among the numerous viewpoints, we particularly value Mr. Lv Shuxiang and Mr. Zhang Shilu's concept of "root words", Mr. Zhao Yuenren's distinction between typical affixes and affixes with relatively concrete meanings, and Mr. Chaucer Chu's three-dimensional description of the structures (including word formation, sentences, and discourses), semantics, and pragmatics related to Chinese affixes. In addition, the distinction between "compulsory" and "non-compulsory" made in this paper can be regarded as an important formal basis for identifying Chinese "affixes".

Nature of Chinese Affixation

In summary, the "affixation" in Chinese is actually a mechanism of semantic combination for forming words in the form of "affixes", which is driven by the unique phonological system of Chinese. It is a manifestation of how the Chinese writing system and phonological system coordinate the organizational forms of the language. On the other hand, the "affixation" in English and other western languages refers to various syllabic changes that occur under the influence of the variability of syllables, and these syllabic changes are used to achieve the purposes of word formation and expressing grammatical forms. It should be particularly noted that the syllables in Chinese have the characteristic of invariability. It is impossible for Chinese to truly

add "affixes" to "roots" in the same way as in English. This fundamentally prevents the occurrence of the "affixation" in the sense of western languages in Chinese. Therefore, adding affixes to the roots in western languages is actually a manifestation of the syllable extension of the same word. Once the syllables are extended, they are different from the original word, and a new word is created. However, adding the so-called "affixes" to the "roots" in Chinese is actually adding new meaning components to the original word, thus forming a new word.

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