

Chapter 5

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

In this chapter, a summary of findings from the main body of the thesis, chapters 2 to 4, are presented. Highlights of interesting facts are discussed from each chapter. For complications, solutions are given as seen appropriate. If there is no answer to addressed problems, they will serve as implications for future studies.

Chapter 2 is a classification of types of adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien according to morphological, phonological and grammatical criteria followed with an alternate classification according to semantic criterion. By morphology and phonology, adjectives can be divided into monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic types.

The monosyllabic adjective is comprised of a single morpheme. It can undergo reduplication to become an XX construction of which the first and second syllables share a common morphological structure. Tone sandhi differentiates the first syllable of the first adjective from its reduplicated counterpart. Upon reduplication, the meaning of the monosyllabic adjective can either be magnified or mitigated depending on discourse context.

The disyllabic adjective is comprised of two syllables. It can be subdivided into simple, compounded and derived types according to their morphological formations. The simple disyllabic adjective is unique in that it can only be analyzed as a whole due to the fact that the two morphemes have no meaning when occurring in isolation. The compounded disyllabic adjective is comprised of two free morphemes and therefore each of them can be analyzed in isolation. The derived disyllabic adjective is comprised of a free morpheme and a bound morpheme of which both morphemes can occur in any position. The bound morpheme, though possessing a meaningful function of its own, requires attachment to its free counterpart to be analyzed appropriately. Each syllable has to be in exact order or the meaning of the derived adjective cannot be realized. The derived disyllabic adjective can be further divided into prefixed and suffixed ones. Attaching prefixes and suffixes causes the word class of a word to enter a derivation process in which the word changes from

either a noun or verb into an adjective depending on the type of prefixes and suffixes.

Other than analyzing disyllabic adjectives by giving importance to morphological criterion, another alternative of analyzing them is to adhere to semantic criterion. The alternate analysis concerns the radial structure which centers on a general concept of meaning which gets retained throughout the analysis.

The polysyllabic adjective is an adjective that contains more than two syllables. The process that brings about this outcome is reduplication. The reduplication process renders these type of adjectives unique in their formation, being a phonologically and a morphologically fused one. Their production is a semantic extension from their monosyllabic counterparts which was discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the grammatical constraints of the modification of the adjectival phrase. The adjective can be modified by an adverb which is a degree expression. The degree expression functions to modify adjectival phrases by stating the extent of the adjective. In other words, the degree expression modifies the adjective by answering the question of “how much” and “to what extent”.

Degree expressions are complementary in distribution, thus for two degree expressions to occur and modify the same adjectival phrase in the same environment is impossible. On the contrary, some degree expressions can undergo reduplication and become intensifying modifiers of the adjectival phrase displaying an even more intensified degree of modification. Degree expressions can be categorized into intensifier degree expressions, comparative constructions and reduplication. Intensifier degree expressions occur in front of an adjectival phrase to express the extent of the semantic content exhibited in the adjective. They can be further categorized into intensifying, moderated and excessive intensifier degree expressions.

The intensifying intensifier degree expression magnifies the extent of the modified adjective's semantic content. The moderated intensifying degree expression demonstrates a significantly lesser extent of the modified adjective's semantic content than its intensifying counterpart. The excessive intensifying degree expression is employed for adjectives which are comprehended to possess negative

connotations. The outcome of this adverb is identical to the intensifying intensifier degree expression; the extent of the modified adjective's semantic content undergoes intensification.

Like intensifiers, comparative constructions also demonstrate degrees of adjectives as well. Constructions that portray comparison can be subdivided into equative, figurative, differential, comparative and superlative comparison constructions. Equative comparison constructions demonstrate resembling qualities of two entities. Figurative comparison constructions demonstrate figurative resemblance of two entities.

Differential comparison constructions illustrate differences between two entities and there are two alternatives to do so; without or with degree of difference explicitly referred to the compared entities. Differential comparison without the degree of difference being explicitly expressed can be executed in several ways, depending on whether the adjective functions as a main predicate, a verb object modifier, a verb modifier or a verb complement. The grammatical function of the adjective results in slightly varied structures of differential comparison sans degree of difference.

For differential comparison with degree of difference explicitly expressed, a quantitative expression or a quantity adjectival phrase is utilized. The domain of discussion influences the type of measure that serves as the degree of difference. Comparative comparison constructions express difference between two entities. The comparative degree expression in the construction places focus on the notion that one entity possesses a more intensified quality than the other.

Constructions that illustrate comparative comparison can vary according to the grammatical function of the adjective; whether the adjective is the main predicate, the adjective modifies the object of the main verb, the adjective modifies the main verb or the adjective is a verb complement. Superlative comparative constructions are employed to express qualities belonging to the extreme end of the differential comparison continuum. The superlative comparison construction is formulated by an adverb clause followed by the superlative comparison expression.

Reduplication is also another process utilized to express extent. The process is a phonological one which impacts the extent of the semantic content of the adjective.

When reduplication is in process, the adjective can be reiterated to achieve an either intensified or mitigated semantic alteration depending on the discourse context. Furthermore, reduplication can cause the adjective to function in an idiomatic way by adding a bound morpheme followed with its reduplicated counterpart. The meaningfulness of the bound morpheme's semantic content is optional.

Reduplication can replicate the bound morpheme in various levels of phonology. The entire bound morpheme may be replicated with a difference in tone, where tone sandhi plays a crucial role in expressing the non-similarity of tones. The outcome of tone sandhi results in an adjective followed by two identical bound morphemes.

Partial reduplication can also be found in that either the same consonant or same set of consonants of the preceding syllable gets copied and transferred to the reduplicated portion. This phonological process is called consonance. Another type of partial reduplication is the copying and transferring of initial consonant of the preceding syllable to the reduplicated morpheme. This process is called alliteration. Both processes are identical in practice; the former is a hyponym of the latter. Moreover, both consonance and alliteration create an adjective followed by unidentical morphemes.

The production of reduplicated adjectives is arbitrary, as there is no consistent pattern in describing their formation. Hence, phonological production is utilized as an attempt to classify them for ease of understanding.

Another alternative method for categorizing these reduplicated adjectives is to account for their semantic content. Grouping them by semantic qualities can also possibly shed some light in comprehending them better. As it has been established that reduplicated adjectives are idiomatic extensions of their basic counterparts and they express degree, they are subsequently named reduplicated expressives.

The ultimate purpose of describing degree in this chapter is to provide substantial evidence to the reader that the word which is modified by it belongs to the adjective word class.

Chapter 4 deals with negation of the adjective. There are three methods of negating the adjective. The choice of negation is dependent on the modal auxiliary verb;

whether the modal auxiliary expresses ability, existence, or validity. Each modal auxiliary verb is different in form and meaning, thus the negation of each modal auxiliary reflects their difference. Nonetheless, the grammatical function of negation be it of the ability, existential or the validity type serves a single purpose; it negates the adjective.

An interesting observation is that the negation of ability and existence is comprehended in the same way in Singaporean Hokkien whereas in Taiwanese Hokkien they are not. This chapter serves its purpose in comparing the similarities between the adjective and the verb word class. The phenomenon of the adjective's ability to take on negation highlights the fact that there is a fuzzy boundary between being an adjective and a verb. For a number of languages in the eastern part of the world, especially from East Asia downwards, this phenomenon holds true. However, an interesting question can be raised on whether the adjective is to be analyzed as a separate word class or as a sub-class of verb in Singaporean Hokkien.

The researcher's stance regarding the adjective-verb dilemma is a neutral one. He is aware that in Singaporean Hokkien the adjective can modify the noun under two types of constraints. The adjective either precedes the noun functioning as a typical adjective or follows the noun functioning as a predicate of the sentence. The similarity of grammatical functions of the adjective and verb coupled with the fact that they both can be negated render it tempting to categorize them under the same word class of being verbs. Nonetheless, the adjective can also be isolated from the verb by taking on modification via the usage of degree expressions or adverbs. Upon considerable contemplation, the researcher has opted not to take sides in deciding whether to analyze an adjective as a different word class or as a verb. It is better to embrace both sides of the argument and be open-minded to all opinions.

Upon mounting on the task of completing this thesis, there are problematic issues that were encountered. In terms of phonology, the consonant and vowel charts merely reflect exclusively data that were collected orally. In terms of grammatical analysis, insights from language resource persons were insufficient due to limited access and time. Various discourse analysis details need to be accounted for a better in-depth analysis of adjective constructions. Moreover, this thesis has covered only the adjective word class in Singaporean Hokkien. More research is required for understanding this language in detail. For future implications, a more detailed

phonological analysis of this language, extended studies of other words classes; precisely nouns, verbs, coverbs, etc., as well as more discoveries about semantic and discourse issues could be conducted to bring more insight to Singaporean Hokkien. The researcher hopes that this thesis can contribute to areal studies as a first start to study how languages behave cross-linguistically across Asia.

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