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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER MARKER AND MANDARIN CHINESE AFFIXOID

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Abstract

This study focuses on the recent morphological development -jie ‘sister’ in Mandarin Chinese. For example, in zhùpǎo-jìě 助跑姐 ‘a woman who ran up to pretend something’ -jie is an affixoid. Our data are taken from Taiwan News Smart Web (2019) and are examined within a semantic and morphological framework. The goal of the study is to investigate the semantic and morphological attributes of [X + jie] nominals and to find out social development the nominals revealed. The findings show that, semantically, [X + jie] refers to the outer appearance, emotion, and behavior of the targeted female. Morphologically, the nominals could be in sentential form and undergo omission, reversion, modification, etc. before reaching suffixation formatting with the affixoid. The high productivity of the gender marker -jie brings the social development of this Chinese speaking society to light. [X + jie] nominals demonstrate social activity, cultural organization, political event, and language contact in Taiwan.

Keywords

[X + jie] Construction, Affixoid, Quasi-suffix, Collocation, Social Change

1. Introduction

Jie 姐 ‘elder sister’ is a kinship term and gender indicator with high frequency of use nowadays. We collect the data from newspaper corpus and the paper aims to study the semantic and word formation of [X + jie] construction in the Mandarin Chinese speaking society Taiwan.

Many researchers concern about affixoids (inter alia, Mohanan, 1986; Artstein, 2002; Hsieh and Hsu, 2003; Meesters, 2004; Ascoop and Leuschner, 2006; Decroos and Leuschner, 2008; Tang, 2009; Leuschner, 2010; Van Goethem, 2010; Cao, 2017). Tang (2009) studies the person suffixes ‘-tsiá者’ and ‘-uân員’ in Taiwanese Southern Min and expresses that they lack of independency but can be attached to stems like verbs, nouns and adjectives to form nominals. Take ‘-yuan員’ as an example. Attaching to the verb teach, then it is *jiaoyuan* 教員 ‘teach-person; teacher’ and suffixing to certain post, it can be *yinhanghangyuan* 銀行行員 ‘bank clerk’, etc. Cao (2017) observes *jun* 君 in [X + jun] ‘person; someone’ in online language use and identified that *jun* is developed from a honorific address term to carrying evaluative connotation. It may evaluate person, object, even abstract object, and finally developed into an affixoid highlighting the given prototypical feature. Piayura, Sorthip, Unthanon & Tularak (2018) also focus on online language use.

The pragmatic concerns of affixoids have gained much attention and examined in compound construction. Hoeksema (2012:97) found that compounds could add subjective flavor to our speech “in a colorful and stylistically sensitive manner” where the right-hand element of the compounds are responsible for the task. Potts (2011) investigates pragmatic level of word use in movie reviews and suggests an emergent negative polarity in that he claims that deriving from the word meaning of negation as well as from pragmatic concerns and expectation of the hearer, negation opens up expressivity. In the same vain, Booij (2010) observes Dutch affixoid *ere-* and indicates that the original form of *ere-* carries *honorary* meaning to its NN compounds. Depner (2018) claims the negativity bias of using person affixoids. She explains that the language users apply thinking in metonymy and carry out cognitive economy contribute to the developing process of affixoids. Concentrating on adverbial clauses in Romance languages, Bodoc (2019) asks whether language contact or Latin inheritance play a role in the related morphosyntactic features. Examining Aivaliot, a dialect spoken in Greece, Ralli (2019) concentrates on prefixoids *plaku-* and *sa-*. She believes that affixoids may appear in languages of stem-based, such as

Greek. Furthermore, Vounchev (2019) deals with the affixoids in the Greek gay argot *Kaliardà* and comes to the conclusion that *Kaliardà* uses mainly domestic affixoids for the reason of differing its vocabulary from Standard Modern Greek.

Despite the attention that has been directed on affixoids, there are a number of areas where further research is warranted. The present paper delves into the semantic and morphological features of the affixoid *-jie* in Mandarin Chinese. Our research questions ask: (1) What are the morphological and semantic attributes of the affixoid *-jie*? (2) What social development do [X + jie] nominals revealed in the Mandarin speaking society Taiwan?

This paper is organized as follows: introduction section presents the previous studies and rationale of the present study, section 2 introduces data source and theoretical tenets of the study. Section 3 gives exemplary interpretation of the data. After examining the data, a further discussion is provided in section 4 to demonstrate the productivity of the affixoid and the social development that it expresses. Finally, conclusion about *-jie* affixoid is drawn in section 5.

2. Research Framework

This morphological process works explicitly in daily conversation as well as in news reports, we thus collect the linguistic materials from *Taiwan News Smart Web* (www.tbmc.com.tw). This newspaper corpus collects more than 18,600,000 pieces of news dated from 1951 and it is updated every day by about 2,000 pieces. The corpus compiles politics, society, business, arts, sports, and supplement pages. The newspapers collected are e.g., United Daily News since 1951, Commercial Times since 1996, Apple Daily since 2004, Central Daily News from 2001 to 2006, The Merit Times from 2000 to 2009.

In total 82,333 [X-*jie*] data were retrieved from the corpus (see Table 1). After examining them, 657 are organized in our Excel database. The following data are collected: Name of the newspaper, collocations, headlines, news contents, and edition. The analytic columns are (a). part of speech, (b). semantic feature, (c). metaphor, (d). evaluation, (e). pragmatic type, etc. The two fields (a) and (b) are for the analysis of the overall structure of the [X + jie], and the other fields are for further linguistic assessment.

Table 1: *[X + jie]* and Its Distributions in the Newspaper Corpus

Newspapers	Tokens
United Daily News	17,533
United Daily News (Local Pages)	13,188
United Evening News	4,956
Economic Daily News	5,461
China Times	15,188
China Times	4,341
Commercial Times	1,441
Liberty Times	2,825
Apple Daily	2,813
China Daily News	1,436
Central Daily News	923
Minsheng Bao	9,029
The Merit Times	402
Journal (Estrela) Seng Pou	2,797
Total tokens	82,333

* retrieved on 12.12.2019

The research framework is grounded on semantic and morphological analysis where collocation is an important notion. Collocation (Halliday 1966, Dunning 1993) is fundamental in Corpus Linguistics. It refers to the frequent co-occur words before and after the target word. For example, a search of the target word *day*, one finds *every day*, *week day*, *sunning day*, *day trip* etc., *every*, *week*, *sunning*, *trip* are thus collocations of *day*. In our database, collocations such as *fǎ* 髮 ‘hair’ and *shīkòng* 失控 ‘out of control’ are often combined with *-jie*, thus *fǎ-jie* 髮姐 ‘hair-sister; female hairdresser in barbershop’ and *shīkòng-jie* 失控姐 ‘out-of-control woman’. These collocations not only provide semantic and morphological contexts but also convey messages about the Chinese speaking society together with the *-jie* affixoid.

Next section begins with an analysis of the structure of *[X + jie]* with such research framework.

3. Analysis and Findings

Common collocations of *jie* long before Modern Mandarin are like examples (1) and (2).

- (1) Wǒ yǒu yīgè jiě-jie liǎng gè dì-dì

我有一個姐姐兩個弟弟。

‘I have a sister and two brothers.’

- (2) Lǎo dàjiě

老大姐

‘big sister’

To mention family member, as in example (1), [number + jie] is a typical construction. The *jie* is the female sibling who is older than the speaker. When "sister" collocates with adjectives, it is often the corresponding combination [X sister] where X indicates the order or characteristics of the sibling as in (2). After this stage, *jie* ‘sister’ gains its semantic autonomy through reanalysis. (Note that “14” in example 3 and “A16” in example 5 refers to the page in the respective newspaper.)

- (3) Zhǎngtuǐ-jiě wáng xiùzhēn nèixīn jiāozhàn: Yīdù xiǎng tuì xuǎn

長腿姐王秀真 內心交戰：一度想退選 (08.10.1996, 14, China Times)

‘Long-legged sister Wang Xiuzhen’s inner war: once wanted to withdraw from the election.’

- (4) Tí dào tián-jiě zhǔbō hóupèicén, zhōu dǒng tǎnshuài huíyīng

提到甜姐主播侯佩岑，周董坦率回應 (01.30.2005, Liberty Times Net)

‘Referring to the sweet sister anchor Hou Peiyu, Jay Chou frankly responded’

- (5) Tái-jiě zàoxíng zàn

台姐造型讚 (07.25.2011, A16, Apple Daily)

‘Taiwanese sister has a great style.’

- (6) Liǎng wèi qián yà-jiě liànglì dēngchǎng

兩位前亞姐亮麗登場 (08.10.2018, C4, United Daily News)

‘Two former beauties of Asia make bright debut.’

In the above examples (3) to (6), the *-jie* are to understand as ‘woman; female’, a gender marker indicating one who with no blood relation with the speaker. Example (3) describes a woman with long legs, while example (4) addresses a lady who is pleasant and likable. The

collocations of our *-jie* data disclosed three major meanings that *-jie* usually attached to: outer appearance, emotion, and behavior. The following discusses them in turn. From sibling to outer appearance, the use of the [X + jie] structure comes to a new phase. Example (3) "Long-legged sister" appeared in 1996 in China Times. A more frequent version is *zhǎngtuǐ-jie jiě* 長腿姐姐 for avoiding light-headed morphological structure. Example (4) is often attached to by the diminutive suffix *er* 兒, the erization or rhotacization of syllable final, to achieve a semantic embellish for describing the sweet lady. At this stage, the morphological structure of *-jie* is [noun / adjective + jie]. Now the "sister" expresses external traits, often the outer appearance of the targeted person or as selected beauty as examples (5) and (6) refer to. In this case, the location, or to be more specific, the country where the beauty is from is the modifier of the nominal. Jie is not a 'sister', but a 'woman; female', that is, a gender marker.

- (7) Shīkòng-jie zhǎo chá ōu diànyuán yòu zá diàn
失控姐找碴 毆店員又砸店 (05.15.2013, B04C, Liberty Times)
'Frantic woman made troubles, punching clerks and messing up the store.'
- (8) Chē zāo zhuàng guì fù biàn bàonù-jie
車遭撞 貴婦變暴怒姐 (12.22.2015, B3, United Daily News (Local Pages))
'A rich lady's car was crashed, so she turned out to be a rage lady.'
- (9) Mí gē mí-jie kàn ǒuxiàng
迷哥迷姐看偶像 (01.12.2004, B2, United Daily News (Local Pages))
'Fan brothers and sisters look at the idol.'
- (10) Dài shēnzhàng mā shàngbān péngyǒu fēng tā xiàoxīn-jie
帶身障媽上班 朋友封她孝心姐 (03.11.2012, B2, United Daily News (Local Pages))
'Because she goes to work bringing with her ill mother, her friends called her filial woman.'
- (11) Zhèngyì-jie bàn xiāofáng dàshǐ dài tóu xué fángzāi
正義姐扮消防大使 帶頭學防災 (01.20.2015, B1, United Daily News (Local Pages))
'Impartial woman dressed as fire control delegate, and learned disaster prevention.'
- (12) Pū jiē 30 miǎo kuài shǎn jiǎshuāi-jie méi piàn chéng
仆街30秒快閃 假摔姐沒騙成 (06.22.2014, United Daily News (Local Pages))
'Falling on the street for 30 seconds, then sneaked off, a pretended to fall woman did not get her way.'

Emotion of women is targeted and often appear in news reports. In (7), the woman punched the shop clerks and messed up the store, the troubles were made because she was

hysterically upset. Example (8) mentions the crash of the rich lady’s car and she was emotionally so out of control that she turned into a rage lady. Of course not only negative emotion is given an account. Turning to the next type behavior, examples (9) to (11) report these women’s behaviors attributable to positive inner move; whereas example (9) states the fantasy and adoration to movie stars of the ladies, example (10) praises a filial daughter who brings her disabled mother along with her to work. Additionally, example (11) reports the woman as an “impartial sister” because she stood in for fire control delegate and took the initiative to learn to prevent disaster.

We see that the gender marker *-jie* acts as hypocorism, a kind of ‘nickname’ to denote friendliness onto a certain female social role. These social roles can be categorized into seven groups (see Table 2). In Table 2, types (a) and (b) are related to famous persons; while type (a) can be a politician, an actor or artist, e.g., *Jú-jie* 菊姐 is the former mayor Chen Ju 陳菊 of Kaohsiung city, Taiwan, type (b) concerns females who are “famous” for her certain act or characteristic. Roles of these two types can be famous, guilt-ridden or people with specific trait.

Table 2: Social Roles *-jie* Communicates

Social Role	Example
a) famous person	<i>Jú-jie</i> 菊姐 ‘the politician Chen Ju’
b) somehow famous	<i>guài guài-jie</i> 怪怪姐 ‘a weird woman’
c) one who takes certain job	<i>fǎ-jie</i> 櫃姐 ‘sales counter dedicated to a certain kind of product (e.g. cosmetics)-sister; a female counter keeper in a department store’
d) criminal tendency	<i>zhùpǎo-jie</i> 助跑姐 ‘run-up-sister; a woman who ran up to pretend something’
e) criminal	<i>zéixiōngzéijiě</i> 賊兄賊姐 ‘thief-brother-thief-sister; male and female thieves’
f) one with specific personal trait	<i>zhèngyì-jie</i> 正義姐 ‘an impartial woman’
g) one who is emotional disorder	<i>shīkòng-jie</i> 失控姐 ‘an out-of-control woman’

The underlying morphological structure of [X + jie] in the corresponding nominal is complex. The collocation of *-jie* can be adjectives, noun phrases, verb phrases, or sentences.

From inner state to outer motion yield the *jiǎshuāi-jie* 假摔姐 ‘pretend-to-fall woman’ (12) to light. Here we are dealing with more than one stage of nominal operation (see Figure 1). *Jiǎshuāi* 假摔 is a verb phrase (VP). The *jiǎshuāi-jie* has entered [verb phrase + jie] and has a morphological gain is born by the underlying sentential form *jie* + 假装摔倒 (S = NP + VP). After omission, the VP reached its contraction and became a multi-syllabic VP; that is, from *jiǎzhuāng shuāidǎo* 假装摔倒 ‘pretending to fall’ to *jiǎshuāi* 假摔 of the same meaning. This launched the process of suffixation, so that the next step processed with reversion in that the sentence appeared as a pseudo VP where *jiǎshuāi* 假摔 is leading the morphological structure. Then a modification of an AP structure is necessary because the addition and ellipsis of the genitive particle *de* in Modern Chinese, just like its forerunner *zhi* did in Archaic Chinese (Hsieh and Hsu 2003, Wei 2000, He 1989), flex the entire structure and insinuate suffixation task for *jie*. Consequently, the VP turned into a pseudo AP by adding a genitive label (*de*) to stable the morphological formation and at last calling off the *de* before the suffixation completed as a NP.

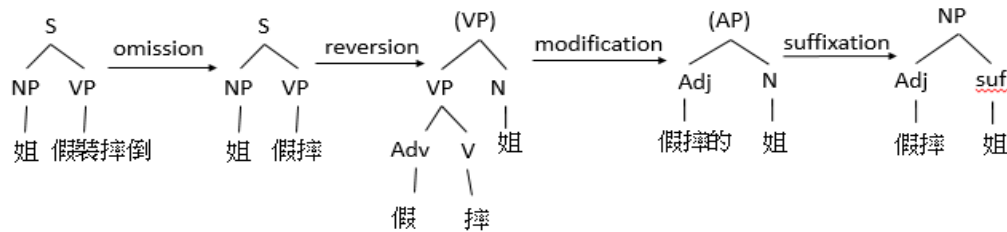


Figure 1: The Underlying Morphological Operation of *Jiǎshuāi-jie*

At this point, any third person female individual in the head slot can be morphologically operated and transformed into a nominal, be the modifier a bi- or multi-syllabic gloss, to insinuate and make semantic expression straightforward with a sense of ingenuity, often implying acting secretly, a cheating or negative intention, so to facilitate language speaker’s cognitive processing through the working of an affixoid.

4. Discussion

The above analysis exemplifies the semantic development of [X + jie] construction with data retrieved from newspapers. We search seven sample [X + jie] and present them in Table 3 to

confirm the rapid development of the affixoid *-jie*. The increasing use of the nominals over the last ten years (2010-2019) is recognizable, e.g., *shīkòng-jie* 失控姐 first appeared in 2010 and a google search on December 12, 2019 presents 8,490,000 indexes. The productivity indicates that *jie* has become a quasi-suffix marking gender to express the speaker's attitude, understanding or interpretation.

Table 3: The Frequency of Sample [X + jie]

[X + jie]	First occurrence / year	current index / Dec 2019
<i>shīkòng-jie</i> 失控姐 'out-of-control woman'	2010	8,490,000
<i>dǎbāo-jie</i> 打包姐 'woman who packs (e.g., food etc.)'	2011	9,360,000
<i>zhèngyì-jie</i> 正義姐 'an impartial woman'	2012	12,800,000
<i>zhùpǎo-jie</i> 助跑姐 'a woman who ran up to pretend something'	2013	161,000
<i>jiǎshuāi-jie</i> 假摔姐 'a pretend-to-fall woman'	2014	10,500,000
<i>bàonù-jie</i> 暴怒姐 'a rage woman'	2015	2,260,000

Moreover, the *-jie* data imply social change in modern Chinese society in Taiwan. The changes may be discussed in terms of social activity, cultural organization, politic event, and language contact. First of all, the social activities cited in the above show that Taiwan is a democratic country and social insurance is active. For instance, the example (9) in the above portrays the fans striving to be the first and fear to lag behind for following their stars. The loud, exciting, yet happy and cheerful democratic atmosphere in Taiwan is in sight. Examples in Table 2 imply Taiwan's casualty insurance: *jiǎshuāi-jie* 假摔姐 and *zhùpǎo-jie* 助跑姐, as the related events in examples (12) and (13) indicate. In (12), the *jiǎshuāi-jie* is trying to fake a traffic accident in order to obtain insurance settlement claim. The singer in (13) was almost accused as having the same intention. According to Tseng (2011), the insurance system in Taiwan is instituting since 1950. The current healthcare system, also known as National Health Insurance was established in 1995.

(13) Lóng qiān yù biāo tiěmǎ tuǐ ruǎn pū jiē qiū bèi dāng zhùpǎo-jie

龍千玉 飆鐵馬腿軟 仆街糗被當助跑姐 (12.20.2013, D06, Liberty Times)

‘Lóng qiān-yù rode a bike for a long time, so she fell on the street, being seen as a run-up woman.’

(14) Zuìjìn shīzi huì hái kàn dào māmāmen de nǔli, lì yāo shī xiōng shī-jie rèliè dìnggòu

最近獅子會還看到媽媽們的努力，力邀獅兄獅姐熱烈訂購 (05.31.2010, B2, United Daily News
(Local Pages))

‘Lions Club also knew mothers’ devotion, then invited members of Lions Club to subscribe.’

Cultural organizations like the *shī-jie* 獅姐 ‘Lions Club sister’ (14) or the *shè-jie* 社姐 ‘club sister’ of Taichung Orchestral Club present musical, cultural, social service organizations. In addition, while *yé dàn shī-jie* 耶誕獅姐 ‘Christmas Lions Club sister’ performs foreign influence of a religious festival and holiday, *shuǐ-jie* 水姐 ‘pretty sister’ indicates contact and influence of an inland dialect, Taiwanese Southern Min. *Shui* meaning ‘pretty’ is a transliteration from Taiwanese Southern Min to Mandarin Chinese (Hsieh and Chen 1998) and is an often used loanword also for code mixing or code switching in Mandarin. Taiwanese Southern Min is the most speaking dialect in Taiwan. It was banned at school in order to promote the official language Mandarin Chinese (Hsiao 1997, Chiung 2001, Tsai 2011, Su 2019) but the enactment was annulled and speaking the dialect, or to be more specific, speaking loanwords from this dialect became trendy in the beginning of the 21th century due to political development. Many other Taiwanese Southern Min words were and are borrowed into Mandarin to show humorous effect and solidarity, etc. (Hsieh 1994, Hsieh & Yeh 2009).

On the other hand, social activity like beauty election revealed social change in Taiwan. Whether it be Miss Taiwan (example 5), Miss Asia (6) or *zhōng-jie* 中姐 ‘Chinese Beauty’, *shì jie* 世姐 ‘Miss World’, as *guó-jie* 國姐 ‘National Beauty’, beauty elections are accepted and well-liked in Taiwan. In time past, in a Chinese community like Taiwan, people were conservative and had traditional Chinese mode of thinking. Yet, Taiwanese ladies today are walking on the street with miniskirts. The opening up of the Chinese people’s mind on this island is observable from other *-jie* nominals, e.g., *fēnjú yī-jie* 分局一姐 addresses a policewoman, the *Jú-jie* 菊姐 is a female mayor in Taiwan. The political development of this island is not overlooked. In 2016, a female scholar, Tsai Ing-wen, was elected as president of Taiwan. She became the first female president in Taiwan as well as in the Chinese history. Furthermore, since 2015 some cities in

Taiwan opened registration for same-sex couple. In May 2019, the Taiwanese government approved and took effect same-sex marriage. This made Taiwan the first nation in Asia recognizing same-sex marriage, and in the Chinese-speaking world, as *The Washington Times* (Jennings, 2019) reported. The social change in this Chinese speaking community is noticed, also revealed by *-jie* nominals.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines Mandarin Chinese *-jie* to demonstrate that it is reanalyzed from meaning ‘sister’ to simply mark gender therein performing as an affixoid that can further reveal social development of the speakers’ community. The collocations of *-jie* data disclosed four major meanings, they are: outer appearance, emotion, and behavior. Referring to the groups of people who are famous, guilt-ridden or with specific trait people. Acting as an affixoid and a gender marker, *-jie* enjoys high frequency. A google search displays increasing use of [X + jie] nominals over the recent ten years.

Through the morphological operation of suffixation, the nominal function made semantic expression straightforward and facilitate language speaker’s cognitive processing. The X in [X + jie] nominals can be a noun, an adjective, or can be in sentential form and undergo omission, reversion, modification, etc. before they were suffixed with the affixoid. The productivity of the gender marker *-jie* brings the social development of this Chinese speaking society to light. [X + jie] nominals demonstrate social activity, cultural organization, politic event, and language contact of Taiwan. By means of semantic reanalysis, morphological interface and contextual interaction, language users accelerate the growth and development of *-jie* as a suffix, now an affixoid.

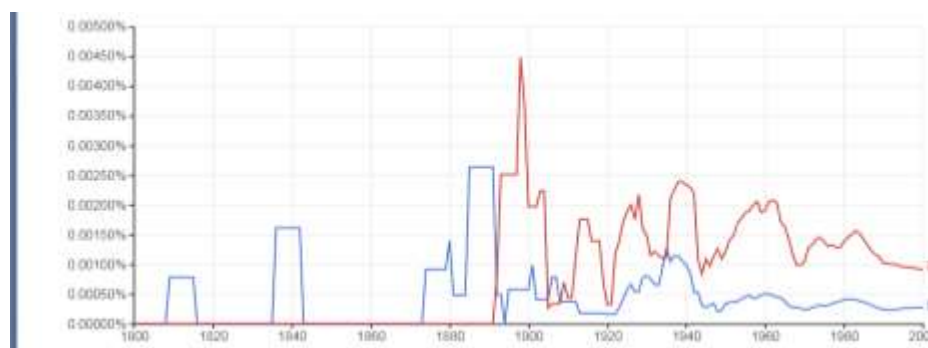


Figure 2: The Growth of Use of Mandarin gē ‘brother’

Due to the concern of feasibility, there are a few limitations. One of the major limitations of the present study is that we could only focus on an affixoid. Other examples such as *gē* ‘brother’ is used even more frequently according to the survey presented by Ngram Viewer (see Figure 2, red line). Moreover, the morphosyntactic contraction and cognitive operation behind the use of the given Mandarin affixoid is given only scant attention. More related data and focused study are suggested for future research.

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