Abstract

This study adopts an inter-disciplinary approach to explore how the prefixation is encoded and contributes to the word formation in Zhangzhou Southern Min, an under-described Sinitic dialect spoken in the southern Fujian of mainland China. It reveals the semantic function, morpho-syntactic characteristics, prosodic effect, pragmatic significance of prefixation in this dialect, along with their occurrence constraints. The exploration directly fills in the research gap in the study of Zhangzhou grammar, and substantially advance our knowledge of the encoding of prefixation in southern Chinese dialects. It contributes well-attested linguistic data to the typology of prefixation as an important phenomenon in the world’s natural languages, while enlightening the discussion on how Sinitic languages should be better defined from the morpho-syntactic perspective.

Keywords: refixation, semantics, morpho-syntax, phonology, constraint, Zhangzhou, Southern Min

1 Introduction

Affixation broadly refers to a morphological process whereby lexical or grammatical information is added to an existing lexical base and a new lexeme, or a new form of the same lexeme is derived (Hall, 2008; Hawkins & Gilligan, 1998; McCarthy, 2002). Natural languages vary in what morphological processes are available in their grammar, how frequently the processes are used, and what types of information are encoded. For example, English expresses the plurality of nouns using suffixation (e.g., table/tables, friend/friends) (McCarthy, 2002). Zapotec, a language spoken in Oaxaca, Mexican, expresses the plurality through prefixing ka-morpheme to nominal bases (Marlett, 1985). Yoruba, a language of south-western Nigeria, uses a separate word to encode the plurality, such as the word okunrin means ‘the man’ and its corresponding plural form is awon ‘the men’ (Ajiboye, 2005). As seen, morphology is not equally prominent in spoken languages, as the same information can be encoded differently. Languages are thus classified into different types, such as analytic and synthetic, depending on the complexity of morphology and the method they employ to construct words (e.g., Banfi & Arcodia, 2007; Bybee et al., 1990; Basciano, 2017).

Sinitic languages, along with Yoruba and Vietnamese, are often cited to be isolating because of their exhibiting an extreme degree of analyticity with little affixation (Lin, 2001; Liao, 2014). However, this convention has been challenged because both inflectional and derivational affixes are continually discovered in the synchronic speech of those so-called isolating languages (Lin, 2001; Liao, 2014; Arcodia & Basciano, 2012; 2022). For example, in Zhangzhou Southern Min, a Sinitic dialect spoken in southern Fujian province of southeast China, the prefix ʔɐ33 can be attached to kinship terms (ʔɐ33-kɔŋ35 ‘grandfather’) or the first name of personal names (ʔɐ33-kun22 ‘address a girl whose last syllable of first name is kun 22) to express closeness and affection. The infix ʔɐ51 can be inserted into disyllabic bases and serve as a modifying marker (kjɵ35-ʔɐ51-tʰɐw22 ‘bridge-ʔɐ51-head: a place name’), or a coordinative marker (ɗĩ35-ʔɐ51-tse41 ‘year-ʔɐ51-festival: traditional festivals’). The suffix ʔɐ51 can serve as...
a purely nominal marker (kw3n.5n-ʔn35 ‘orange-ʔn51: orange’), a nominaliser to some verbs (g5f55-ʔn51 ‘to clamp-ʔn51: plier’) and adjectives (pwi35-ʔn51 ‘fat-ʔn51: fat person’) or a diminutive marker to kinship terms to deliver feeling of smallness, closeness, and affection (tsiwn5-ʔn51 ‘daughter-ʔn51: daughter’). Given an increasingly high ratio of morphemes per word, it has become questionable to define these languages as being morphologically isolating.

Triggered by its intriguing affixational phenomenon, this study is devoted to exploring how prefixation is encoded and contributes to word formation in Zhangzhou Southern Min. This Sinitic dialect is under-described, because no systematic work has described its prefixing system. Fives specific research questions will be addressed, including (a) what semantic information can be encoded in the process of prefixation? (b) What morpho-syntactic consequences are induced? (c) What prosodic consequence can be evoked? (d) What pragmatic information can be conveyed by the prefixation, and (e) What linguistic factors can constrain the application of prefixation in this Sinitic dialect?

The exploration directly fills in the research gap and advances our knowledge of the encoding of prefixation in this Southern Min variety, while contributing vital linguistic data to the typology of affixation as an important morphological event not only in Sino-Tibetan language family but in human languages at the general level. The description also enlightens the discussion on how human beings employ different linguistic levels to encode and decode a particular language phenomenon in their mental grammar and language practice, while shedding light on the discussion of how Sinitic languages should be better defined.

The materials used in this study are collected from the field site by the author in 2019, and also from online consultation with native speakers over these years. The research locality is strictly limited to Xiangcheng and Longwen districts, the inner urban area of Zhangzhou, which are conventionally considered to be historically-socially-culturally-linguistically-geographically representative of Zhangzhou (Huang, 2022).

2 SEMANTICS OF PREFIXATION

Semantically, the prefixes in this dialect can be classified into either mono-semantic or polysemantic, depending on the range of lexical information that they can convey. The mono-semantic prefixes refer to those prefixes whose derived words can only cover one semantic domain. For example, as illustrated in (1), the prefix hw3n35 exclusively indicates the foreign origin of the related object. For example, the lexical base ts22 literally means ‘potato’, while the derived word hw3n33-ts22 particularly refers ‘sweet potato’. Because sweet potatoes historically are imported from other countries, rather than being produced domestically. The prefix hw3n33 indicates the foreign origin of sweet potatoes. Likewise, when attached to numbers, the prefix te33 exclusively indicates an ordinal order of the base. For example, the lexical base zi33 means ‘two’, while the derived word te32-zi33 with the prefix particularly refers to ‘the second’.

(1) Mono-semantics of prefixation

• hw3n35 (foreign origin)
  hw3n33-po22 ‘hw3n33-lady: foreign lady’
  hw3n33-ts22 ‘hw3n33-potato: sweet potato’

• te33 (ordinal order)
  te32-ʔik41 ‘te32-one: the first’
  te32-zi33 ‘te32-two: the second’

• kr63.pk41 (internal relation)
  kr63.pk65-hj535 ‘kr63.pk41-elder brother’
  to address the elder son of father’s brother’
  kr63.pk65-tsi41 ‘kr63.pk41-younger uncle’
  ‘the younger son of grandfather’s brother’

• pjw51 (external relation)
  pjw35-hj535 ‘pjw35-elder brother’
  ‘the elder son of father’s sister or mother’s sibling’
  pjw35-tsi41 ‘pjw35-younger uncle:’
  ‘son of grandpa’s sister or grandma’s sibling’

The mono-semantic property can also be seen from the prefixes kr63.pk41 and pjw51 which can be attached to the same kinship terms but reveal different semantic readings. The prefix kr63.pk41, which literally means ‘next belly’, is exclusively created in Southern Min to indicate an internal relation to one’s family or clan. Such as the derived word kr63.pk65-hj535, in which the base hj535 means ‘elder brother’, is used to address the son of one’s father’s brother who is elder than the addresser. On the contrary, the prefix pjw51, meaning ‘surface’, expresses an external relation to a family or a clan. For example, the derived word pjw35- hj535 exclusively refers to the elder son of one’s father’s sister or mother’s sibling.
On the contrary, the poly-semantic prefixes refer to those prefixes whose attachment can cover two or more semantic domains. This property is illustrated in (2). The prefix ʔi35 can be attached to lexical bases of different types to transfer different semantics. Such as it can be attached to kinship terms to address one’s family members who are senior in terms of age or generation with a sense of respect and closeness. For example, the derived word ʔi33-ʔj53 is colloquially used to address one’s elder brother. It can be attached to person names of those family members who are at the same generation to deliver a feeling of closeness and affection. For example, given a person’s first name contains ʔs53 morpheme that means ‘tree’, it is a common way to address him as ʔi33-ʔs53 that transfers a sense of closeness and affection. Likewise, the prefix ɗɐw33 can be attached to kinship terms to address family members who are senior than the addressee with respect to age and/or generation with a sense of respect and closeness (ɗw32-pdf3 ‘ɗw32-father: to introduce one’s father’). It can also be attached to person names of those people at the same generation to convey a feeling of closeness and affection (ɗjɔk32 ʔi35.35.su35 → ɗw32-su35 ‘Su35; Si’). Apart from these, this prefix can also be attached to an entity to express a sense of a long history ‘old’). Such as, the term ʦ35.ju33 itself means ‘tree’, while the derived word ɗw32-ʦ35.ju33 refers to ‘an old tree’.

(2) Poly-semantics of prefixation

- **Prefix ʔi35**
  - **Before kinship term (closeness and respect)**
    - ʔi33-ʔj53 ‘grandfather’
    - ʔi33-ɓ53 ‘grandmother’
    - ʔi33-ʔp3 ‘father’
    - ʔi33-ɓɓ3 ‘mother’
  - **Before first name (closeness and affection)**
    - ten33. ɗj32.35.kun22 → ʔi33-kun22 ‘Qun’
    - ɓw32 ʔs53.35.ju33 → ʔi33-ʦ35.ju33 ‘Shu’
  - **ɗw33**
  - **Before a kinship term (respect and closeness)**
    - ɗw32-pdf3 ‘ɗw32-father: introduce one’s dad’
    - ɗw32-ɓ53 ‘ɗw32-mum: introduce one’s mum’
  - **Before person name (affection and closeness)**
    - ɗjɔk32 ʔi35.35.su35 → ɗw32-su35 ‘Su35; Si’
    - ten33 ʔs53.35.ju33 → ʔi33-ʦ35.ju33 ‘Shu’
  - **ɗw33**
  - **Before an entity (long history)**
    - ɗw32-ϳm341 ‘ɗw32-store: an old store’
    - ɗw32-ʦ35.ju33 ‘ɗw32-tree: an old tree’
  - **ɗw51**

**Before number (ordering)**

ɗw35-zi33 ‘ɗw35-two: second eldest sibling’
ɗw35-sɓ35 ‘ɗw35-three: third eldest sibling’

**Before family name (closeness and respect)**

ʔi33 tsu35.33.zin22 → ɗw35-ʔi33 ‘ʔi33’
ʔi33 tsq33.tsui51 → ɗw35-ʔi33 ‘ʔi33’

As seen, the prefixation is productive to modify the lexical meanings of existing bases and create new lexemes across several semantic domains. The process substantially enriches the inventory of local vocabulary that native speakers can choose and use in their conversations, while expanding the lexicon in their mental grammar.

3 **MORPHO-SYNTAX OF PREFIXATION**

Morpho-syntactically, the prefixing process seldom changes the part of speech of related item in Zhangzhou Southern Min. In most cases, the derived words are categorically the same as their corresponding bases being attached. For example, the bases that can be attached by the above-mentioned prefixes (hwnm33, te33, k35.pjk41, pjanw51, te33, ʔi35, ɗw33, ɗw51) in (1) and (2) are all nominal, so are their derived lexemes. Therefore, the prefixation process presents a categorical-preserving characteristics.

Apart from this, most of lexical bases that can undergo prefixation are dominantly nominal. Only few non-nominal bases can be prefixed to derive words of a different part of speech. This can be seen in (3), for example, the prefix kq51, a cognate of Mandarin ke214, can transfer verbal or nominal bases to lexemes of an adjective category to deliver a semantics of ‘do-able’, equivalent to the English suffix ‘-able’. Such as in the word kq51-ʔŋ41, the base ʔŋ41 is a verb meaning ‘to like, love’, while the derived word refers to ‘likable’. In the word kq51-kq51, the base kq51 is a noun meaning ‘mouth’, with this prefix, the derived word is used to describe something which is delicious.

(3) Categorical-changing prefixation

- **kq51**
  - **Verbal base**
    - kq51-ʔŋ41 ‘kq51-like: likeable’
    - kq51-kq51 ‘kq51-rely: reliable’
  - **Nominal base**
    - kq51-kq51 ‘kq51-mouth: delicious’
    - kq51-kq51 ‘kq51-people: lovable’
  - **ho51**
verbal base
ho35-tpi35 ‘ho35-listen: sound-good’
ho35-tsji221 ‘ho35-to eat: taste-good; delicious’
ho35-sji51 ‘ho35-to write: good-writing’
• ɓɐj41

verbal base
ɓɐj35-t’ji35 ɓɐj35 ‘ɓɐj35-to listen: sound-unpleasant’
ɓɐj35-tsji221 ɓɐj35 ‘ɓɐj35-to eat: bad-tasting
ɓɐj35-k’wà41 ɓɐj35 ‘ɓɐj35-to look: bad-looking; ugly’

The prefixes ho51 and ɓɐj51, which separately mean ‘good’ and ‘bad’, are commonly attached to verbal bases to derive new lexemes of an adjective category that expresses the positive or negative characteristics of related verbal actions. For example, the derived word ho35-tsji221, with the verbal base tsji22 ‘to eat’, is used to describe something that tastes good. Similarly, the derived word ɓɐj35-tsji221 describes something that tastes bad. As seen, the attachment of these prefixes not only changes the semantics but also the word class. However, not so many cases involve such a categorical change, instead, in most cases, the grammatical category of nominal lexical bases is maintained over the prefixation in this dialect.

4 PROSODY OF PREFIXATION

The prefixing process in Zhangzhou Southern Min does not cause any phonological alternation on their subsequent lexical bases, but all prefixes themselves are seen changing their tonal profiles to be entirely different from their corresponding forms in citation. Such a tonal alternation can be consider resulting from the operating effect of a right-dominant tone sandhi system in Zhangzhou (Huang, 2018; 2020; 2022). All tones at the non-rightmost position, referred to as sandhi position, alter their realizations phonologically and phonetically, while tones at the rightmost position maintain their realization categorically similar to their citation forms, but may subject to certain variation at the phonetic level because of their sensitivity to occurring environments (Huang, 2018; 2020; 2022). So that, all prefixes are supposed to change their tonal profiles if they are attached to lexical bases to fulfill their semantics and/or morpho-syntactic functions.

What needs a further mention is that no special tone sandhi pattern is evoked over the prefixing process. But rather, all prefixes follow the general sandhi tendency to change their tonal forms. For example, tone 1 is realised as a rising [35] contour in citation but is altered to be a mid-level [33] contour in the sandhi context. Tone 3 changes its contour shape to a rising [35] from a high falling contour in citation. All tones within general morpho-syntactic phrases XP in which X may be adjective, verbal, nominal among others, are expected to change in this way (Huang, 2018; 2020). Table 1 summaries tonal changes of individual prefixes, in which the forms in bold show their corresponding sandhi forms.

Table 1. Tonal changes of individual prefixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Sandhi Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ðrw33</td>
<td>ðrw32-þu51 ‘to introduce one’s mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ðrw51</td>
<td>ðrw35-si35 ‘the third (of the siblings)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e35</td>
<td>2e33-hj35 ‘elder brother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pjo51</td>
<td>pjo35-hj35 ‘the elder son of father’s sister or mother’s sibling’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k63.pke41</td>
<td>k63.pke51 ‘the elder son of father’s brother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7ʔ51</td>
<td>7ʔ5-k5 ‘father’s sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hw3n35</td>
<td>hw3n3-kj35 ‘foreign chilli’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te33</td>
<td>te32-zi33 ‘the second’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twen3</td>
<td>twen2-tsi51 ‘the elder sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so41</td>
<td>soj5-ksj35 ‘husband’s younger sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sj51</td>
<td>sj5-fj5 ‘younger sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’wà51</td>
<td>k’wà5-þu41 ‘likeable; adorable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɓɐj51</td>
<td>ɓɐj35-k’wà41 ‘ugly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho51</td>
<td>ho35-tsji221 ‘delicious’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen, the tonal pitch of all prefixes has been changed phonetically and phonologically. Such as the prefix ðrw51 has a high-falling [51] contour in citation, but when attached to lexical bases, the pitch is changed to a rising [35] contour (ðrw35-si35 ‘the third (of the siblings)’). Similarly, the prefix hw3n35 has a rising contour [35] in citation but the pitch is changed to a mid-level [33] when attached to lexical bases to denote their foreign origin (hw3n3-kj35 ‘foreign chilli’). The tone sandhi pattern in the prefixing context is different from that occurs in other affixational environment in which tones are changed to either a rising or high-level contour, depending on their contour shape in citation (Huang, 2023).

5 Pragmatics of Prefixation

Certain prefixes are pragmatically significant to reveal certain relation within the social-cultural setting of Southern Min. This can be demonstrated by the usage of prefixes pjo51, k63.pke41 and
They can be attached to the same kinship terms but reveal different social relationships. As illustrated in (4), the prefix pjvw51 indicates an external relation to a family or a clan; the derived words are particularly used to address the descendant of (grand-) father’s sisters or (grand-) mother’s siblings. Such as the term pjvw35-hjì35, in which the base hjì35 refers to the elder brother, is specifically used to address the son of father’s sister or mother’s sibling who is elder than the addresser. The prefix ke63.pwk41 indicates an internal relation to one’s family or clan; the derived terms are limited to address the descendant of (grand-) father’s brothers. Such as the term ke63.pwk65-hjì35 specifically refers to the son of father's brother who is elder than the addresser. Similarly, the prefix ʔŋ51 expresses the core blood relationship on the paternal side. Such as the term ʔŋ35-hjì35 refers to one's blood-related elder brother who has the same parents.

(4) Pragmatics of prefixation

- **pjvw51**
  - pjvw35-hjì35 ‘pjvw35-elder brother’
  - ‘the elder son of father's sister or mother’s sibling’
  - ‘the elder son of grandfather’s sister or grand-mama’s sibling’

- **ke63.pwk41**
  - ke63.pwk65-hjì35 ‘ke63.pwk41-elder brother’
  - ‘the elder son of father’s brother’

- **ʔŋ51**
  - ʔŋ35-hjì35 ‘ʔŋ35-elder brother’
  - ‘the blood-related elder brother’
  - ‘father’s younger brother (s)’

- **tw33**
  - tw32-pee31 ‘tw32-uncle’
  - ‘to address father (or husband)’s eldest brother’

- **se41**
  - se63-k35 ‘se63-father’s sister’
  - ‘to address husband’s younger sister’
  - se63-tsi41 ‘se63-father’s younger brother’
  - ‘to address husband’s younger brother’
  - se63-kim35-ŋe51 ‘se63-mother’s brother’s wife’

The pragmatic function can also be illustrated by the usage of the prefixes tw33 and se41 before kinship terms. The prefix tw33, lexically meaning ‘big’, is often used to indicate the elder (not necessarily needs to be the eldest) member of a group, especially within a family or a clan. On the contrary, the prefix se41, lexically meaning ‘small’, indicates the younger member. However, in Southern Min, housewives are discovered using exactly the same kinship words as their children to address their husband’s siblings.

For example, as illustrated in (4), the word tw32-k33, in which the base k33 means ‘aunty on the parental side’, can be used to refer to either father’s elder sister or husband’s elder sister. On the contrary, the words se63-k35 and se63-tsi41, which literarily mean ‘younger aunty (father’s younger sister)’ and ‘younger uncle (father’s younger brother)’, respectively, are exclusively used by housewives to address their husband’s younger siblings. The reason for existing such a special addressing is because, in the old society of Southern Min, married women are given a lower status within a family and a clan. Thus, they step down their seniority and address their husband’s siblings in the same way as their children do. Such an addressing has been customized over time and is still adopted by the married women in the modern society. Therefore, as seen, the application of certain prefixation is pragmatically related by the local social culture and custom.

### 6 OCCURRENCE CONSTRAINT

The prefixation is productive in this dialect to expand its lexicon; however, several different constraints can be seen governing what prefixes can be used; what lexical bases can be attached, and/or what new lexemes can be generated.

#### 6.1 Semantic constraint

The occurrence of certain prefixes is strictly limited to a particular semantic domain. For example, the prefixes pjvw51 (pjvw35-tw32-tsi31 ‘to address the daughter of father’s sister or mother’s sibling who is elder than the addresser’), ke63.pwk41 (ke63.pwk65-tw32-tsi31 ‘to address the daughter of father’s brother who is elder than the addresser’) and ʔŋ51 (ʔŋ35-k33 ‘to address the blood-related grandfather’) can only occur before kinship terms to deliver the blood relation or the affinity by marriage to a family or a clan. On the contrary, the prefix te33 (te32-sb35 ‘te32-three: the third’) can occur before numbers to indicate ordering.
6.2 Phonological constraint

The prefixing process in Southern Min can be constrained phonologically because there exist some cases in which only parts of the lexical bases, rather than the entire bases, can be prefixed to fulfill a particular semantic function. For example, as illustrated in (5), the prefixes *ɗɐw32, *ɗɐw51, *ʔn35 and *sjo51 can all be attached to person names, but the prefixes ɗw51 and sjo51 are typically attached to the family names, while the prefixes ɗw33 and ʔn35 are exclusively attached to the last syllables of the first names. If they are attached to other part of the lexical bases, the derived forms are considered to be colloquially ill-formed.

(5) Phonological constraint on prefixation

Before family name
- ɗw51 (seniority and respect)
  ʔn33 tsu35.zin22 → ɗw35-ʔn22 ʔn22; Wang
  ten33 kk65.kj35 → ɗw35-ten22 ʔn22; Chen
- sjo51 (diminution and affection)
  ten33, ge32.kun22 → sjo35-ten22 ʔn22
  hwi22 sjok65.kwan35 → sjo35-hwi22 ʔn22

Before first name
- ɗw33 (seniority and respect)
  djok32 ʔi35.su35 → ɗw32-su35 Su35; Si
  ten33 kkg65.kj35 → ɗw32-kj35 ʔk33 ʔn22’Kj33
- ʔn35 (diminution and affection)
  hwi22 ge32.kj35 → ʔn33-kj35 ʔn22 Qiang
  lim33 sjok65.kwan → ʔn33-kwan35 Juan

For example, given a person is called ʔn33 tsu35.zin22, in which ʔn22 is the family name and tsu35.zin22 is its first name, it is grammatically well-formed to address him as ɗw35-ʔn22 with a sense of respect and seniority. Similarly, the prefix sjo51 can also be attached to family names to convey a sense of diminution and affection, such as sjo35-ten22 Chen given a person’s family name is ten22. The two prefixes can only be attached to family names, and it is grammatically ill-formed to attach them to other position of the person names.

On the contrary, the prefixes ɗw33 can only be attached to the last syllables of the first names to deliver a semantics of seniority and respect. Such as, given a person is called djok32 ʔi35.su35 in which djok32 is the family name, it is grammatically well-formed and colloquially respectful to address him as ɗw32-su35, but ill-formed to call him as *ɗw32-djok32 or *ɗw32-ʔi35.su35. Likewise, the prefix ʔn35 can only be attached to the last syllables of the first names to convey a sense of closeness and diminution, such as ʔn33-kwan35 given a person is called lim33 sjok65.kwan35. As seen, the occurrence of certain prefixes is phonologically limited to certain syllables, and this has become an important part of the mental grammar of native speakers.

6.3 Pragmatic constraint

The occurrence and usage of certain prefixes can also be constrained by the pragmatic factor. For example, as discussed in Section 5, the derived words with the prefix pjew51 are exclusively used to address descendants of (grand-) father’s sisters; and/or (grand-) mother’s siblings. The derived words with the prefix kj63.pek41 are dominantly used to address descendants of (grand-)father’s brother(s), whereas the derived words with the prefix ʔn51 only refer to those core family members who hold a blood relationship on the parental side. As well as this, the married women in Southern Min address their husband’s siblings in the same way as their children. Such as the derived word tw32-kj35 can be used to address one’s father’s eldest sister, but also one’s husbands’ elder sister(s). These reflects the constraints from the social culture and custom in Southern Min.

7 Discussion

As discussed in this paper, the prefixing process has been developed as an important device in the word formation in Zhangzhou Southern Min. Semantically, the prefixation is constructive to create new lexemes and substantially enlarge the local vocabulary. Some prefixes are polysemantic to derive words that can cover different semantic domains, like the prefixes ɗw51, ɗw33, and ʔn35, while some prefixes are shown to be mono-semantic whose derived items can only cover one single semantic domain, such as hwen35 and te33.

Morpho-syntactically, the prefixing process, in general, presents a categorical-preserving property, because both the lexical bases and their derived words are largely nominal, the process of which does not evoke a new word class. But some prefixes in few cases, like kʰa51, ho51, and bnj41 can change the category of the bases from a non-adjective category to adjective. Phonologically, the tonal forms of all prefixes are changed categorically over the process, because of the forcing factor of the right-dominant tone sandhi system in this Southern Min variety. Pragmatically, the usage of certain prefixes, like pjew51,
$k^63 $pek$41$, $\partial n 51$, $\partial v^33$ and $se^41$, can reveal some particular social culture and custom of Southern Min. As seen, the prefixing can substantially affect the semantic, morpho-syntactic, and prosodic structures of this dialect. However, the encoding also subjects to several constraints from semantics, morpho-syntactics, phonology and pragmatics, reflecting a close interface between different linguistic levels in this dialect.

This study is the first to discuss the prefixation in Zhangzhou, which directly fills in the research gap of this under-described Southern Min variety. The exploration substantially stretches and advances our knowledge of how prefixation is encoded and contributes to the word formation in southern Chinese dialect, shedding an important light on the generalization of areal characteristics of prefixation within the Sino-Tibetan language family. The innovative description also contributes vital empirical data to the typology of prefixation in world’s natural languages. The discussion also challenges the conventional assumption of regarding Sinitic languages as being isolating without significant affixation, while enlightening the theoretical discussion on how Sinitic languages should be better defined from the morpho-syntactic perspective, given their existing rich prefixing system in the synchronic speech.

8 REFERENCE


