

A study on the use of Taiwanese classifiers by different generations

Yawen Chen

National Taiwan Normal University

jc2266.candy@msa.hinet.net

The use of classifiers is an important characteristic in Modern Chinese. In the syntactic structure a numeral can't be placed directly before a noun, and a suitable classifier is chosen between them in order to code noun hood. The collocation between a noun and a classifier is constrained by semantic and cognitive basis., i.e. speakers will choose an appropriate classifier cognitively in accordance with some feature(s) of a noun.

The issues of previous researches include the semantic relationship between the classifier and the cognition (Tai 1996) and the relation between classifier and constructions (Biq 2002). In the present study, based on the framework of the prototype theory and experiential view of categorization the use of classifiers by different generations will be investigated. The data are collected by field work in Taipei and Changhua. Both of the cities belong to Taiwanese, i.e. a kind of Southern-Min dialect spoken in Taiwan, and are located in Northern and Middle parts of Taiwan, respectively. This study will show the use of different classifiers in different generation may be due to two factors – language contact and the difference of background. For example, the use of Taiwanese classifiers by the younger generation is obviously influenced by Mandarin, and merger of *e* ‘the default noun classifier’ appear in more informants in Taipei, a political and economical center, than those in Changhua.