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The Clutch Word Nature of "Xuexi" and its Mechanism of Generation

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Abstract: The synonymous compound word "Xuexi" has not been identified as a clutch word, but from the current situation of its use and the definition standard of clutch words, it can be able to be considered as a clutch word. The generation of "Xuexi" was first the combination of "Xue" and "Xi" of free morphemes, and then began the lexicalization process in modern times. There are probably three bases: from "Xuexi" to modern times, it became an adhesive morpheme, and the meaning of "Xuexi" was expressed by words rather than phrases composed of free morphemes. According to the specific indicators for judging phrases and words, "Xuexi" is not a word until modern times; The change of order form "Xuexi" of "Xuexi" gradually disappeared after modern times, and the disappearance of the change of order form shows that it has solidified into a word. The mechanism of the generation of clutch words 'Xuexi' is the joint result of monosyllabic action and the analogy of the V-O structure: with the premise that 'Xi' becomes an adhesive morpheme, 'XueXi' begins to de-lexicalize under the action of the monosyllabic form of commonly used verbs 'Xue', and expands and transforms under the analogy of the strong verb object structure, ultimately becoming clutch words.

Keywords: Xuexi; Clutch Words; Generating Mechanism.

1. Introduction

The *Modern Chinese Dictionary (Seventh Edition)* (hereinafter referred to as the *Dictionary*) marks the pronunciation of separable words with double slashes "//". For example, the pronunciation of "shuìjiào" is marked as "shuì//jiào"; the pronunciation of "xuéhǎo" is marked as "xué//hǎo". According to statistics by Xiao Yang (2021), there are a total of 4052 separable words marked in the *Dictionary*. However, the pronunciation of "xuéxí" in the *Dictionary* is not marked.

Li Zongjiang (2006) categorized "xuéxí" as a "non-verb-object combination used as a verb-object structure" in his article "Delexicalization: 'jiéhūn' and 'xǐzǎo' from Words to Phrases," and proposed that it has undergone a delexicalization process like that of "jiéhūn" and "xǐzǎo". In contrast, in "The Determination and Nature of Separable Words" (1996), Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin divided 355 separable and non-separable verb-noun combinations into five categories according to their criteria for identification, and "xuéxí" was not mentioned in the category of "non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object structures."

Some scholars have conducted case studies on certain non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object separable words. For example, Li Zongjiang (2006) studied "xǐzǎo"; Ge Yishuang (2014) studied "shuìjiào"; Chen Hongyu (2014) and Yin Jiahui and Song Wenbing (2016) studied "jūgōng"; Zeng Guangyu (2017) studied "kǎoshì". However, "xuéxí" has not yet been sufficiently studied.

In summary, "xuéxí" has not been classified as a "separable word," and its separable usage has not received widespread attention. It has only been mentioned in individual studies as a non-verb-object combination used as a verb-object structure. However, as Shi Maozhi (1999) pointed out, "there are many words that are not marked as separable in the dictionary but can still be separated in use." Moreover, according to statistical data, the frequency of separable usage of "xuéxí" is not low, and it has a rich and diverse range of extended forms in actual use. Therefore, the research objective of this paper is to determine the separable nature of the non-verb-object compound word "xuéxí," to discuss the emergence and lexicalization process of the coordinate compound word "xuéxí" from a diachronic perspective, and to analyze the generation mechanism of the separable word "xuéxí" from multiple angles in combination with relevant theories.

2. The Current Research Status of Clutch Words

2.1. The Determination of Clutch Words

Traditional The following scholars have explicitly put forward their views on the determination of clutch words:

Zhu Dexi (1982) proposed that the characteristics of verb-object type clutch words include "containing bound morphemes," "when extended, the subject and object often cannot be separated from each other," and "some can take objects."

Zhao Jinming (1984) used "structural transformation," "the structural relationship and segmentation of extended forms," "order reversal," "taking objects," "being modified by adverbs or taking adverbial complements" as ways to distinguish between compound words of verb-object combinations, clutch words, and phrases.

Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin (1996) took "containing bound morphemes in the combination components," "strict collocation restrictions," "non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object combinations," and "being able to extend and also belonging to nouns or adjectives" as the criteria for identification, indicating that compound words of verb-object combinations that meet any one of these criteria are clutch words.

Wu Daoqin and Li Zhongchu (2001) used the following three criteria to discuss the grammatical nature of clutch words: "whether the entire format has a unique single lexical meaning," "whether the combination components contain bound forms," and "whether the format can be extended," and

they proposed that the third one cannot be used as the determination criterion for clutch words. At the same time, Shen Haixing (2002) and Ma Caixia (2005) both questioned the use of the "extension method" to identify clutch words.

Ma Caixia (2005) also explicitly put forward the determination criteria for clutch words, that is, those that meet the criteria of "containing bound morphemes," "strict collocation restrictions," and "belonging to nouns or adjectives" and can be extended in use are clutch words.

In summary, in addition to "extension use," the recognized determination criteria for clutch words are: containing bound morphemes; strict collocation restrictions. The reference criteria are: non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object combinations; belonging to nouns or adjectives.

2.2. The Extension Forms of Clutch Words

Lu Zhiwei (1957) was the first to call these special language units that can be separated and combined and can be extended "clutch words," and the extension forms of clutch words are also the focus of many scholars' research.

Zhang Liming (1982) pointed out that after the extension of clutch words, they can insert particles such as "le, guo," numerals, measure words, numeral phrases, pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives, phrases, and some can even swap the positions of the two morphemes.

Li Qinghua (1983) believed that the extended forms of verb-object structure clutch words can use "le, zhe, guo," numeral words (phrases), and other components such as "shenme, diǎnr, tā de," etc. In addition, when expressing repeated actions, only the verbal morpheme is repeated, such as "wò wò shǒu," etc., while the extended forms of verb-complement structure clutch words are limited, and can only add "de" or "bù" between the morphemes.

Duan Yehui (1994) supplemented the previous research, pointing out that clutch words can also insert trend verbs such as "qǐ, shàng, xià." In addition, some joint-type clutch words can symmetrically insert semantically similar related morphemes. For example, "wú jū wú shù," etc.

Rao Qin (1997), out of the needs of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, summarized the eight common extension methods of clutch words: V+le/guo+O; V+zhe+O; V+ bù/méi+V+O and other interrogative forms; V+ complement (monosyllabic)+le+O; V+le/(guo)+ complement (disyllabic) +O; V+mod+O; V+ complement+ le+ mod1+mod2+O; VO-SV.

Zeng Guangyu (2017) and Li Zongjiang (2006) analyzed the non-verb-object type clutch words, and both used the syntactic conditions of typical verb-object phrases to test whether they have the attributes of phrases. The syntactic conditions listed by Li Zongjiang are more detailed, such as: (1) adding temporal aspect markers after verbs (temporal aspect markers include perfective verbs, trend verbs expressing temporal aspect meanings, and aspect particles, such as "wán, bì, bà, shàng, xià, qǐ, zhe, guò," etc.); (2) verb reduplication; (3) adding verbal quantity components after verbs (verbal quantity words indicate the number of actions and the total time of occurrence); (4) verbs taking complements; (5) adding "de" or "(yī) gè" after verbs; (6) adding modifiers to objects; (7) objects forming a coordinate structure; (8) objects being fronted as topics; (9) transforming into interrogative forms; (10) transforming into "bǎ" word structures; (11) transforming into passive sentences.

Because this paper needs to use the syntactic conditions of verb-object phrases listed by Li Zongjiang (2006) to analyze when testing the clutch nature of "xuéxí" and discussing its generation mechanism, in order to maintain the consistency of the data and materials, this paper also adopts the above conditions when discussing the extension forms of "xuéxí."

2.3. The Extension Forms of Clutch Words the Formation Motivation of Clutch Words

Zhang Liming (1982) called clutch words phrasal verbs, believing that these combinations are between words and phrases. Because they are formed by the solidification of phrases and have the structural form of verb-object combinations, phrasal verbs can often be used in a separated manner.

Lu Shixiang mentioned in his article "Reading <Gui Si Cun Gao>" (1984) that the reason for non-verb-object combinations being used as verb-object combinations is the classifying effect of verb-object structures.

Cao Nailin (1994) discussed the formation motivations from internal and external perspectives. The internal factors are the transition from monosyllabic words to disyllabic words and the abbreviation of words, while the external factors are the effects of communicative interaction on vocabulary.

Liang Chihua (2000) also discussed from internal and external perspectives. The former is the transition from monosyllabic words to disyllabic words and the instability caused by modern Chinese disyllabic vocabulary; the latter refers to the effects of communicative interaction on vocabulary.

Wang Haifeng (2002) believed that the generation process of clutch words is based on the interconnection of word formation and syntax. The internal factors are the functional characteristics of verb-object structures, and at the same time, the role of communicative interaction promotes the insertion of some components, eventually leading to disintegration.

Zhou Shangzhi (2007) believed that the roots of the generation of clutch words are the wordization of disyllabic phrases and the phrasalization of disyllabic words, and the driving force is the interaction between monosyllabic and disyllabic words in Chinese.

Ma Qinghua (2009) believed that the formation of clutch words is the result of the convergence of multiple sources and influencing factors, that is, there are historical evolutionary relationships of changing from separation to combination or from combination to separation, and at the same time, there are free transformation relationships of phrasal words. Among them, the change from combination to separation is the main body of clutch words.

Wang Yanming (2010) believed that the main reasons for the formation of clutch words are disyllabification, the unique structure of Chinese words, oral language environment, and disyllabic word analogy.

In summary, previous research on the formation motivations of clutch words mostly focuses on monosyllabic and disyllabic words, verb-object structure analogy, and other external factors, such as Cao Nailin (1994), Liang Chihua (2000), Zhou Shangzhi (2007), and Wang Yanming (2010), who pointed out that their generation has the effect of monosyllabic and disyllabic words; Zhang Liming (1982), Lu Shixiang (1984), and Wang Haifeng (2002), who mentioned the role of verb-object structures.

2.4. The Diachronic Evolution of Clutch Words

The diachronic study of clutch words generally falls into

two categories: holistic research and case studies.

Li Liang and Chao Rui (2007), Wang Huiqin (2008), Lin Kehong (2011), and Wang Jun (2015) have conducted holistic research on the evolution and motivation of clutch words. For example, Li Liang and Chao Rui (2007) proposed that clutch words in the Chinese language originated in the Song and Yuan dynasties. The earliest clutch words were all of the verb-object (V-O) type, and the emergence of V-O clutch words is related to the maturation of the aspectual particle "le".

Li Zongjiang (2006), Liu Hongni (2008), Zuo Fuqiang (2013), Ge Yishuang (2014), Chen Hongyu (2014), Yin Jiahui and Song Wenbing (2016), Zeng Guangyu (2017), and others have conducted case studies on clutch words. Most of these studies focus on the diachronic analysis of non-verb-object (non-V-O) type clutch words. For instance, Li Zongjiang (2006) suggested that the clutch words "jiéhūn"and "xǐzǎo" have undergone a process of delexicalization, evolving from words to phrases. He posits that the delexicalization of these two words is the result of competition between phonological and syntactic functions. Ge Yishuang (2014) clarified the evolution of "shuìjiào" from a diachronic perspective, arguing that "shuìjiào" does not belong to the category of non-V-O used as V-O. Instead, it originates from the structure "shuì + numeral + jiào", where "jiào" directly serves as the object of the verb "shuì" and has a nominal nature. Zeng Guangyu (2017) concluded that "kǎoshì" has multiple sources through its evolutionary process.

In summary, previous research on the extension forms of clutch words is relatively sufficient, and there is a relatively consistent view on the formation motivations. However, research on the evolution and generation mechanisms of clutch words is still scarce, and the views are quite different.

3. The Clutch Nature of “Xuéxí” The Characteristics of Traditional Embroidery Art

Table 1. Results of Testing “Xuéxí” with Clutch Word Criteria

Clutch Word Criteria	Typical Clutch Words			Inspection Object
	“Xǐzǎo”	“Yóuyǒng”	“Jūgōng”	“Xuéxí”
Whether it can be extended	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whether it contains bound morphemes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whether collocation is strictly restricted	No	Yes	Yes	No
Whether it is used as a verb-object combination in a non-verb-object way	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whether it belongs to nouns or adjectives	No	No	No	No

We can discuss the clutch nature of “xuéxí” from the perspectives of theory and actual use. From the theoretical perspective, the recognized criteria for determining clutch words are “the ability to extend,” “containing bound morphemes,” and “strict collocation restrictions.” The reference criteria are “non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object combinations” and “belonging to nouns or adjectives.” The author will refer to the above criteria and combine the content of the following text to analyze whether “xuéxí” meets the criteria one by one. Meanwhile, “xuéxí” will be compared horizontally with other well-studied typical clutch words such as “xǐzǎo” (taking a bath), “yóuyǒng” (swimming), and “jūgōng” (bowing) to explore the structural characteristics of “xuéxí.” Finally, based on previous theories, it will be confirmed whether “xuéxí” can be regarded as a clutch word.

The first criterion is “whether it can be extended.” According to the subsequent statistics on the extended use of “xuéxí,” “xuéxí” can definitely be used in an extended manner. According to previous research, other typical clutch words can also be extended, such as “xǐwánzǎo” (finish taking a bath), “yóule yóuyǒng” (went swimming), and “jūgè gōng” (bow). The second criterion is “containing bound morphemes.” Bound morphemes are morphemes that cannot stand alone as words. In modern Chinese, “xí” cannot stand alone as a word, so “xuéxí” meets the criterion. The bound morphemes in “xǐzǎo,” “yóuyǒng,” and “jūgōng” are also “zǎo,” “yǒng,” and “gōng,” respectively. The third criterion is “whether collocation is strictly restricted.” That is, in a verb-object combination, one verbal component can only combine with one nominal component, or one nominal component can only combine with one verbal component (Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin 1996). “Xuéxí” and “xǐzǎo” do not meet this criterion for the same reason: the verbal morphemes themselves are transitive verbs, and the collocation with nominal morphemes to form words is relatively free. The collocation of “yóuyǒng” and “jūgōng” is relatively strict because their bound morphemes “yǒng” and “gōng” have weak collocational abilities with other morphemes in modern Chinese. The fourth criterion is “used as a verb-object combination in a non-verb-object way.” According to the subsequent statistical analysis, “xuéxí” has cases of being used as a verb-object combination in a non-verb-object way, such as “xué gè xí” (learn a xí), “xué huì xí” (learn to xí), and “xué xué xí” (learn to learn xí), so it meets the criterion. According to previous research, these typical clutch words can also be used as verb-object combinations, such as “xǐ gè zǎo” (take a bath), “yóu gè yǒng” (go for a swim), and “jū gè gōng” (bow). The fifth criterion is “belonging to nouns or adjectives.” “Xuéxí” is generally used as a verb, but sometimes it can be used as a noun to function as the subject or object of a sentence, such as "Carry out party spirit and party style education with 'emphasizing learning, emphasizing politics, and emphasizing integrity' as the main content." As for the other typical clutch words, Zeng Guangyu (2017) believed that “xǐzǎo,” “yóuyǒng,” and “jūgōng” belong to “can be extended and also belong to nouns or adjectives,” but Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin (1996) did not classify these words as “belonging to nouns or adjectives” when they defined and categorized 355 verb-noun combinations. This issue will not be discussed here, and the view of Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin (1996) will be followed.

In summary, “xuéxí” meets three criteria: “can be extended,” “contains bound morphemes,” and “used as a verb-object combination in a non-verb-object way.” Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin (1996) took “combination components containing bound morphemes,” “strict collocation restrictions,” “non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object combinations,” and “can be extended and also belong to nouns or adjectives” as the criteria for determining clutch words and indicated that any verb-noun combination that meets any one of these criteria is a clutch word. Zeng Guangyu (2017) also pointed out that “the ability to extend” and “used as a verb-object combination” are the main criteria

for determining that they are clutch words. Based on the above analysis, “xuéxí” has met the criteria for determining clutch words. Therefore, we can conclude that “xuéxí” is a clutch word.

Secondly, from the perspective of actual use, “xuéxí” does have cases of extended use. For non-verb-object type clutch words, Zeng Guangyu (2017) and Li Zongjiang (2006) used the syntactic conditions of typical verb-object phrases to test whether they have the attributes of phrases. The author will take the syntactic conditions of verb-object phrases as an example and statistically analyze the specific cases and their occurrence frequencies of the extended use of “xuéxí” in the BCC (Beijing Corpus of Contemporary Chinese) corpus.

Table 2. Comparison of Extended Use of “Xuéxí” with Typical Verb-Object Phrases

Serial Number	Condition	Example	Explanation
A	Verb followed by temporal aspect marker	xuéwánxí	
B	Verb reduplication	xuéxuéxí	
C	Verb followed by verbal quantity component	xuéhuìxí	
D	Verb followed by complement	xuéhǎoxí	
E	Verb followed by “de” or “(yī) gè”	xuégè xí	
F	Object modified by an adjective	None	Emphasizing the nominal nature of the object
G	Object forming a coordinate structure	None	
H	Object fronted as a topic	xíxué zěnme yàng le	
I	Transformed into an interrogative form	xuébùxuéxí	
J	Transformed into a “bǎ” word structure	None	“Xué” has no dispositional nature
K	Transformed into a passive sentence	None	

In the above extended forms, there are four forms without corpus data. The author believes the reasons are as follows. F: Modifying the object with an adjective and G: The object forming a coordinate structure are two forms that emphasize the nominal nature of the object. However, as a synonymous compound word, “xuéxí” has a more obvious verbal nature for both “xué” and “xí,” so it is not possible to add an adjective before “xí” or coordinate “xí” with other nouns. J: Transforming into a “bǎ” word structure and K: Transforming into a passive sentence are because “xué” has no dispositional nature and cannot form “bǎ” or “bèi” sentences. Therefore, the acceptability of these two extended forms is low.

Based on the above extended use forms, representative examples of each form are listed as follows (source: BCC):

(1) A: After all, I basically didn't study in the past two years; I just played around. (Weibo)

(2) B: I originally planned to spend two hours studying tonight, but I didn't even open the books before it was time to sleep. (Weibo)

(3) C: While waiting for the movie to download, feeling extremely bored, I might as well learn! (Weibo)

(4) D: It's a holiday, so let's have some fun~ But still, I need to study well first. (Weibo)

Table 3. Number of Extended Use Cases of “Xuéxí”

Serial Number	Condition	Specific Example	Frequency
A	Verb followed by temporal aspect marker	xuéguòxí	4
		xuéwánxí	6
		xuéxiàxí	1
		xuézhexí	2
B	Verb reduplication	xuéxuéxí	18
C	Verb followed by verbal quantity component	xuéhuìxí	23
D	Verb followed by complement	xuéhǎoxí	9
E	Verb followed by “de” or “(yī) gè”	xuéde xí	1
		xuégè xí	13
H	Object fronted as a topic	xíxué zěnme yàng le	1
I	Transformed into an interrogative form	xuébùxuéxí	12

(5) E: I have plenty of time to read the books I should and shouldn't read, study what I should and shouldn't study, and think about the things I should and shouldn't think about. (Weibo)

(6) H: --"I guess so, how's the studying going ?" --"Still studying..." (Dialogue)

(7) I: "Whether to study financial knowledge, and whether to master the knowledge of the socialist market economy, is not just a matter of professional level and work efficiency..." (Scientific Literature)

According to Table 3, among the 11 extended forms, there are 7 forms that can find specific cases of extended use in the corpus, and the total number of cases for all forms is 90, with an average of no less than 12 cases per form. Although in the sense of language, the verb nature of “xí” is more obvious, it is still used as a verb-object combination for extension, and the frequency and forms of extended use of “xuéxí” are not negligible. It can be seen that “xuéxí” has a variety of extended forms and is widely used in spoken language, while the number of written language corpora is very small. It can be said that “xuéxí” is at least used as a clutch word in spoken language.

In summary, with the support of both theory and data, we can confirm that “xuéxí” has the nature of a clutch word.

4. The Emergence of the Coordinate Compound Word “Xuéxí”

4.1. Monosyllabic Verbs “Xué” and “Xí”

4.1.1. “Xué”

“Xué” in the *Shuowen Jiezi*: “Xué, enlightenment. Composed of ‘jiào’ (teaching) and ‘mián’ (covering), indicating a state of being in the dark. Pronounced with the sound of ‘jiù.’ Xué is a simplified form of the ancient character ‘xiào’ (to imitate).” It can also be interpreted as a person holding the divination symbols to teach a child at their knee, or a child learning divination symbols from an elder. The original meaning of “xué” was “to learn,” which later radiated to “school,” “to imitate,” “knowledge,” and then “doctrine” through a chain of extensions. [Source: *Chinese Character Dictionary*, p.1092, Zi Section] Li Lingmei (2017)

synthesized the views of various scholars and outlined the developmental trajectory of “xué” from its original to its extended meanings: The original meaning of “xué” is “to learn,” which later extended radiatively to “school,” “to imitate,” “knowledge,” and then to “doctrine” through a chain of extensions.

In both ancient and modern Chinese, “xué” can stand alone as a verb and take a noun as its object to mean “to learn.” As early as the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, “xué” was used with a noun object, a usage that has continued to the present day, as seen in examples (8-12, 17-20). Additionally, “xué” can be used in combination with other verbs, as in examples (13-14), and can be modified by adverbs or followed by complements, as in examples (15-16, 21-22). In modern Chinese, “xué” can also take temporal aspect markers such as “zhe” (indicating an ongoing action), “le” (indicating a completed action), and “guo” (indicating an experienced action), as in example (23):

(8) If one does not learn poetry, he cannot speak well; if one does not learn propriety, he cannot stand firm. (Analects of Confucius)

(9) When he was young, he tried to learn calligraphy but failed, so he gave up; he also tried to learn swordsmanship but failed again, so he gave up. (Book of Han)

(10) He often practiced horseback riding and archery in the courtyard, and studied military strategy, which led people at that time to consider him mad. (Book of Liang)

(11) He excelled in learning horseback riding and archery. (History of Song)

(12) Those who seek immortality and Buddhism, though they endure hardships in cultivation, must first guard against the four poisons of wine, sex, wealth, and anger. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(13) He lectured to seek more knowledge and did not blame the mad for their admonitions to the officials. (History of Song)

(14) The report was hung with red, sent to the study where teaching took place that day for supply. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(15) I, of humble origin, have learned some rudimentary writing skills and also know a few prescriptions from the sea. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(16) A woman in someone's home, instead of being taught to be good, is instigated to be unruly and unvirtuous. What is this about? (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(17) Rural women will continue to engage in activities such as learning culture and technology in the future. (Fujian Daily 1994)

(18) Since the mid-1990s, Shanghai has been carrying out the "Three Learnings" activities of learning science, knowledge, and technology. (People's Daily, 2000)

(19) I haven't studied mathematics for four years, and now I'm asked to solve such difficult math problems. (Weibo)

(20) You're telling me to study architecture and build houses, right? (Weibo)

(21) Zhen Bao believes that this is beneficial and also a form of modern housewife education; even learning a few sentences of Mandarin is good. (The Red Rose and the White Rose, 1994)

(22) Zhou Guangzhao emphasized that it is necessary to advocate for everyone in the scientific community to learn a bit of philosophy. (People's Daily, 1999)

(23) This is the subject I have the least confidence in because I have never studied it. (The Silent Majority, 2009)

In summary, whether in ancient or modern times, “xué” can stand alone as a word and has been used as a verb with a noun object since the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. This usage has continued to the present day. “Xué” has always been a free morpheme with rich usages and few restrictions. According to statistics from the Institute of Language Teaching at Beijing Language Institute, “xué” ranks in the top 6.65% of frequently used words in primary and secondary school textbooks. [Source: *Common Characters and Common Words*, Beijing Language Institute]

4.1.2. “Xí”

“Xí” in the *Shuowen Jiezi*: “Xí, repeated flying. Composed of ‘yǔ’ (feather) and ‘bái’ (white).” [Source: *Chinese Character Dictionary*, p.3565, Feather Section] It is known that the original meaning of “xí” is generally interpreted as the repeated attempts of a young bird to fly, a usage that only appears in ancient Chinese, as seen in the example from the *Book of Rites·Monthly Ordinances*: “The eagles begin to learn to fly.” Li Lingmei (2017) similarly outlined the relationship between the original and extended meanings of “xí”: “Xí” evolved from its original meaning of repeated attempts to fly, and through a chain of extensions, it came to mean “repeat,” “practice,” “review,” and “learn.” For example, in the *Book of Rites·Record of Learning*: “After five years, one should be broadly learned and close to one's teacher; after seven years, one should be able to discuss learning and choose friends.”

The usage of “xí” to mean “to learn” appeared as early as the pre-Qin period and was frequently used until modern times. As a verb, it could take a noun as its object, as seen in examples (24-27), and it could also be used in combination with other verbs, as in examples (28-29), or followed by a resultative complement, as in examples (30-31):

(24) When seated, one recites the Book of Poetry and the Book of Documents; when standing, one practices proper etiquette. This should be beneficial. (Book of Han)

(25) Falsely creating talismans and commands, privately studying astrology and calendars, engaging in debates in remote villages, and spreading gossip in alleys. (Old Book of Tang)

(26) After a day of fasting, those who have completed their fast will take over the duties and continue to practice rituals at the community temple. (History of Jin)

(27) If one cannot read, then one should either engage in farming or learn some craft; there should be no idle person. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(28) The elegant tunes of the zither... this sound has suddenly ceased. Although there is transmission and learning, the musical scales have been lost. The authorities are ordered to select musicians who understand the zither and sheng to repair and practice the old tunes. (Old Book of Tang)

(29) It is appropriate to respect and honor teachers, to lecture and study the classics, to have a broad knowledge of ancient and modern times, and to understand the appropriate strategies. (History of Ming)

(30) Through constant exposure, one has developed a frivolous attitude. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

(31) The desire has been extinguished, and one still brings out the usual demeanor and employs the learned skills. (Xingshi Yinyuan)

In early modern Chinese, “xí” could still be used alone to mean “to learn” (Li Lingmei 2017), and at this time, “xí” could also take a noun as its object to indicate the content of learning, as seen in the following examples:

(32) In 1946, at the age of 23, after arriving in Kunming,

he was admitted to the Yunnan Military Academy to study infantry. (People's Daily, 1946)

(33) Vocational schools should be attached to all major enterprises and factories to recruit children of workers who have graduated from primary school, with half of the time spent learning technical skills and the other half on cultural studies. (People's Daily, 1949)

However, in modern Chinese, “xí” can no longer be used alone to mean “to learn.” It generally combines with “xué” to form the compound word “xuéxí” (Li Lingmei 2017). It can also form words like “xíyì” (to practice an art) and “xíde” (to acquire), but it cannot freely combine with other morphemes. In some words like “xíwǔ” (to practice martial arts), “xíqín” (to practice the zither), “xízì” (to practice writing), “xíhuà” (to practice painting), “xíquán” (to practice boxing), “xíwǔ” (to practice dancing), “xí” mostly means “to practice,” and the objects are usually fixed in these traditional activities, carrying a classical Chinese flavor and cannot be flexibly combined. For example:

(34) The She ethnic group, residing in Jin Douyang Village of Fu'an County, is known as the "Hometown of Martial Arts." Men and women of the She ethnic group here have practiced boxing and martial arts since childhood. (Fujian Daily, 1982)

(35) After learning to paint, he integrated this emotion into his brushwork. (People's Daily, 2003)

(36) Since childhood, he has learned to play the zither and study calligraphy and painting, under the tutelage of renowned masters. (Wenhui Daily, 2005)

(37) Those who practice dancing often suffer from soreness and injuries all over their bodies. (Weibo)

In summary, the meaning of “xí” as “to learn” has been used since ancient times and was still a free morpheme that could be used alone to mean “to learn” until early modern Chinese. However, in modern Chinese, its usage has decreased, and it can no longer be used alone to mean “to learn.” It can only combine with other morphemes to form words and cannot be flexibly combined. In other words, “xí” was a free morpheme in ancient Chinese that could be used alone to mean “to learn,” but in modern Chinese, it has become a bound morpheme and cannot be used alone.

4.2. The Lexicalization Process of “Xuéxí”

4.2.1. Semantic Expression Form – From Morphemes to Words

From the perspective of semantic expression, “xué” and “xí” have undergone different developmental trajectories. As mentioned earlier, “xué” has always been a free morpheme that can be used alone to mean “to learn.” In contrast, “xí” could be used independently as a verb in ancient times, followed by a noun object, and could be freely combined. However, in modern times, it has become a bound morpheme and generally combines with “xué” to express the meaning of “to learn.” Luo Siming (2007) believes that lexicalization refers to “the process and result of integrating semantic components into a word.” From this perspective, the meaning of “to learn” could be expressed by a single morpheme “xué” or “xí” in ancient and medieval times. Therefore, “xuéxí” did not begin to lexicalize until modern times.

4.2.2. Morpheme Combination Form

When “xuéxí” first appeared together, it was a verb-object phrase meaning “to learn to fly,” as seen in example (38). In ancient Chinese, “xí” had already extended to mean “to learn,” and it often appeared in combination with “xué” as a coordinate verb pair, which began to show the possibility of lexicalization. However, at that time, the structure was still flexible, and there were two forms of combination: “xuéxí” and “xíxué,” both of which had the same meaning and could take a noun object to indicate the content of learning, as seen in examples (39-40), with similar frequencies of occurrence.

(38) When the warm breeze begins to blow, the crickets dwell in the walls, and the eagles start to learn. (Book of Rites)

(39) When commoners manage their households, they focus on agriculture; when scholars study, they learn the laws and prohibitions. (Records of the Grand Historian)

(40) Only these three hundred li of land, with the defenders of the state practicing military arts. (Book of Documents)

In the medieval period, “xuéxí” and “xíxué” developed synchronously with similar frequencies. In the Hanji Electronic Text Database, “xuéxí” has 5 instances, 2 of which take a noun object indicating the content of learning; “xíxué” has 7 instances, 3 of which take a noun object indicating the content of learning, as follows:

(41) During the Jianwu period, he visited a teacher to study the Han poetry. After several years, he returned and quietly engaged in teaching. (Book of the Later Han)

(42) He left home and followed Zhou Xun from Qianwei to study the ancient methods. (Book of the Later Han)

(43) From then on, he ceased to engage in social affairs and devoted himself to learning, thus enabling him to extensively read various books and complete his collection of works. (Book of Jin)

(44) At that time, the diviners suspected that there was some other influence at work, not due to learning, but they could not determine it. (Old Book of Tang)

(45) The musicians were then ordered to learn it. This is the so-called "Ba Yu Dance" today. (Book of Huayang)

(46) In a world where learning is not practiced, the people lack ambition and righteousness; contradictions arise from this, and chaos ensues. (Book of Southern Qi)

(47) Those who study both literature and martial arts are considered scholars, while those who diligently engage in farming and sericulture are considered farmers. (Old Book of Tang)

(48) I wish to study the classics and history; which should I prioritize? (Old Book of Tang)

(49) It is not heard that those who engage in improper conduct study the ancient texts. (Old Book of Tang)

In the modern period, the frequency of both terms increased, but “xíxué” was used more frequently than “xuéxí.” According to the author's investigation and statistics, there are only 26 instances of “xuéxí” in modern literature; excluding proper nouns, there are nearly 100 instances of “xíxué.” For example, in the *History of Song* and *Jinghua Yuan*, both terms appear together: in the *History of Song*, there is only one instance of “xuéxí” and four instances of “xíxué,” none of which take an object; in *Jinghua Yuan*, there is only one instance of “xuéxí” without an object, while there are 19 instances of “xíxué,” five of which take an object. However, during this period, both “xuéxí” and “xíxué” were used very flexibly, as predicates with objects, as in examples (50-52); with complements, as in examples (53-55); with adverbs, as in examples (56-60), and so on.

(50) Since childhood, he has studied literature and extensively read the classics and histories. (Pinghua of the History of the Five Dynasties)

(51) Bao said, "Since my childhood, I have practiced martial arts, and my arrows never miss their target." (Romance of the Three Kingdoms)

(52) Following my mother and aunts to learn needlework, is that not good? (Jinghua Yuan)

(53) After composing a poem, he went to see Zhu Wu Jing and asked him to learn something. (Pinghua of the History of the Five Dynasties)

(54) Nowadays, the four styles of Su, Huang, Mi, and Cai are widely popular; who does not learn some of them? (Water Margin)

(55) After the Empress Yuan no longer used it, people also became lazy to learn. (Dream of the Red Chamber)

(56) The younger sister, after hearing this, sought lessons everywhere and studied daily, but still could not enter the door. (Jinghua Yuan)

(57) The young lady, accustomed to being pampered, has never learned. (The Peach Blossom Fan)

(58) Starting from that day, they selected strong and robust individuals to learn day and night. (Water Margin)

(59) I tried to decline several times, but the madam did not allow it, instead accusing me of seeking comfort and being unwilling to learn. (Dream of the Red Chamber)

(60) In the future, upon returning to the hometown, they would study from time to time. (Jinghua Yuan)

In summary, in the modern period, people tended to use “xíxué” to mean “to learn.” So, were “xuéxí” and “xíxué” words at this time?

Ma Qinghua (2009) proposed specific criteria for disyllabic combinations of phrases: when a combination possesses all the characteristics of a phrase, it indicates that it has not yet been lexicalized. M phrase characteristics = {1. It can be disyllabic; 2. A conventional combination of free morphemes; 3. The structural relationship remains unchanged when used conventionally; 4. Strong substitutability of structural components; 5. The combination ability is essentially the same as when used separately; 6. The ability to function as a syntactic component is essentially the same as when used separately; 7. The overall function is essentially the same as when used separately; 8. The overall meaning is generally equal to the natural combination of morpheme meanings; 9. The recurrence rate is generally low}.

According to the analysis in the previous section, first, “xué” and “xí” can both serve as free morphemes to independently express the meaning of “to learn,” so “xuéxí” and “xíxué” are both disyllabic coordinate combinations composed of two free morphemes, and both express the meaning of “to learn,” thus meeting M1, M2, and M8. Second, the syntactic functions of “xué” and “xí” are essentially equal. As disyllabic coordinate combinations, the structural relationship remains parallel when used separately, so both meet M3. Third, as mentioned in the previous section, “xué” and “xí” can both combine with other morphemes, such as “jiǎngxué” (to lecture) in the *History of Song*, “jiàoxué” (to teach) in *Xingshi Yinyuan*, “chuánxí” (to pass on and learn) in the *Old Book of Tang*, and “jiǎngxué” (to study and discuss) in the *History of Ming*. The parallel structural relationship remains unchanged after substitution, so both meet M4. Fourth, the combination ability and syntactic ability of “xuéxí,” “xíxué,” “xué,” and “xí” are equivalent. They all function as verbs in predicate positions, combining with objects, adverbs, complements, etc., thus meeting M5, M6, and M7. Finally, according to the Hanji Electronic Text Database, there are 73,542 instances of “xí,” 214,504 instances of “xué,” which may include instances with other meanings, but only 747 instances of “xuéxí” and 808 instances of “xíxué.” The significant disparity in numbers indicates that both meet M9. In summary, in the modern period and before, “xuéxí” and “xíxué” were considered phrases and had not yet been lexicalized.

In modern times, the frequency of “xíxué” has significantly decreased. According to the BCC (Beijing Corpus of Contemporary Chinese), in the early development of modern Chinese, “xíxué” had many instances, with a peak frequency of 105 times per year before 1943. However, in that year, the number of instances plummeted, and the frequency afterward did not exceed 2 times per year. There are a total of 17 instances that meet the criteria after 1943, and a total of 658 instances after 1919. The written instances range from the *Shenbao* in 1943 to the novel *Shengfushou*, serialized in the overseas edition of the *People's Daily* in 2004, with no further appearances; the spoken instances come from Weibo, with the latest appearance being no earlier than 2009 (Weibo was founded in 2009).

(61) The diligent study of outstanding students, inspired and urged on by the righteous actions of all sectors. (Shenbao, 1943)

(62) In Yanguan Town, it has long been a custom for schoolchildren to learn calligraphy and painting. (Shengfushou, 2004)

(63) This case illustrates that the obedience of dogs to humans is limited, and so is human patience; the instinct of animals to learn should naturally come from the guidance of their own kind. (Weibo)

(64) You know, I am studying law, so I can't help but "think like a lawyer." (Weibo)

(65) There are too many virtues that humans need to learn from animals. (Weibo)

In contrast, the frequency of “xuéxí” has increased significantly. According to the BCC corpus, before 1949, the highest frequency of “xuéxí” did not exceed 3,000 times per year, but in that year, the number of instances surged to 12,764. Subsequently, the frequency of “xuéxí” stabilized between 4,000 and 20,000 times per year. There are a total of 622,988 instances after 1949 and 650,406 instances after 1919. Additionally, according to the author's statistics, “xuéxí” ranks in the top 5.63% of frequently used words in the *Common Characters and Common Words* compiled by the Institute of Language Teaching at Beijing Language Institute.

In summary, the number of instances of “xíxué” plummeted in 1943, while the number of instances of “xuéxí” surged in 1949. The total number of instances of “xíxué” after 1919 is far less than that of “xuéxí.” It can be said that in modern Chinese, “xíxué” gradually disappeared, while “xuéxí” became the dominant form. The disappearance of “xíxué” indicates that “xuéxí” began the process of lexicalization in modern times.

Free morphemes can combine in different orders; for example, “xíxué” is a reversed form of “xuéxí.” Many coordinate disyllabic words have had reversed forms in history (Jiang Shaoyu 1994), but during the process of lexicalization of phrases, the combination form gradually becomes fixed. For example, the frequency of “xíxué” in modern Chinese has greatly decreased, while “xuéxí” has become the dominant form. As a phrase, the combination of morphemes can be unfixed, but as a word, the internal components cannot be reversed. The process from having a reversed form to not having one is precisely the process of lexicalization of coordinate phrases (Dong Xiufang 2002). According to the data from the BCC corpus above, during the same period, the number of instances of “xíxué” is far lower

than that of “xuéxí.” It can be known that in modern Chinese, “xíxué” has gradually disappeared, stopped reversing, and “xuéxí” has solidified into a word, beginning lexicalization in modern times.

Dong Xiufang, in her book *Lexicalization: The Derivation and Development of Disyllabic Words in Chinese* (2002:123), proposed a four-level hierarchy of the degree of lexicalization of disyllabic words, with the lowest level being disyllabic words that still have monosyllabic synonyms but cannot be reversed, and “xuéxí” is precisely the disyllabic word that has lost its reversed form and has a monosyllabic synonym “xué” in modern times (Dong Xiufang 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that “xuéxí” has been lexicalized in modern times.

So, is “xuéxí” a word in modern Chinese?

Ma Qinghua (2009) proposed specific criteria for the qualification of disyllabic combinations as words: when a combination meets all the flexible criteria and also meets one or more rigid criteria, it can be determined to have been lexicalized. N word flexible criteria = {1. Disyllabic; 2. High recurrence rate}. O word rigid criteria = {1. Contains bound morphemes; 2. Derived from the abbreviation of a phrase; 3. Morpheme variation; 4. Structural reanalysis; 5. Weak substitutability of structural components; 6. Essential differences in combination ability compared to when used separately; 7. Essential differences in the ability to function as a syntactic component compared to when used separately; 8. Essential differences in overall function compared to when used separately; 9. The overall meaning is not equal to the conventional combination of morpheme meanings; 10. Direct borrowing of foreign character words}.

Combining the analysis of this section, first, “xuéxí,” as a disyllabic coordinate combination, ranks in the top 5.63% of frequently used words in modern Chinese, thus meeting N1 and N2. Second, “xí” has become a bound morpheme in modern times and cannot be used alone, thus meeting O1. Therefore, “xuéxí” meets all the flexible criteria and one rigid criterion, and can be determined to have been lexicalized.

5. The Generation Mechanism of the Clutch Word "Xuéxí

According to the lexicalization process of "xuéxí," the role of "xí" was still very prominent before it became a bound morpheme, and it could freely combine with objects. The number of instances of "xíxué" even exceeded that of "xuéxí." However, in modern times, as "xí" changed from a free morpheme to a bound morpheme and could no longer freely combine with objects, the reversed form of "xuéxí," which is "xíxué," could no longer freely combine with objects either and gradually disappeared. Since then, "xuéxí" has solidified into a word.

In the definition of clutch words, bound morphemes also play a very important role. Zhao Shuhua and Zhang Baolin (1996) used the presence of bound morphemes in the combination components to identify clutch words, stating that any word containing bound morphemes is a clutch word. Wu Daoqin and Li Zhongchu (2001) pointed out that one of the criteria for identifying clutch words is "whether the combination components contain bound forms." Ma Caixia (2005) also believed that words meeting the condition of "containing bound morphemes" are clutch words.

Since "xí" became a bound morpheme, "xuéxí" has been a combination of the highly frequently used monosyllabic verb "xué" and the bound morpheme "xí," which cannot freely combine and cannot stand alone as a word. This combination has provided the basic driving force for the emergence of the clutch word "xuéxí."

Based on this driving force, other factors that promote the emergence of the clutch word "xuéxí" have had the space to take effect. Previous research on the formation mechanisms of clutch words has mostly focused on the roles of monosyllabic and disyllabic words and the classification of verb-object structures. Cao Nailin (1994) and others have pointed out that the formation of clutch words is influenced by monosyllabic and disyllabic words; Zhang Liming (1982) and others have mentioned the role of verb-object structures. The following is a detailed analysis of how these factors play a role in the generation mechanism of the clutch word "xuéxí."

5.1. From Lexicalization to Delexicalization

The lexicalization of "xuéxí" was influenced by the trend of disyllabic words, with the synonymous monosyllabic forms "xué" and "xí" combining multiple times into "xuéxí" and "xíxué." After modern times, the reversed form disappeared, and "xuéxí" became fixed in use, thus establishing "xuéxí" as a disyllabic word from a disyllabic phrase.

The clitic phenomenon of "xuéxí" may be precisely because it has also undergone a "delexicalization" process. Li Zongjiang (2006) believed that the clitic nature of "jiéhūn" (to get married) and "xǐzǎo" (to take a bath) might be related to "delexicalization," pointing out that their emergence is the result of the combined effects of prosodic and syntactic actions. The former refers to the fact that most commonly used verbs are monosyllabic, which leads to the separation of a disyllabic verb; the latter refers to the situation where, after a temporal marker is added to the first component of a disyllabic verb, the second component is mistakenly analyzed as an object, and the disyllabic word is reanalyzed as a verb-object structure. He also mentioned that such non-verb-object combinations used as verb-object combinations, like "xuéxí," may have also undergone delexicalization.

According to this theoretical analysis, the author believes that "xuéxí" has indeed undergone a delexicalization process under the influence of prosody and syntax, forming various extended usage forms, thereby creating the phenomenon of clitic usage.

In terms of prosody, the commonly used monosyllabic word "xué" plays the main role. In modern Chinese, "xué" is among the top 6.65% of frequently used monosyllabic words, and "xué" is also the synonymous monosyllabic form of "xuéxí." We can see that there is virtually no semantic difference between the two by substitution:

(66) Most of these students cannot speak Chinese, but after returning from China, they all became interested in Chinese culture and began to learn Chinese. (Scientific literature)

(67) During the National Day fireworks party at Tiananmen Square that year, I met a Japanese friend who was a student learning Chinese. (Donggong Xigong, 2006)

(68) He has already sent four batches of 26 middle-level and above cadres and dismissed cadres to take up posts for training and learn the management experience of township enterprises. (People's Daily, 1995)

Replacing "xuéxí" with "xué" in the example sentences, there is almost no difference in meaning between "xuéxí zhōngwén" (learn Chinese) in sentence 66 and "xué

zhōngwén" (learn Chinese) in sentence 67, and they can be interchanged, with only a slight difference in usage where the former is more inclined towards written language; the meaning of "xuéxí guǎnlǐ jīngyàn" (learn management experience) in sentence 68 is also essentially the same as "xué guǎnlǐ jīngyàn" (learn management experience), but the sense of rhythm and style drives us to choose the former. It can be said that the disyllabic word "xuéxí" is a complementary form of "xué" in terms of rhythm and style. Pan Wengu (2002) also pointed out that many concepts in Chinese can be expressed in both monosyllabic and disyllabic forms, with only differences in rhythm.

In terms of syntax, the clitic extended forms of "xuéxí" also reflect the results of structural reanalysis. According to the BCC corpus, under the influence of reanalysis, "xuéxí" is often extended in the form of verb-object structures, as seen in the following three example sentences:

(69) The closing ceremony is over, let's focus and study. (Weibo)

(70) After lunch, it's time to study~ After finishing studying, we'll have a meeting~ After the meeting, we'll watch a ball game~. (Weibo)

(71) I have a lot of time to read the books I should and shouldn't read, study the things I should and shouldn't study, and think about the principles I should and shouldn't think about. (Weibo)

"Shōuxīn" (focus), "chī wǔfàn" (have lunch), "kāihuì" (have a meeting), "dúshū" (read books), and "xiǎng dàolǐ" (think about principles) are verb-object phrases with monosyllabic verbs as predicates. When "xuéxí" is used in parallel with them, on one side, the force of commonly used monosyllabic verbs drives it, and on the other side, the existence of the synonymous monosyllabic form "xué" makes the role of "xí" dispensable. Eventually, it is inevitably reanalyzed as a verb-object structure and extended in a verb-object manner.

In summary, under the influence of prosody, that is, the role of commonly used monosyllabic verbs, "xuéxí" has undergone delexicalization again after lexicalization, causing "xuéxí" to be separated and reanalyzed as a verb-object structure under the influence of syntax, thereby becoming a clitic word that can be separated and combined.

5.2. Non-verb-object Combinations Used as Verb-object Structures and Analogical Effects

The verb-object structure is an extremely dominant structural form in Chinese (Lu Shixiang 1979). Compared with other structures, the verb-object structure has a more diverse range of expressions and includes richer semantic relationships. It is the most widely used and most economically principled structure. Therefore, "the verb-object structure is a dominant structure, and its analogical effect on other formats is very obvious" (Zhou Shangzhi 2006). There are also a large number of verb-object clitic words. According to Wang Sumei (1999), among the clitic words marked in the 1996 edition of the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, there are 3184 verb-object type clitic words, accounting for about 97% of all clitic words.

"Xuéxí" is a disyllabic word with synonymous parallel structure, but it is used as a verb-object structure in clitic usage. The reason for this non-verb-object combination being used as a verb-object structure is mainly due to the analogical effect in language (Wang Danxin 1988). Analogy is the assimilation of other formats by a dominant format in language (Zhou Shangzhi 2007). In Chinese, the verb-object structure is the most advantageous, and among clitic words, the analogical effect of verb-object clitic words on other forms, such as verb forms and disyllabic verb structures, is also the strongest.

Li Zongjiang (2006) once tested whether it has the attributes of a phrase based on the syntactic conditions of typical verb-object phrases. According to the BCC corpus, there are seven forms of extended usage of "xuéxí": 1) adding temporal markers after verbs; 2) verb reduplication; 3) adding verbal quantity components after verbs; 4) verbs with complements; 5) adding "de" or "(yī) gè" after verbs; 6) object fronted as a topic; 7) transformed into an interrogative form.

According to the above statistical data, "xuéxí," as a disyllabic word with parallel structure, has a large number of clitic usage materials used as verb-object structures. Among the seven forms of clitic extended transformations, there are 11 instances of usage and 90 pieces of data, with an average of 12 for each form. The analogical effect of the verb-object structure "xuéxí" can be seen from the actual data, and the analogical effect will be more intuitive from the specific materials:

(72) Isn't this me! I have to keep looking at books and studying in order not to be criticized. (Weibo)

(73) The visa is a problem, but it's okay to read books and study. (Weibo)

(74) Instead of embroidering cross-stitch, I might as well take this time to read books and study. (Weibo)

(75) I should study more during my long breaks to attract girls. (Weibo)

(76) It's the most harmonious state to study while browsing the internet. (Weibo)

(77) Oh, I really like this color. I can study and paint my nails, right? (Weibo)

(78) Reading books, studying... it shouldn't be that difficult, right? (Weibo)

(79) Chatting, studying... the unhurried feeling is really nice. (Weibo)

(80) I'm increasingly fond of staying at home, chatting, hanging out, and studying... (Weibo)

(81) After watching "Bright Sword," I learned something. (Weibo)

(82) Study hard. Equip yourself, find a good job, and take control of your life. (Weibo)

(83) Do well in your part, study hard, and getting into a good university will be satisfying. (Weibo)

(84) Today, I installed a B at home and studied. (Weibo)

(85) As soon as I got back, I turned on the TV. Study or not, go to university or not! (Weibo)

(86) ...Are you still going to study, or go to university?! (Weibo)

Firstly, according to the analysis of the previous section, the extended forms of "xuéxí" in sentences 69-71 are also influenced by the analogical effect of verb-object structures. "Shōuxīn" (focus), "chī wǔfàn" (have lunch), "kāihuì" (have a meeting), "dúshū" (read books), and "xiǎng dàolǐ" (think about principles) are all natural extended forms of verb-object structures. "Xuéxí" is influenced by them and extended in the same format, which does not affect the semantic understanding and communication.

Secondly, in the above examples, sentence 72 "xuézhe xí" is influenced by "kànzhe shū" (looking at books), adding a temporal marker after the verb, used as a verb-object structure;

sentences 73-80 "xuéxuéxí" are influenced by "kànkàn shū" (look at books), "bǎbǎ mèi" (flirt), "shuāshuā wéibó" (browse Weibo), "tútú zhǐjia" (paint nails), "liáolián tiān" (chat), with verb reduplication, the latter morpheme "xí" acquiring noun properties, used as a verb-object structure; sentences 81-83 "xuéhǎoxí" are influenced by "zhǎodào hǎo gōngzuò" (find a good job), "kǎodào hǎo dàxué" (get into a good university), with a complement added after "xué," "xí" used as an object; sentence 84 "xué gè xí" is influenced by "zhuāng gè B" (install a B), with the numeral classifier "gè" added before "xí," "xí" used as an object, and "xuéxí" is analogized from a verb-verb structure to a verb-object structure; sentences 85-86 "xuébùxuéxí" are influenced by "kǎobùkǎo dàxué" (take or not take the university entrance exam), "shàngbùshàng dàxué" (go or not go to university), with the structure repeating the verb, the following component generally being an object, and "xuéxí" in this structure is analogized to repeat only the verb "xué," with "xí" serving as the object.

In summary, in the generation mechanism of the clitic word "xuéxí," the analogical effect of the verb-object structure is indispensable. When verb-object clitic words coexist in a sentence, non-verb-object forms like "xuéxí" are easily analogized by this structure. The latter morpheme "acquires noun properties and becomes a verb-object structure" (Wang Haifeng 2002). This type of sentence occupies a large proportion in all the clitic usage materials of "xuéxí," and it is undeniable that the analogical effect of the verb-object structure has a significant impact on the emergence of the clitic word "xuéxí."

6. Conclusion

The research objective of this paper is to determine the clitic nature of the non-verb-object compound word "xuéxí" and to discuss the emergence and lexicalization process of the coordinate compound word "xuéxí" from a diachronic perspective. The study also analyzes the generation mechanism of the clitic word "xuéxí" from multiple angles in combination with relevant theories.

The comprehensive research findings indicate that the criteria for identifying clitic words include: containing bound morphemes; having strictly restricted collocations; being used as verb-object structures in a non-verb-object way; and belonging to nouns or adjectives. Therefore, despite the fact that the coordinate compound word "xuéxí" is not currently classified as a "clitic word," is not marked as such in the *Dictionary*, and its clitic usage is only mentioned in individual studies as a non-verb-object combination used as a verb-object structure, the actual data and theoretical analysis demonstrate that "xuéxí" is indeed a clitic word.

The original meaning of "xué" is "to learn," and it has been a free morpheme since the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, capable of forming words independently and freely combining with other elements, such as taking objects. In modern Chinese, "xué" is an extremely frequently used monosyllabic verb. The original meaning of "xí" is the repeated attempts of a young bird to fly. From ancient times until the modern era, "xí" could still form words independently and freely combine with other elements. However, in modern times, the usage of "xí" has significantly decreased. It can no longer form words independently, cannot express the meaning of "to learn" on its own, and cannot flexibly combine with other morphemes, thus becoming a bound morpheme.

The lexicalization process of "xuéxí" began in modern times. In terms of semantic expression, the meaning of "to learn" could be expressed by two free morphemes before modern times, but afterward, it could only be expressed through the synonymous compound word "xuéxí." Regarding the combination of morphemes, both "xuéxí" and its reversed form "xíxué" existed before modern times, with "xíxué" being more frequently used in the modern era. However, after 1919, the number of instances of "xíxué" became much lower than that of "xuéxí." Therefore, we conclude that the reversed form "xíxué" of "xuéxí" gradually disappeared in modern times, and the disappearance of the reversed form also reflects the process of lexicalization of coordinate phrases. Additionally, according to the specific criteria proposed by Ma Qinghua (2009), "xuéxí" and "xíxué" could only be phrases before modern times, and only afterward could "xuéxí" be regarded as a word. In summary, "xuéxí" began to lexicalize in modern times.

The generation mechanism of the clitic word "xuéxí" is based on "xí" becoming a bound morpheme, which makes "xuéxí" a combination of the highly frequently used monosyllabic verb "xué" and the bound morpheme "xí," which cannot freely combine or form words independently after becoming a bound morpheme. This combination provides the basic driving force for the separation of disyllabic words into monosyllables and the analogical extension of verb-object structures.

Subsequently, the role of monosyllables led to the delexicalization of "xuéxí" after its lexicalization, with the force of the commonly used monosyllabic verb "xué" causing "xuéxí" to be separated and reanalyzed as a verb-object structure, thereby becoming a clitic word that can be separated and combined.

Finally, the analogical effect of the verb-object structure also had a significant impact on the emergence of the clitic word "xuéxí." The coordinate disyllabic word "xuéxí" could be used as a clitic word in a verb-object structure, and the analogical effect of the verb-object structure was indispensable. When verb-object clitic words coexist, non-verb-object forms like "xuéxí" are easily analogized by this structure. "Xí" also acquires noun properties, and the entire structure is extended and transformed in a verb-object manner, enriching its forms and ultimately becoming a clitic word.

In summary, "xuéxí" lexicalized in modern times. The generation mechanism of the clitic word "xuéxí" is based on the bound morpheme "xí," which, under the influence of prosody and syntax, underwent delexicalization, and the verb-object structure underwent strong analogical extension, ultimately forming the clitic word "xuéxí" with various extended forms.

Although some refer to this type as "pseudo-clitic" (Chen Hongyu 2014), arguing that it violates grammatical structure and semantic relationships and is considered improper language use, and others believe that the evolution of clitic words does not follow a single rule (Zeng Guangyu 2017), the research results of this paper show that the clitic usage of "xuéxí" is the result of the combined effects of prosody and syntax. The role of prosody in language often follows a natural, objective law that is not subject to human will. The author believes that if research on clitic words is not limited to special cases but instead examines the phenomenon of cliticization as a whole, we may make richer discoveries.

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