A Study Of The Pragmatic Functions Of Modern Chinese Adverbs "Zhen", "Zhenshi" And "Zhende"

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Abstract:
This research used the Modern Chinese Research Corpus System constructed by Beijing Language and Culture University as the corpus source, and analyzed the pragmatic functions of Modern Chinese adverbs "zhen", "zhenshi" and "zhende" which are located before the predicate and are used as sentence adverbial. The results show that these adverbs have similarities and differences in pragmatic functions. The adverb "zhen" has four pragmatic functions: one is to confirm authenticity, the other is to express subjective evaluation, the third is to express a high degree of authenticity, and the fourth is to make hypotheses. The adverb "zhenshi" has only one pragmatic function, that is, the subjective evaluation function. The adverb "zhende" has two pragmatic functions: one is to confirm authenticity, and the other is to express subjective evaluation. The adverb "zhenshi" and "zhende" can appear together with the degree adverbs "tai" and "hen", but the adverb "zhen" cannot appear with the degree adverbs. The adverb "zhen" and the adverb "zhende" can be replaced with each other, and the meaning of the sentence remains unchanged after the replacement.
Keywords: "Zhen", "Zhenshi", "Zhende", Pragmatic functions, Chinese

1. Introduction

"Zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" are three adverbs commonly used in spoken Chinese. They are semantically similar, so Vietnamese Chinese learners are prone to making errors when using them. However, most of the existing dictionaries and reference books in the field of international Chinese education only deal with the usage of the adverb "zhen (真)", and seldom involve the usage of the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" and the adverb "zhende (真的)", and do not explain the similarities and differences of these adverbs. The specific situation is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

"Zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" in dictionaries and reference books

No.	Dictionaries and reference books	Zhen (真)	Zhenshi (真是)	Zhende (真的)
1	Dictionary of commonly used words in Modern Chinese (Li, 1995)	✓		
2	HSK Chinese Proficiency Test dictionary (Shao, 2000)	✓		
3	Handbook of Modern Chinese function words (Li, 2003)	✓		
4	Chinese teaching and learning dictionary (Shi, & Wang, 2011)	✓	✓	
5	Dictionary of 800 Chinese function words usage (Yang, & Jia, 2013)	✓		
6	Dictionary of Chinese adverbs (Cen, 2013)	✓		✓

Note: ✓ indicates that this adverb is involved.

There are not many studies on Chinese adverbs "zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" at present. According to Li (2005) and Chen, & Cai (2008), the adverb "zhen (真)" is a modality adverb and has a confirming meaning. Lai (1999) believed that the adverb "zhen (真)" is generally used in exclamatory sentences, with a strong emotional color, and is mostly used in spoken language and dialogue, it's not used for right-and-false questions, "zhen A (真 A)" can be used as a predicate, a modal complement, and can be modified with a structure with a degree of complement such as "…si (死)", "…jile (极 了)", "…yaoming (要命)", "…huai (坏)". According to Shan (2004) and Yan (2010), the adverb "zhen (真)" is strongly subjective in the speaker's personality. Zhang & Zhang (2015) generalized three meanings of the subjectivity of the adverb "zhen (真)" as: First, confirm the authenticity; Second, a high degree of authenticity; Third, subjective evaluation. Research by Pan & Zeng (2014) has said that the adverb "zhende (真的)" is subjective, signifying the affirmative meaning for certain things or situations, often used in bilateral dialogue. According to Wu (2017), the basic use of the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is to indicate the speaker's subjective evaluation. Miyashita (2002) compared "zhen (真)" and "zhende (真的)". Fang (2012) pointed out the shortcomings in the research of Miyashita (2002), he also believed that the adverb "zhen (真)" is both an adverb of degree and an adverb of mood, and the adverb "zhende (真的)" is an adverb of mood, which has the function of emphasizing and confirming. Zhang & Xie (2018) said that the adverbs "zhen (真)" and "zhende (真的)" both mean to confirm the truthfulness, both expressing the subjective assessment of the speaker; In addition, the adverb "zhen (真)" has a hypothetical function, and the adverb "zhende (真的)" does not have this function.

This article focuses on the study of the pragmatic functions of the Chinese adverbs "zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" which are located before the predicate and are used as sentence adverbials. On this basis, compare the similarities and differences in the pragmatic functions of these adverbs.

2. Methods

The corpus of this article comes from the Modern Chinese Research Corpus System (现代汉语研究语料库系统) built by Beijing Language and Culture University (China), the size of this corpus is 2 million Chinese characters. This article extracts exhaustively from the corpus, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1. The pragmatic function of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 621 use cases for the adverb "zhen (真)" which is located before the predicate and is used as a sentence adverbial. After corpus analysis, we found that the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)" has four pragmatic functions: one is to confirm authenticity, the other is to express subjective evaluation, the third is to express a high degree of authenticity, and the fourth is to make hypotheses. The number and proportion of use cases of each pragmatic function of the adverb "zhen (真)" are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

The distribution of pragmatic functions of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

No.	Pragmatic function	Number of use cases	Proportion
1	Confirmation of authenticity	294	47.3%
2	Subjective evaluation	225	36.2%
3	High degree of authenticity	76	12.2%
4	Hypothesis	26	4.3%

Table 2 shows that the main pragmatic function of the adverb "zhen (真)" is the confirmation of authenticity, followed by the subjective evaluation function, followed by the high degree of authenticity function, and finally the hypothetical function. Below, we discuss each pragmatic function of the adverb "zhen (真)".

3.1.1. The confirmation function of the authenticity of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

The Chinese adverb "zhen (真)" is used to confirm the reliability and authenticity of something. In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 294 use cases of the adverb "zhen (真)" with this function, accounting for 47.3% of all use cases with the adverb "zhen (真)". For example:

(1) 听说劳动部门他们【真】告了您？

(2) 妙，妙，【真】是绝妙的安排。

(3) 专家们说得好，当今，移动通信【真】是一个利润颇丰的领域。

(4) 治保主任很尴尬也很难为情地说，我【真】没看见也没听清，我以党性做保证。

In example (1), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to confirm the authenticity of the prosecution by the "labor department (劳动部门)". In example (2), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to confirm the wonderful arrangement of things. In example (3), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to confirm the authenticity of the "experts (专家们)" previously referred to as "highly profitable fields (利润颇丰的领域)". In example (4), the facts confirmed by the adverb "zhen (真)" are "don't see (没看见)" and "don't hear clearly (没听清)".

3.1.2. The subjective evaluation function of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

The Chinese adverb "zhen (真)" is used to give a subjective evaluation of a person or a thing. In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 225 use cases of the adverb "zhen (真)" with this function, accounting for 36.2% of all use cases with the adverb "zhen (真)". For example:

(5) 嗯，刘先生，你这个记性【真】好啊，对，不是七块六，是七块五 。

(6) 说句良心话，价钱倒定的可【真】不贵。

(7) 听说您不老富裕的，把房子出手啦给妈妈念经，【真】够孝顺的！

(8) 一个战士接过大娘递过来的地瓜，一口咬下去，嘿，【真】好，栗子味的。

In example (5), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the listener's "memory (记性)". In example (6), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of "price (价钱)". In example (7), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of "reciting sutras to mother (给妈妈念经)".)". In example (8), the adverb "zhen (真)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of "the sweet potatoes handed over by the lady (大娘递过来的地瓜)".

3.1.3. The high degree of authenticity function of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

The Chinese adverb "zhen (真)" is used to express the high degree of a certain state or quality. In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 76 use cases of the adverb "zhen (真)" with this function, accounting for 12.2% of all use cases with the adverb "zhen (真)". For example:

(9) 我【真】想你，我要向你解释 ……

(10) 我【真】喜欢您！

(11) 不过，你们俩和好了，我【真】高兴。

(12) 【真】不好意思，我没和任何人提起过她 。

In examples (9) and (10), the adverb "zhen (真)" is placed before the mental verbs "miss (想)" and "like (喜欢)", and is used to express the high degree of these mental verbs. In examples (11) and (12), the adverb "zhen (真)" is placed before the adjectives "happy (高兴)" and "sorry (不好意思)", indicating the high degree of these states.

3.1.4. The hypothetical function of the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)"

When the Chinese adverb "zhen (真)" is used in conjunction with certain actual verbs, it can express an unrealistic state. This is the hypothetical function of the adverb "zhen (真)". In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 26 use cases of the adverb "zhen (真)" with this function, accounting for 4.3% of all use cases with the adverb "zhen (真)". For example:

(13) 同时指出："【真】想搞建设，就要搞点骨干项目，没有骨干项目不行……，宁可压缩地方上的项目，特别是一般性的加工工业项目"。

(14) 哎，咱可说好了，死了以后，要是【真】有个阴曹地府的，我可得跟他去！

(15) 我若【真】犯了那种病，踩坏了你家的瓜秧，碰坏了你家什么，可请你多多原谅哟。

(16) 假如【真】来看我，你就会愿意这儿永远冷冷清清……你可以走了！

In example (13), "really want to do construction (真想搞建设)" means "if you want to do construction (如果想搞建设)", and the adverb "zhen (真)" means the speaker's hypothesis. In addition, the adverb "zhen (真)" can also be combined with "ruo (若)", "ru (如)", "ruguo (如果)", "yaoshi (要是)", "jiaru (假如)" to indicate hypothesis, in example (14), the adverbs "zhen (真)" and "yaoshi (要是)" are combined, in example (15), the adverbs "zhen (真)" and "ruo (若)" are combined, and in example (16), the adverbs "zhen (真)" and "jiaru (假如)" are combined.

3.2. The pragmatic function of the Chinese adverb "zhenshi (真是)"

In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 90 use cases for the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" which is located before the predicate and is used as a sentence adverbial. After corpus analysis, we found that the Chinese adverb "zhenshi (真是)" has only one pragmatic function, that is, the subjective evaluation function. For example:

(17) 虽然我们相识的时间很暂短，但你给我的感觉是一见如故，【真是】相识恨晚呀。

(18) 王教授，今天到太阳岛【真是】不虚此行、受益非浅。

In example (17), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the acquaintance between the speaker and the listener. In example (18), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective

evaluation of the event "Today to Sun Island (今天到太阳岛)".

Different from the adverb "zhenshi (真是)", when used to express subjective evaluation, the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" can appear at the same time as the degree adverb "tai 太", indicating that the speaker's subjective evaluation is particularly reliable. For example:

> (19) 噢，大嫂，说起来可【真是】太苦啦！
> (20) 噢──您想的【真是】太周到啦！
> (21) 原来军人为保卫祖国要牺牲的东西那么多，他们【真是】太伟大了。
> (22) 这装束令佳希眼睛一亮，"哇，你【真是】太美了。"

In example (19), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of "sister-in-law (大嫂)", and the degree adverb "tai 太" increases its reliability. In example (20), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the listener's thoughts, and the degree adverb "tai 太" increases its reliability. In example (21), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of "soldiers (军人)", and the degree adverb "tai 太" increases its reliability. In example (22), the adverb "zhenshi (真是)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the listener, and the degree adverb "tai 太" increases its reliability.

3.3. The pragmatic function of the Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)"

In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 76 use cases for the adverb "zhende (真的)" which is located before the predicate and is used as a sentence adverbial. After corpus analysis, we found that the Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)" has two pragmatic functions: one is to confirm authenticity, and the other is to express subjective evaluation. The number and proportion of use cases of each pragmatic function of the adverb "zhende (真的)" are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The distribution of pragmatic functions of the Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)"

No.	Pragmatic function	Number of use cases	Proportion
1	Confirmation of authenticity	74	97.4%
2	Subjective evaluation	2	2.6%

Table 3 shows that the main pragmatic function of the adverb "zhende (真的)" is the confirmation of authenticity, the subjective evaluation function of the adverb "zhende (真的)" is the least frequently used. Below, we discuss each pragmatic function of the adverb "zhende (真的)".

3.3.1. The confirmation function of the authenticity of the Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)"

The Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to confirm the reliability and authenticity of something. In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 74 use cases of the adverb "zhende (真的)" with this function, accounting for 97.4% of all use cases with the adverb "zhende (真的)". For example:

> (23) 哈哈，这回才算【真的】抓到狐狸了。
> (24) 不是吓你，从明天起我【真的】不当上海市长了，只能挂个名了。
> (25) 到年底，汽车【真的】通到各个乡镇和大部分村子了。
> (26) 那么，你【真的】原谅我了？

In example (23), the adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to confirm the truthfulness of the event "caught a fox this time (这回抓到狐狸)". In example (24), the adverb "zhende

(真的)" is used to confirm the truthfulness of the event "not serving as the mayor of Shanghai (不当上海市长)". In example (25), the adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to confirm the truthfulness of the event "cars go to all towns and most villages (汽车通到各个乡镇和大部分村子)". In example (26), the adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to confirm the truthfulness of the event "you forgive me (你原谅我)".

When used with this pragmatic function, the adverb "zhende (真的)" and the adverb "zhen (真)" can be interchanged, the meaning does not change. Example (23) "【真的】抓到狐狸了" can be changed to "【真】抓到狐狸了". Example (24) "【真的】不当上海市长了" can be changed to "【真】不当上海市长了". Example (25) "【真的】通到各个乡镇和大部分村子了" can be changed to "【真】通到各个乡镇和大部分村子了". Example (26) "【真的】原谅我了" can be changed to "【真】原谅我了".

3.3.2. The subjective evaluation function of the Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)"

The Chinese adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to give a subjective evaluation of a person or a thing. In Modern Chinese Research Corpus System, there are 2 use cases of the adverb "zhende (真的)" with this function, accounting for 2.6% of all use cases with the adverb "zhende (真的)". For example:

(27) 【真的】很快，青春还没怎么过，青春就过去了。

(28) 一开始，你【真的】很难进入角色。

In example (27), the adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the time. In example (28), the adverb "zhende (真的)" is used to express the speaker's subjective evaluation of the listener.

The adverb "zhende (真的)" in the above two examples cannot be changed to the adverb "zhen (真)". This is because the degree adverb "hen (很)" is used in both examples, and the adverb "zhen (真)" cannot appear together with the degree adverb "hen (很)". This is also the main difference between the adverb "zhen (真)" and the adverb "zhende (真的)" when used in subjective evaluation.

4. Conclusion

From the above analysis of the pragmatic functions of Chinese adverbs "zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)", we can see that these adverbs have similarities and differences. Their similarities and differences are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

The similarities and differences between Chinese adverbs "zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)"

No.	Pragmatic function	Zhen (真)	Zhenshi (真是)	Zhende (真的)
1	Confirmation of authenticity	✓		✓
2	Subjective evaluation	✓	✓	✓
3	High degree of authenticity	✓		✓
4	Hypothesis	✓		✓

Note: ✓ indicates that the adverb has this pragmatic function.

The pragmatic function of the Chinese adverbs "zhen (真)", "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" is the speaker's subjective evaluation of someone or something. The adverb "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" can appear together with the degree adverbs "tai (太)" and "hen (很)", but the adverb "zhen (真)" cannot appear with the degree adverbs.

Both the adverb "zhen (真)" and the adverb "zhende (真的)" have the function of authenticity confirmation. They can be replaced with each other, and the meaning of the sentence remains unchanged after the replacement.

The adverb "zhen (真)" also has a high degree function and a hypothetical function, the adverbs "zhenshi (真是)" and "zhende (真的)" do not have these functions.

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