



Degree Adverb *Zhī* 之 in Modern Chinese

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Abstract

Chinese ZHI (之) is a polysemous word with various functions. It was frequently used as a pronoun, a particle as well as a verb in ancient Chinese. Recently, it is used as a degree adverb. However, such a usage is not listed in dictionaries, and it has not been discussed in any studies on ZHI yet. The author assumed this is a new emerging use of ZHI in colloquial language. The paper studied the degree adverb ZHI, aiming to figure out how the extent meaning of ZHI was derived. The findings and conclusions may provide Chinese learners and teachers with an effective way to learn and teach the polysemous ZHI.

Keywords: collocation, semantic extension, degree adverb, generalization

INTRODUCTION

In Chinese, degree adverbs are most commonly used to express the extent of something. There are numerous degree adverbs in Chinese; *hěn* (很; very), *fēicháng* (非常; very), *jí* (極; very) and *xiāngdāng* (相當; quite) have been traditionally used to express an excessive extent, whereas *chāo* (超; super) and *wúdǐ* (無敵; invincibly) are becoming more prevalent in modern Chinese. The author of this study observed that *zhī* (之) has developed a usage as a degree adverb in modern Chinese. Many of Chinese degree adverbs were generated from lexical words through grammaticalization. This study examined the usage of *zhī* as a degree adverb to determine whether such usage was derived from a lexical word via grammaticalization or from other derivational routes. The synchronic modern Chinese corpus was analyzed to identify possible routes of the derivation.

The Corpus

The corpus used in this study for analysis and inference was collected online, mainly collected from Google search engine. Such usages are not included in the Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Modern Chinese, indicating that they are relatively contemporary and colloquial expressions. The Chinese corpus comprised expressions from mainland Chinese, as well as from Taiwanese Chinese and Hong Kong Putonghua. In addition to collecting the synchronic corpus, this study also observed the use of the

same expression in different eras from a diachronic perspective. The sequential order of the emergence of expressions could therefore be determined for inferring the derivational sequence of *zhī*. In the examples, the mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Putonghua expressions are marked.

Collecting the corpus was challenging. *Zhī* has numerous usages; moreover, the distinction of parts of speech in Chinese is not clear, and the punctuation is not rigorous. Therefore, each example required careful reading and interpretation. Because numerous Chinese verbs and adjectives can also be used as nouns, not all expressions that contained the verbs or adjectives following *zhī* could be collected as examples. In addition, simply entering the character 之 to search for the “*zhi* + ADJ/V” construction that expressed a degree would receive far too many results. To accurately and efficiently collect the required examples, the author attached specific predicates to *zhī* (e.g. *zhī kěwù* 之可惡; extremely hateful) to perform the search. Because Chinese predicates are so numerous, searching them individually was time-consuming. This study focused on a corpus that mostly comprised predicates following *fēicháng zhī* (非常之; extremely) to observe the derivational relationship between the “*fēicháng zhi* + predicate” and “*zhi* + predicate” constructions and to determine their distribution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies of *Zhī*

Zhī does not appear to occupy a crucial status in modern Chinese, and is mostly used to replace *de* (的; of). By comparison, *zhī* conveys an abundance of meanings in ancient Chinese, which contained few frequently used function words. Among these few function words, *zhī* played a prominent role. *Zhī* in ancient Chinese was both a content word and function word. Because of the variety of usages and prevalence of *zhī*, substantial research has been completed on its usages. Shen (2009) noted that in *Mengzi*, *zhī* was used as a verb, conjunction, pronoun, multifunctional word, and particle. Yuan indicated that in *Analects*, *zhī* was employed as a verb, conjunction, pronoun, and particle. Jia (2007) identified the syntactic positions of *zhī* in all its usages in ancient Chinese, reporting that it could be categorized as a neutral word in ancient Chinese; as a content word, it could serve as a pronoun and verb; and as a function word, it could serve as a conjunction, modal particle, particle, and preposition. Moreover, Feng (2012) proposed a derivational process of several meanings of *zhī* based on their connections. According to the *Shuowen Jiezi*¹, the original meanings of *zhī* were “to grow, to breed”. Feng claimed that these meanings were later extended to mean “going from one place to another”. On the basis of this meaning, *zhī* was further extended to serve as a demonstrative pronoun, meaning “this or that”. However, Feng merely noted the usages of *zhī* as a content word and did not elaborate on *zhī* as a function word

¹ *Shuowen Jiezi* explains: “*Zhī* means to grow and resembles a plant that has sprouted, developing strong stems.”

Derivation of Other Degree Adverbs

Regarding the formation of adverbs, Yang (2005) proposed that structural variation serves as the basis for the grammaticalization of content words. Variations in its construction and syntactic position transform a content word, which exerts core functions, to an adverb, which operates modifying functions and undergoes meaning abstraction. Most degree adverbs in Chinese are derived from content words.

Wang (2003) investigated the origin of the degree adverb *hěn* (很; very). *Hěn* was originally an adjective meaning “disobedient,” and was later extended to mean “vicious and grumpy”. Regarding the syntactic position, *hěn* was initially used in collocation with other synonymous or similar adjectives to serve as predicates, in which both adjectives had equal status. Examples of this include *hěnlì* (很戾; vicious and grumpy) and *hěnnào* (很傲; vicious and proud). Eventually, the status of the two adjectives became imbalanced. In the “*hěn* + adjective” construction, the other adjective became the head, whereas *hěn* became a modifier. Liu (2008) studied the grammaticalization of the degree adverb *guài* (怪; quite), indicating that the usage of *guài* as a degree adverb was derived from its usage as an adjective that meant “unusual.” In addition, when *guài* serves as a verb, the variation of its construction triggered grammaticalization.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Reanalysis

Reanalysis is a mechanism of linguistic change, and it is commonly adopted to explain the syntactic changes that take place in language history. According to Langacker (1977), reanalysis is “change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation”. Hendrik (2009) stated that reanalysis takes place on the syntagmatic level of language and causes a single surface sequence of linguistic elements to receive a new syntactic and semantic interpretation. Reanalysis is usually an alternative when a surface sequence appears to be ambiguous. There would be a split between an old representation and a new one for the same surface sequence, and the newly established representation may manifest itself in new surface sequences irreconcilable with the old analysis. Hendrik highlights two central characteristics of reanalysis: it takes place abruptly, consisting in a leap from one discrete syntactic category to another, and (from a language-internal perspective) it has the potential of introducing a genuine novelty in grammatical structure.

Collocation

Word collocations substantially affect semantic changes. Liu (2000) explained this process as being a causal relationship: Word collocations emerge in actual linguistic contexts on the basis of semantic connections, which was later normalized as specific word collocations. As the scope of application of such collocations expands, distinguishing features are formed. Basically, compound words and specific

constructions are likely to be produced from specific word collocations. In addition, Wang (2001) proposed a two-way theory between meanings and collocations from the perspective of cognitive linguistics: collocations are determined by word meanings; moreover, word meanings can also be determined by collocations. Wang claimed that word meaning is necessarily a reflection of the objective external world, because people use language to express their observations of the external world. Word meaning is determined by the objective external world, and collocation is based on the meaning. For example, the collocation *a wonderful idea, a strange idea, a good idea, a bad idea* all satisfy the conventions of English, because it complies with the rules of human cognition. However, the collocation *a green idea, an angular idea* and *a sweet idea* violate semantic rules, and no linguistic context that supports this collocation can be identified, because such a collocation is illogical.

Meanings determine collocations, but the relationship also works vice versa. Firth (1957, p. 196)² noted that the optimal method to analyze the meanings and usages of a polysemous word is to examine its collocations. Meaning in collocation refers to the associations a word acquires by being part of commonly applied collocations in specific linguistic contexts, and is typically derived from the influence of other words in these collocations. That is, collocations can affect or even determine the meaning of a word. For example, the Chinese word *dǎ* (打) has more than 20 meanings. Its meaning can only be determined by the collocations that include the word. The meanings of *dǎ* in the following phrases are different.

dǎmáo yī 打毛衣 “to knit a sweater”

dǎjiǔ 打酒 “to buy wine”

dǎzár 打雜兒 “to do menial jobs”

dǎsuǐ 打水 “to get water”

dǎqiāng 打槍 “to fire a gun”

dǎquán 打拳 “to practice boxing”

The English word *heavy* is also a polyseme, and its correct meaning can be determined only when it is used in collocation with other words: *a heavy blow* (“powerful”) ; *a heavy crop* (“abundant”) ; *heavy traffic* (“crowded”) ; *heavy applause* (“warm”) ; *a heavy heart* (“gloomy”) ; a heavy vote (“large quantity”).

Not only do meanings determine collocations, but collocations also determine and create meanings. Two words that are commonly used in collocation tend to share a combined meaning. In the process of grammaticalization, words generally undergo meaning changes. When a word forms a collocation with other words in a specific linguistic context, a new meaning is often derived from this construction.

² The original sentence is : “You shall know a word by the company it keeps”.

Generalization

Generalization may happen after a construction is formed. Generalization refers to modifying or supplementing the definitions of things to expand their scope of application. At the beginning, a construction was originally comprised of specific words; however, more words, even words from a different part of speech, entered this construction over time. Although word collocation and construction are not identical, they are related. When certain words are often used in collocation, this collocation becomes permanent and forms a construction. When this construction is employed frequently, generalization of this construction can occur to include other words. Take Chinese “ADJ/V+sī” construction as an example. Liu (2013) mentioned that the excessive complement sī originally collocated with only psychological predicates but later extended to all the predicate types including action verbs.

DISCUSSION

The original meaning of *zhī* at its creation was “stepping on the ground and advancing forward on foot”³. In the following section, the author presents and arranges usages of *zhī* in accordance with the *Hanyu Da Zidian*, *Hanyu Da Cidian*, *Mandarin Dictionary* edited by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education and previous studies.

Preposition

(1) of

夫子 之 文章。⁴

fūzǐ zhī wénzhāng

pedant ZHI article “The articles of Confucius.”— from *Analects*

(2) among

比 之 匪 人， 不 亦 傷 乎？

bǐ zhī fěi rén, bù yì shāng hū

stay ZHI unvirtuous people not also harm PAR

³ The original sentence is *Zúlǚ píngdì, túbù qiánwǎng* (足履平地，徒步前往).

⁴ In the paper, the Chinese data is shown in the following manner.

可惡 之極

kěwù zhī jí

hateful ZHIJI

“Extremely hateful”

The Chinese characters are at the first line; the second line displays *pinyin*; the third line presents English translations. The complete meaning is enclosed with “ ”. Some abbreviations are used to indicate function words: GN (genitive), PAR (particle), CL (classifier) and PASS (passive).

⁴ X refers to predicates, usually verbs or adjectives.

“Is staying among unvirtuous people not a danger to oneself?” – from *Book of Changes*

(3) into

決 汝、漢，排 淮、泗而 注 之 江。

jué rǔ hàn pái huái sì ér zhù zhī jiāng.

dredge Ru Han dredge Huai Si and divert ZHI river

“Yu dredged the Ru, Han, Huai, and Si Rivers, diverting the water into the Yangtze River.”—from *Mengzi*

Conjunction

(4) and

樂 之 弗 樂 者， 心 也。

lè zhī fú lè zhě xīn yě

pleasure ZHI no pleasure person mind

“The mind determines the pleasure and displeasure of a person.”-- *Annals of Lu Buwei*

(5) but

臣 恐 王 為 臣 之 投 杼 也。

chén kǒng wáng wèi chén zhī tóu zhù yě

I afraid monarch for I ZHI throw weaving shuttle

“I am afraid Your Royal Highness may have doubt about me.” -- *Zhanguo Ce* (Strategies of the Warring States)

(6) if

邦 之 臧， 惟 汝 眾， 邦 之

bāng hī zāng wéi rǔ zhòng bāng zhī

nation ZHI prosperous by you great nation ZHI

不 臧 惟 予 一 人 有 佚 罰。

bù zāng wéi yǔ yīrén yǒu yì fá

no prosperous by I alone with fault retribution

“If the nation prospers, then it should be attributed to the efforts of all of you; if the nation does not prosper, then I am the only one to be punished.”-- *Book of Documents*

(7) then

故 民 無 常 處， 見 利 之 聚， 無 之 去。

gù mín wú cháng chù jiàn lì zhī jù wú zhī qù

so people without stable place undergo profit ZHI gather without ZHI leave

“Consequently, people do not stay permanently in one place. When they see potential profits, then they congregate. When the potential profits are consumed, then they dismiss.” -- *Annals of Lu Buwei*

Particle

(8) a modal function without meaning

悵 悵 久 之。

chàng hèn jiǔ zhī

frustrate regret long PAR

“Chenshe has long been melancholy.” -- *Shǐjì* (Records of the Grand Historian)

(9) equivalent of *de* (的)

近 塞 上 之 人， 死 者 十 九。

jìn sài shàng zhī rén sǐ zhě shí jiǔ

near fort above ZHI person dead person nine ten

“Among people who were in the vicinity of the fortress, nine out of ten were dead.”

-- *Grandpa Sai lost his horse*

(10) indicator of the preposed object

宋 何 罪 之 有？

sòng hé zuì zhī yǒu

Song what sin ZHI have “What crime does the Song Nation have?” – *Gongshu*

(11) used between the subject and predicate, which functions to cancel the independence of the sentence

無 絲 竹 之 亂 耳。

wú sī zhú zhī luàn ěr

no music instrument ZHI disturb hearing

“No disturbing noisy music is heard.” -- *An Epigraph in Praise of My Humble Home*

(12) indicator of the postposed noun modifier

凌 萬 頃 之 茫 然

líng wàn qǐng zhī mángrán

transit ten thousand acre ZHI wide

“Rowing a small boat on the river that is tens of thousands of acres wide.”

-- *Ode to the Red Cliff*

(13) indicator of a complement, equivalent to *de* (得)

古 人 之 觀 于 天 地、 山 川、 草木、 鳥獸，

gǔ rén zhī guān yú tiān dì shān chuān cǎomù niǎoshòu

ancient person ZHI observe at sky earth mountain river flora fauna

往往 有 得， 以 其 求 思 之 深 而 無 不 在 也。

wǎngwǎng yǒu dé yǐ qí qiú sī zhī shēn ér wú bù zài yě

often have profit because they explore think ZHI deeply but not there

“Ancient people’s observations of the sky, earth, mountains, rivers, flora, and fauna were often fruitful, because they contemplated deeply on everything.” -- *Travel Note to the Baochan Mountain*

Pronoun

(14) he, him, that

愛 之 欲 其 生。

ài zhī yù qí shēng

love ZHI want she/he alive

“When a person likes someone, he wishes him/her to live.” -- *Analects*

(15) his or hers

紂 王 令 推 上 法 場， 斬 之 老 母。

zhòu wáng lìng tuī shàng fǎ chǎng zhǎn zhī lǎomǔ

Zhou king demand usher to executed place kill ZHI mom

“King Zhou demands to usher his elderly mother to the execution place and kill her.”

-- *Play of King Wu's Crusade against King Zhou*

(16) this

乃 如 之 人 兮， 逝 不 古 處。

nǎi rú zhī rén xī shì bù gǔ chù

like ZHI person disappear no usual place

"Unlike the sun and the moon, the parents passed away and no longer appeared in the house." -- *Book of Songs*

(17) I

君 將 哀 而 生 之 乎？

jūn jiāng āi ér shēng zhī hū

you will pity alive ZHI PAR

"You must have pitied me and wish[ed] me to live." -- *Tale of a Snake Catcher*

Verb

(18) to go

百 爾 所 思， 不 如 我 所 之。

bǎi ěr suǒ sī bù rú wǒ suǒ zhī

hundred you suggest not as good as I ZHI

"The hundred plans you think of are not equal to the course I go." -- *Book of Songs*

(19) to arrive

此 自 少 之 多， 自 微 至 著 也。

cǐ zì shǎo zhì duō zhì wēi zhì zhù yě

this from less ZHI many from small to significant

"This develops from few to many, and from small to significant." -- *Miscellaneous Notes of the West Capital*

(20) be

吾 見 子 之 君 子 也， 是 以 告 情 於 子 也。

wú jiàn zǐ zhī jūnzǐ yě shì yǐ gào qíng yú zǐ yě

I see you ZHI gentry thus tell truth to you

"I find that you are a person of noble character, so I will tell you the truth."

-- Mr. Gongyang's Annals

(21) use

故物 舍 其所長， 之其所短， 堯 亦 有 所 不 及 矣。

gù wù shě qí suǒcháng zhī qí suǒduǎn yáo yì yǒu suǒ bù jí yǐ

so thing dismiss his advantage use his disadvantage also have shortcoming

"Therefore, if a leader dismisses a subordinate's advantages, and use this person's disadvantages, then even the saint Yao can exhibit shortcomings." -- *Zhanguo Ce* (Strategies of the Warring States)

The *Mandarin Dictionary* edited by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education only includes one usage of *zhī* as a particle, namely "to emphasize or supplement the tone". The *Hanyu Da Cidian* lists numerous particle usages, but it does not include the usage for emphasis. The variety of particle usages shows the importance of *zhī* in Chinese syntax. However, emphasizing and supplementing the tone is also a key function of *zhī*. Jia (2007) noted that when used as a particle, *zhī* can be placed after an adverb of time to indicate the continuation of time. In addition, *zhī* can also follow an adverb and precede a predicate or subject to emphasize and extend the tone. Emphasis can be achieved through all of these functions.

***Zhī* in Modern Chinese**

In modern Chinese, *zhī* can serve as a degree adverb.

(22) 這 還 是 我 人 生 頭 一 次 進 入 KFC， 速 食 店 文 化 是

zhè hái shì wǒ rénshēng tóuyīcì jìnrù sù shí diàn wénhuà shì

this also be my life first time enter fast food store culture be

被 我們 所 不齒 的， 尤 其 是 我 在 動 畫 公 司 的 老 闆 的 指 導

bèi wǒmen suǒ bùchǐ de yóuqí shì wǒ zài dònghuà gōngsī de lǎobǎn de zhǐdǎo

PASS we contempt especially be I at animation company boss instruct

更 覺 得 他 之 可 惡， 之 垃 圾。 (Mainland)

gèng juéde tā zhī kěwù zhī lèsè

more feel he ZHI hateful ZHI garbage

"This is my first time going to KFC. We have contempt for the fast food culture. Since it is in charge of my ex-boss in the animation company, I feel extremely hateful and extremely rubbish."

- (23) 印度法規 之 囉唆，不是 台 商 可以玩得。

yìndù fǎguī zhī luōsuō bùshì tái shāng kěyǐ wán dé

India rule ZHI talkative not Taiwan merchant can play

“The laws and regulations of India are very verbose. Taiwanese merchants cannot play with them.”

- (24) 《鬼入鏡》之 討厭 啦~ 半夜 不要 亂 拍

guǐ rù jìng zhī tǎoyàn la bàn yè bù yào luàn pāi

ZHI hateful PAR midnight not carelessly shoot

“Paranormal Activity 2 is very hateful! Don’t shoot carelessly at midnight.”

- (25) ...又 或者 是一套 南非 開普敦 的 觀光 片，

yòu huòzhě shì yī tào nánfēi kāipǔdūn de guānguāng piàn

or maybe be a set South Africa Cape Town sightseeing film

其 故事 之 單薄， 劇情 之 冗長， 對白 之 無聊，

qí gùshì zhī dānbó jùqíng zhī rǒngcháng duìbái zhī wúliáo

its story ZHI underdevelop plot ZHI long dialogue ZHI boring

“... or maybe watching a set of sightseeing films on Cape Town, South Africa. The story was very underdeveloped, the plot was very long, and the dialogues were very boring.”

- (26) 我們 母 女 倆 就 吵 了 起來，吵架 內容 之 幼稚，

wǒmen mǔ nǚ liǎ jiù chǎo le qǐlái chǎojià nèiróng zhī yòuzhì

we mother daughter two then quarrel PAR quarrel content ZHI childish

對話 之 無聊...

duìhuà zhī wúliáo

conversation ZHI boring

“Eventually, we (mother and her daughter) had a fight. The content of the fight was extremely immature, and the conversations were very boring.”

- (27) 想到 當時 我們 因為 害怕 顧 左右 而言 他 之 白癡

xiǎngdào dāngshí wǒmen yīnwèi hàipà gù zuǒyòu ér yán tā zhī báichī

recall then we because afraid look left right and say other ZHI idiot

對話 好 好笑

duìhuà hǎo hǎoxiào

conversation very funny

“Recalling the time when we tried to evade the topic because of dread, the extremely silly conversation was very funny.”

(28) 最近 收到 了 些 禮物，之 開心 的，趕緊 來 炫耀 一下。

zuìjìn shōudào le xiē lǐwù zhī kāixīn de gǎnjǐn lái xuànyào yīxià

recently receive PAR some gift ZHI happy hurry come show off a bit

“I received a few presents recently. I am very happy that I wanted to show them off immediately.”

(29) 旁白 用的 詞 之 多、之 煩、之 囉唆，很 中國。

pángbái yòng de cí zhī duō zhī fán zhī luōsuō hěn zhōngguó

aside use word ZHI many ZHI boring ZHI talkative very China

“The aside contains very many words, very boring and wordy, completely with a Chinese style.”

As an explanation for why *zhī* has an extent meaning and can serve as a degree adverb, this study proposed that the usage might have been derived either from the word *zhī* itself or from the influence of external factors. To determine the optimal answer, these two possibilities are examined in the following section.

Derivation from Zhī

Zhī was not employed as a degree adverb in ancient Chinese. If the degree adverb *zhī* is derived through grammaticalization, then it is likely that the verb use of *zhī* initiated the generation of the extent meaning. When *zhī* was used as a verb, it meant “to go to” or “arrive at,” showing a close connection with degree. Liu (2007) claimed that in the Hokkien dialect, words that express “to arrive at” can also express extent. The final particle *ka* in Southern Min was derived from the verb *kao* through vowel weakening and change of the part of speech. Originally, *kao* was followed by words that meant “extreme or vertex.” The result of reaching a vertex could be applied to enhance the extent. *Kao* became *ka* through vowel weakening in a continuous speech, and then the resultative complement that followed the term was subsequently removed. The extent meaning of *zhī* was likely produced through the same process. In Chinese, a predicate tagged with *zhījí* (之極) means “reaching the extreme.”

(30) 可惡 之極

kěwù zhī jí

hateful ZHIJI “Extremely hateful”

- (31) 深圳 的 外來 超 生 戶 著實 可惡 之極 和

shēnzhèn de wàilái chāo shēng hù zhuóshí kěwù zhī jí hé

foreign exceed bear family really hateful ZHIJI and

缺德 之極！ (Mainland)

quēdé zhījī

unvirtuous ZHIJI

“The families that came from Shenzhen and violated the one-child policy are extremely hateful and extremely unvirtuous.”

- (32) 自大 之極， 就是「自閉」.

zìdà zhī jí jiùshì zì bì

arrogant ZHIJI be autistic

“Extremely Arrogant equals to extremely autistic.”

However, because *zhī* as a degree adverb appears in front of a predicate, the author had to obtain examples where *zhī jí* precedes the predicate. From the corpus, only examples with the construction “*zhī jí* + ADJ/V” were identified.

- (33) 戰爭 代價 極 之 沉重

zhànzhēng dàijià jí zhī chénzhòng

war cost very ZHI high

“The cost of war is extremely high.”

- (34) 在荷蘭 當 街 打架是 極 之 少見

zài hélán dāng jiē dǎjià shì jí zhī shǎojiàn

in Holland on street fight be very ZHI uncommon

“It is very uncommon to fight on street in Holland.”

The degree adverb *zhī* was not derived from *jí zhī*. First, no reasonable explanation can be provided for why *zhī jí*, which follows the predicate, was abruptly transformed to *jí zhī* when it was placed in front of the predicate. Moreover, the internal structure of *jí zhī*, located in front of the predicate, is different from that of *zhī jí*. The *zhī* in *jí zhī* is a modal particle, whereas that in *zhī jí* is a preposition. Therefore, the possibility that the

degree verb usage of *zhī* was extended from the sememe “to go to or arrive at” is quite low.

Influence of Syntactic Position

Shih (2006) indicated that there are two factors for a word to develop into a specific syntactic category: an appropriate semantic basis and adequate syntactic environment. Accordingly, whether the usage of *zhī* as a degree adverb was derived from an adequate syntactic environment and specifically, if the derivation of the usage was influenced by its adjacent words, was investigated. An examination of the corpus revealed that *zhī* can appear after *fēicháng*(非常; very.)

- (35) 因為 這 種 客人 通常 會 很 鳥毛

yīnwèi zhè zhǒng kèrén tōngcháng huì hěn niǎomáo

because this kind guest usually will very torike

非常 之 囉唆 ...

fēicháng zhī luōsuō

very ZHI talkative

“Because this type of customer is generally very picky and extremely talkative.”

- (36) 有個 非常 之 簡單 的 問卷~ 萬分 感激:)

yǒu gè fēicháng zhī jiǎndānde wènjuàn wànfēn gǎnjī

have a very ZHI simple survey very thank

“Here is a very simple survey. Thank you very much.”

- (37) 還是 感到 非常 之 噁心。

háishì gǎndào fēicháng zhī ǎxīn

still feel very ZHI disgusting

“I still feel extremely gross.”

- (38) 日本 以 臺 制 華 是 非常 之 愚蠢 的

rìběn yǐ tái zhì huá shì fēicháng zhī yúchǔn de

Japan use Taiwan contain China be very ZHI stupid

“The Japanese strategy to use Taiwan to contain the counterattacks of China is extremely foolish.”

- (39) 非常 之 惡劣態度 加 粗魯 動作 行為

fēicháng zhī èliè tàidù jiā cūlǚ dòngzuò xíngwéi

very ZHI bad attitude plus rude action behavior

買他東西 還被罵 還要看他臉色!?

mài tā dōngxī hái bèi mà háiyào kàn tā liǎnsè

buy his thing also PASS scold also see his disposal

“He has an extremely bad attitude and rude behavior. Buying things from him, you will be scolded and at his disposal.”

(40) 維修 難度 非常 之 高, Microsoft Surface Pro 3

wéixiū nándù fēicháng zhī gāo

repair difficulty very ZHI high

平板電腦 分解 完成

píngbǎndiànnǎo fēnjiě wánchéng

tablet disassemble complete

“This repair difficulty is extremely high. The disassembly of Microsoft Surface Pro is completed.”

In Cantonese, *fēi seùhng jī* (非常之) equals to *fēiseùhng* (非常), and the phrase can appear at the end of a sentence, such as *Hóu sāi leih a, júng jī go baatgó jí haih fēi seùhng fēi seùhng jī* (好犀利啊, 总之个八啲只系非常非常之; Very very excellent!) In addition, it could be followed by a predicate, for example, *Gám líh bīn ge fuhk mouh nē, yauh fēi seùhng jī hóu a* (噉里边嘅服务呢, 又非常之好啊; The service inside is very good.) Since there are similarities among dialects, this linguistic phenomenon in Cantonese is worth considering. In online discussions of *fēicháng zhī* in modern Chinese, several web users claim that usages such as *fēicháng zhī hǎo* (非常之好; extremely good) and *fēicháng zhī duō* (非常之多; extremely numerous) are incorrect despite their wide application, because no dictionary states that *zhī* can be modified by *fēicháng*. However, usages listed in dictionaries are not updated fast enough to keep pace with the rapid changes of a language. Expressions that are not included in dictionaries are not necessarily wrong. Instead, they indicate changes in a language. Even if the usages are technically wrong, they produce changes to the language and facilitate generating new usages.

Most web users regard *fēicháng zhī* as a substitute for *fēicháng de* (非常地). However, *zhī* cannot be replaced by *de* (地); it can only be used interchangeably with *de* (非常的). Furthermore, *fēicháng de* (的) modifies nouns rather than adjectives, and in doing so does not have a degree meaning. Consequently, the author determined that the *zhī* in *fēicháng zhī* requires further investigation. In *Laozi*, *fēicháng* appears before a noun, as

in *Dào kě dào fēicháng dào, míng kě míng fēicháng míng* (道可道, 非常道; 名可名, 非常名; The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way. The names that can be named are not the unvarying names.) The usage of *fēicháng* discussed here is not equivalent to that in the example from *Laozi*. All sentences examined in this study that include a construction of *fēicháng* have it followed by an adjective or adverb. Although some Chinese adjectives can also be used as nouns, distinction regarding their role in speech can still be made according to their syntactic positions.

When the search scope was enlarged, data in the corpus showed that besides *fēicháng*, other degree adverbs can also be followed by *zhī*.

jízhī極之

- (41) 被 一個 極 之 囉唆 的 人 纏, 煩惱 不 已

bèi yíge jí zhī luōsuō de rén chán fánnao bù yǐ

PASS one very ZHI talkative person bug worry no end

"I fretted about being bugged by an extremely talkative person."

- (42) 非常 極 之 高興 認識 靚女 路邊攤! (HongKong)

fēicháng jí zhī gāoxìng rènshì jìngnǚ lùbiāntān

very very ZHI happy know beautiful girl booth

"I'm extremely happy to know beautiful girls at a roadside booth."

yǒugòuzhī有夠之

- (43) 最近 過 的 有夠 之 好

zuìjìn guò de yǒugòu zhī hǎo

recently live very ZHI good

"I have had an extremely good life recently."

- (44) 近來, 天氣 真的 是有夠 之 冷 的

jìnlái tiānqì zhēnde shì yǒugòu zhī lěng de

recently weather really be very ZHI cold

"It's really very cold recently."

- (45) 那 天 他 穿的 有夠 之 隨便, 破破爛爛 的 T恤+

nà tiān tā chuānde yǒugòu zhī suíbiàn pòpò lànlan de T xù

that day he wear very ZHI informal shabby T-shirt

夾腳拖 就來了。

jiájiǎotuō jiù lái le

flip-flops come PAR

“He dressed extremely informally on that day, arriving at the venue in a tattered T-shirt and flip-flops.”

(46) 真是 臉皮 有夠 之 厚 的。

zhēnshì liǎnpí yǒugòu zhī hòu de

really skin very ZHI thick

“(He/She) is really very brazen.”

xiāngdāngzhī相當之

(47) Samsung Galaxy S 4 簡單 動手 拆， 相當 之 好 修 呢

jiǎndān dòngshǒu chāi xiāngdāng zhī hǎo xiū ne

simple work disassemble quite ZHI easy fix PAR

“The Samsung Galaxy can be disassembled easily. It is very simple to be fixed.”

(48) 看到 廁所 裡 有人 求婚， 場景 相當 之 感人！（Mainland）

kàn dào cèsuǒ lǐ yǒurén qiúhūn chǎngjǐng xiāngdāng zhī gǎnrén

see toilet in someone propose scene quite ZHI touching

“I saw a guy proposing to his girlfriend in the toilet. The scene was extremely touching.”

(49) 陳地瓜 本人 相當 之 帥氣 瀟灑

chéndìguā běnrén xiāngdāng zhī shuàiqì xiāosǎ

himself quite ZHI handsome charming

“Chen Digua himself is quite handsome and charming.”

shífēnzhī十分之

(50) 父母 十分 之 囉唆， 說話 沒完 沒了

fùmǔ shífēn zhī luōsuo shuōhuà méiwán méiliǎo

parent very ZHI talkative talk no end no end

“The parents were extremely talkative. They could talk on and on.”

- (51) 這一些 實驗 看起來 十分 簡單， 可是，做起 是 十分 之 難 的

zhèyīxiē shíyàn kàn qǐlái shífēn jiǎndān kěshì zuò qǐ shì shífēn zhī nán de

these experiment look very simple but do be very ZHI difficult

“These experiments may seem easy, but they are extremely difficult to be conducted.”

gèngjiāzhī更加之

- (52) 集合 大家的 智慧， 讓 社會 更加 之 和諧。(Mainland)

jíhé dàjiāde zhìhuì ràng shèhuì gèngjiā zhī héxié

gather everyone's wisdom let society more ZHI harmonious

“Let us gather ideas from everyone to render the society more harmonious.”

- (53) 在 銅鑼灣， 找 日 食 比 找 茶 餐廳

zài tóngluówān zhǎo rì shí bǐ zhǎo chá cāntīng

at Causeway Bay find Japanese food compare find tea restaurant

更加 之 容易 (Hongkong)

gèngjiā zhī róngyì

more ZHI easy

“It is much easier to find a Japanese restaurant than a Hong Kong Style Café at Causeway Bay.”

- (54) 我們的 時代 更加 之 自由了，而我們 擁有 的 快樂時光

wǒmende shídài gèngjiā zhī zìyóu le ér wǒmen yǒngyǒu de kuàilè shíguāng

our era more ZHI free PAR and we own happy time

卻 越 來 越 少 了

què yuè lái yuè shǎo le

but more less PAR

“Although we are freer in this era, we have less and less happiness.”

rúcǐzhī如此之

- (55) 生命 如此之輕！看 了 這 六 分 二 秒 的 影片 後

shēngmìng rúcǐ zhī qīng kàn le zhè liù fēn èr miǎo de yǐngpiàn hòu

life so ZHI light watch PAR this six minute two second film after

你 心情 感覺 如何？

nǐ xīnqíng gǎnjué rúhé?

you mood feel how

“Life is so light! How do you feel after the film lasting 6 minutes and 2 seconds?”

(56) 酒店 位置 如此之 棒, 是一家 超過 2 星級 的 酒店

jiǔdiàn wèizhì rúcǐ zhī bàng shì yījiā chāoguò xīngjí de jiǔdiàn

hotel location so ZHI great be a exceed star hotel

“The location of the hotel is so great! This hotel is awarded more than two stars.”

tèbiézhī特別之

(57) 我的 心情 不 僅僅 是 高興, 而且 是 特別 之 高興。 (Mainland)

wǒde xīnqíng bù jǐnjǐn shì gāoxìng érqiě shì tèbié zhī gāoxìng

my mood not merely be happy and be especially ZHI happy

“I’m not merely happy, but especially happy.”

(58) 因為 這一隻 特別 之 可愛, 所以 跟 牠 照...

yīnwèi zhè yīzhī tèbié zhī kěài suǒyǐ kēn tā zhào

because this one expecially ZHI cute so with it photo

“Since this one is especially cute, I took a photo with it.”

(59) 由於 這位 中國人 剛 下 飛機 特別 之 口渴,

yóuyú zhèwèi zhōngguórén gāng xià fēijī tèbié zhī kǒukě

because this Chinese just get off plane especially ZHI thirsty

所以就 拿起碗 就 咕嚕咕嚕 地 喝 了 下去... (Mainland)

suǒyǐ jiù ná qǐ wǎn jiù gūlǔ gūlǔ de hē le xiàqù

so then take up bowl and drink PAR down

“Because this Chinese person just got off a plane, he was especially thirsty. He took the bowl and drank the soup empty.”

wúdízhi無敵之

- (60) 好玩 啦 但 超級 無敵 之 恐怖~~~

hǎowán la dàn chāojí wúdí zhī kǒngbù

funny PAR but super invincibly ZHI terrible

"It's funny, but extremely terrible."

- (61) 真是 無敵 之 可愛的！真是 可愛 到 不 知道 怎麼 說.

zhēnshì wúdí zhī kěài de zhēnshì kěài dào bù zhīdào zěnmē shuō

really invincibly ZHI cute really cute to not know how to say

"This is extremely cute, so cute that it is indescribable!"

chāojízhī超級之

- (62) 超級之 無聊 有 沒 有 什麼 好聽 的手機 鈴聲 啊，

chāojí zhī wúliáo yǒu méi yǒu shéme hǎo tīng de shǒujī língshēng a

super ZHI bored have not have what good listen cellphone ringtone PAR

介紹 幾個 (Mainland)

jièshào jǐge

introduce some

"I feel super bored. Can you introduce a few nice cellphone ringtones?"

- (63) 拿到 的 心情 非常 非常 好 啊!!! 等 了

nádào de xīnqíng fēicháng fēicháng hǎo a děng le

take mood very very good PAR wait PAR

超級 之 久TAT.

chāojí zhī jiǔ

super ZHI long

"I am extremely excited to receive good news. I've waited for very long."

yìchángzhī異常之

- (64) 雖然 他的 解釋 也 真是 異常 之 囉唆

suīrán tāde jiěshì yě zhēnshì yìcháng zhī luōsuō

although his explanation too really abnormal ZHI wordy

“...although his explanation is also really extremely wordy...”

(65) 不 到 兩 個 小 時 我 們 就 走 了 近 一 半 ,

bù dào liǎngge xiǎoshí wǒmen jiù zǒu le jìn yībàn

not to two hour we already walk PAR nearly half

覺得 異常 之 無聊 , 打道 回 府 ...

juéde yìcháng zhī wúliáo dǎdào huí fǔ (Mainland)

feel abnormal ZHI bored go back home

“We walked through nearly half of the venue in less than two hours and felt very bored, so we went home...”

wànfēnzhī 萬分之

(66) 雖 然 無 以 回 報 ~ 但 真 是 萬 分 之 感 謝 !!

suīrán wú yǐ huíbào dàn zhēnshi wànfēn zhī gǎnxiè

although no repay but really very ZHI thank

“Although I cannot repay your favor, I am very grateful.”

(67) 大 家 幫 忙 推 薦 一 下 書 籍 呀 ~ 萬 分 之 感 謝 ! (Mainland)

dàjiā bāngmáng tuījiàn yīxià shūjí ya wànfēn zhī gǎnxiè

everyone help recommend a bit book PAR very ZHI thank

“Please recommend some books. Thank you very much!”

These examples show that *zhī* can be combined with many of the degree adverbs, indicating that such combinations have become a specific construction.

Degree Adverb + zhī + ADJ/V

Zhī is not required in the construction, and when it appears, it serves to emphasize the tone. Therefore, *zhī* does not develop a new structural meaning⁵ in this usage; it just facilitates emphasizing the tone.

The “Deg Adv + *zhī* + ADJ/V” Construction

⁵ Structural meaning refers to a meaning that emerges only in specific constructions. Take Goldberg’s (1995) famous sentence *Pat sneezed the napkin off the table* as an example, the structural meaning “caused motion” is indicated only in the construction [Subj V Obj Obl.] The usage of *zhī* in the construction [degree adverb + *zhī* + ADJ/V] is a pre-existing one; it does not emerge from this construction.

Regarding the construction “degree adverb + *zhī* + ADJ/V,” *zhī* was combined with merely a few specific degree adverbs at first. Gradually, the range of collocation words was expanded to include all degree adverbs. The corpus data showed that the combinations of *zhī* with *fēicháng* appeared relatively early. Instances of *fēicháng zhī* followed by predicates can be traced back to the Ching dynasty. Most instances of *fēicháng zhī* by then were followed by nouns. When compared with current examples, fewer instances of *fēicháng zhī* in the early years were followed by adjectives.

(68) 賈母對她的評價可說是非常之高

jiǎmǔ duì tā de píngjià kě shuō shì fēicháng zhī gāo

mother to she value can say be very ZHI high

“Baoyu’s grandmother has a very high opinion of Skybright.” – *Dream of Red Chamber*

(69) ... 各位 邀請 我 參加 這個 盛大 宴會

gèwèi yāoqǐng wǒ cānjiā zhège shèngdà yànhuì

everyone invite I join this big banquet

見到 各位 宗兄 宗嫂， 心情 非常之 愉快 1972

jiàn dào gèwèi zōng xiōng zōng sǎo xīnqíng fēicháng zhī yúkuài

see every brother sister-in-law mood very ZHI delighted

“I am honored to be invited to this banquet. Seeing all of you from the extended family makes me very delighted.”

(70) 但 真實 生活 中， 我 對小三 嗤之以鼻，

dàn zhēnshí shēnghuó zhōng wǒ duì xiǎosān chīzhīyǐbí

but real life in I to homewrecker contemptuous

非常 之 厭惡 和巴不得 殺 之 而 後 快。 1978 (Mainland)

fēicháng zhī yànwù hé bābudé shā zhī ér hòu kuài

very ZHI annoy and can’t wait kill he/she and after happy

“However, in real life I am contemptuous to home wreckers. I am very annoyed by them, even wishing to have them killed.”

To observe the generalization of the construction from a diachronic perspective, the author searched the year of combination of each degree adverb with “*zhī* + ADJ/V.” The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.6 Earliest discovered examples of combinations of specific degree adverbs with “zhī + ADJ/V”⁷

Degree ADV +zhī	Earliest Appearance	Example
fēichángzhī 非常之	Ching Dynasty	賈母對她的評價可說是 <u>非常之高</u> “Baoyu’s grandmother has a <u>very high</u> opinion of Skybright.”
rúcǐzhī 如此之	1970	e租寶發展如此之快在於積極推動“互聯網+融資租賃”模式(即A2P模式) (Mainland) “The <u>extremely fast</u> development of e-renting is due to the active promotion of A2P Model.”
shífēnzhī 十分之	1976	這封信，使意共 <u>十分之尷尬</u> “This letter is a <u>total embarrassment</u> to Italian Communist.”
jízhī 極之	1976	蓋萊克的官僚政權對十三名參加六月廿五日的工人，判以 <u>極之嚴重</u> 的監禁。 “Gierek bureaucratic regime gave 13 workers who participated the activity on June 25 <u>extremely severe</u> imprisonment.”
yìchángzhī 異常之	1980	obrcimoff 測定雲母解理面的表面能 <u>異常之高</u> “Obrcimoff determines that the surface energy of MICA cleavage plane is <u>extremely high</u> .”
xiāngdāngzhī 相當之	1986	...改造它的難度極大,而且投資又 <u>相當之大</u> (Mainland) “... the evolution on it is extremely difficult, and it requires a <u>quite large investment</u> ”
gèngjiāzhī 更加之	2001	這六位夥伴有的會隨著故事發展而犧牲生命,使二代的故事顯得可歌可泣 <u>更加之精彩</u> “The six partners will sacrifice their lives as the story goes on, making the second series both happy and tragic and <u>more exciting</u> .”
wànfēnzhī 萬分之	2002	急!!!!!! SLDDRW是什麼檔,用什麼軟體才能打開... <u>萬分之感謝</u> !!!! (Mainland) “Urgent!! What is the SLDDRW file? What software should I use to open it? I am <u>very grateful</u> .”
tèbiézhī 特別之	2004	攤販的生意也 <u>特別之好</u> “The vendors’ business is particularly good.”
chāojízhī 超級之	2005	學校圖書館的資源跟資料 <u>超級之多</u> 。 “There are <u>super many</u> resources and information in school library.”
wúdízhī 無敵之	2006	這個他們公司有自己研發東西,拭銀布... <u>無敵之好用的</u> “The company has invented its own product, silver wipe cloth ... <u>extremely good</u> .”

⁶ Owing to space limitations, only the English translation for the whole sentence is displayed in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

⁷ The history of the Internet begins with the development of electronic computers in the 1950s, so the information appeared before then might not be accessed via Google search engine. As a result, it is possible that the combinations appeared much earlier than the data probed from the Internet. Since the main issue to be proved is the combination of “degree ADV + zhī + ADJ/V” appeared earlier than that of “zhī + ADJ/V”, the accurate time for first appearance is not crucial to the conclusion. Examples without clear appearing time were all excluded.

yǒugòuzhī 有夠之	2008	阿卿有夠之誇張的 “Aqing is <u>extremely exaggerated</u> .”
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The combination of *fēicháng zhī* with a predicate appeared the earliest. What is more, the construction is more popular than those of other degree adverbs. Therefore, it is suggested that the “degree adverb + *zhī* + ADJ/V” construction was initiated with *fēicháng*, and was gradually generalized to include all degree adverbs. Currently, people become accustomed to attaching *zhī* to emerging degree adverbs as a means of emphasis, showing that such a construction has been implanted in people's minds.

The Origin of degree adverb *zhī*之

The degree adverb *zhī* is likely to have been derived from the structure “degree adverb + *zhī* + ADJ/V.” The examples of “degree adverb + *zhī*” appeared earlier than did the instances of *zhī* alone. Regarding meaning, it is reasonable to assume that *zhī* had developed an extent meaning as a result of its long-term combination with degree adverbs.

Degree Adverb + zhī + ADJ/V → zhī + ADJ/V

Examples of *fēicháng zhī* with predicates began appearing by the Ching dynasty. However, *zhī* was not used as a degree adverb until 2002. The author thus inferred that the usage of *zhī* as an adverb emerged later than that of *fēicháng zhī*. Search for the same predicate in the corpus data revealed that “*zhī* + ADJ/V” first appeared in 2002, but only the combination *zhīhǎo* was found.

Table 2. Appearance Time of *fēicháng zhī* + ADJ/V and *zhī* + ADJ/V

<i>fēicháng zhī</i> + ADJ/V	<i>zhī</i> + ADJ/V
<i>fēichángzhī hǎo</i>非常之好 1999 效果 <u>非常之好</u> ，幾個星期下來，皮膚柔嫩了不少。 “ <u>Very good</u> outcome, my skin becomes soft after a couple of weeks.”	<i>zhīhǎo</i>之好 2002 ...我不給藥，一兩次拗不過家人的壓力才給2/3包，效果 <u>之好的</u> “I didn’t feed the baby medicine, but finally gave him two thirds because of the family pressure. The effect is <u>extremely good</u> .”
<i>fēichángzhī piéyí</i>非常之便宜 1998 有些七八千~上萬都~~有~~但是K&N的 <u>非常之便宜</u> “Some cost seven thousand or eight thousand to tens of thousands, but K&N is <u>very cheap</u> .”	<i>zhī piéyí</i>之便宜 2003 ...平常也少用長鏡頭，所以想找 <u>之便宜</u> 的自動對焦鏡... “I seldom use long lenses, so I want to find a <u>very cheap</u> automatic focus one.”
<i>fēichángzhī duō</i>非常之多 1920 舊社會中的各種壞分子，數量當然 <u>非常之多</u> (Mainland) “There were certainly <u>very many</u> bad guys in the old society.”	<i>zhī duō</i>之多 2004 不管，摸了摸之後，晚上到西門町，人 <u>之多的</u> “However, I touched my head and went to Ximending at night. There are <u>extremely many</u> people there.”
<i>fēichángzhī hǎochī</i>非常之好吃 2001 香嫩的口感，加上香甜濃膩的味道， <u>非常之好吃</u> 。 “Fragrant and soft, with sweet and thick greasy taste, it is <u>very delicious</u> .”	<i>zhī hǎochī</i>之好吃 2004 ...便在「阿真的店」跟「怡如小吃」之間選了怡如小姐，沒想到竟沒踩到地雷，晚餐 <u>之好吃的</u> !! “Between A-chen Foodstore and Yiru Snacks, we chose Yiru. Out of expectation, we did not get the

fēichángzhī wēnróu 非常之溫柔2001	worse. The dinner is <u>extremely delicious</u> .”
雖然很搞笑，唱歌也極難聽，但個性 <u>非常之溫柔</u> ，簡單，陽光。	zhī wēnróu 之溫柔2004
“Although I am very funny and very bad at singing, I am <u>very gentle</u> , simple, and with a sunny disposition.”	原來到了小朋友二個月大，小白還是看到小孩就躺下來想要哺乳...對小孩之 <u>溫柔的</u>
	“When the doggies were two months old, Little White still lied down to breastfeed while seeing them...She is <u>extremely tender</u> to her babies.”

In addition, the author investigated the years of appearance of other “zhī + ADJ/V” combinations that appeared more recently. The result was in line with the original inference: “fēicháng zhī + ADJ/V” appeared earlier than did “zhī + ADJ/V.” Basically, even the combination of degree adverbs other than *fēicháng* appeared earlier than the “zhī + ADJ/V” construction. In Table 3, *fēichángzhī kāixīn*非常之開心, *shífēnzhī kāixīn*十分之開心 and *jízhī kāixīn*極之開心 all appeared earlier than *zhī kāixīn*之開心.

Table 3. More Recent Examples of zhī + ADJ/V

fēichángzhī hǎokuàng 非常之好逛2008	zhī hǎokuàng 之好逛2010
非常之 <u>好逛</u> ，明亮又大，又整齊，一點都不像一般outlet擺設的亂七八糟	信義區現在真的有好多多百貨公司啊，那之 <u>好逛</u> 的程度讓我都要迷失志己了～
“It is a <u>very good visit</u> , bright, big and neat, not like a normal outlet in mess at all.”	“There are really many department stores in Xinyi district now. <u>The visit there is so good</u> that I almost lost myself.”
fēichángzhī kāixīn 非常之開心2002	
還可以一邊刷牙一邊對著掛滿一臉同情的同屋室友說我非但不鬱悶而且 <u>非常之開心</u>	
“I can brush my teeth and tell my roommates who replete with a look of sympathy that I am not depressed but <u>very happy</u> .”	
shífēnzhī kāixīn 十分之開心2002	
哥哥與憶蓮已經久未碰面，所以一見面 <u>十分之開心</u>	
“Sandy and her elder brother have not met for long, so they are <u>quite happy</u> for the meeting.”	
jízhī kāixīn 極之開心2001	zhī kāixīn 之開心 2009
靜香於網上除 <u>極之開心</u> 地向Fans 公佈自己生口左一個健康女孩心美外，更加放了一張身穿睡衣手執一束鈴蘭花的相片上網	這次他猜贏了！！他之 <u>開心的</u> 呢！跑起來似乎也特別快？！
“Besides <u>extremely happily</u> announcing to the fans Online that she gave birth to a healthy baby girl Kokomi, Kudou Shizuka also put a photo of her dressing in pajamas and holding a bunch of Bell Orchid.”	“This time he won!! He's <u>extremely happy</u> . He seems to run particularly fast.”
fēichángzhī kěwù 非常之可惡2005	zhī kěwù 之可惡 2008
海邊老兵會帶你進去，只是要求 <u>非常之可惡</u> ，需要花費一點聲望才能進入	不過amio大人對這之 <u>可惡</u> 的小毛驢其實是頗有微詞的。
“Veterans on the beach will take you in. But there is a <u>very hateful</u> requirement, you should have a bit of prestige.”	“But actually Amio had murmurs of discontent at this <u>very hateful</u> little donkey.”

fēichángzhī chǎo非常之吵2004

隔音效果我就不了解了，我的你愛她非常之吵！！！！

"I have no idea about the sound effect, but my LIYATA is very noisy."

zhī chǎo之吵 2006

所以我找房子都不想找學生附近的 @@ 尤其是大學生，之吵的。

"So I don't want to find a house near students, especially college students, they are very noisy."

fēichángzhī kěài非常之可愛1998

非常之可愛...小頭飛蟲Achilidae

"Very cute ... the small head plant hopper Achilidae."

zhī kěài之可愛2009

一個是嫁到蘭嶼的台灣人，老公阿貴很黑胖胖的很愛聊天，兩個小孩的媽，還有之可愛的小狗狗

"One is a Taiwanese who married to Orchid Island. Her husband A-gui is black, fat and loves chatting. She is a mother of two young children and a very cute doggie."

fēichángzhī yúkuài非常之愉快1972

見到各位宗兄宗嫂，心情非常之愉快

"Seeing all of you from the extended family makes me very delighted."

zhī yúkuài之愉快2010

[小猴&小胖出發出天花]之愉快的星期天

"[Little Monkey and Chubby's departure] A extremely happy Sunday"

CONCLUSION

The usage of *zhī* as a degree adverb is relatively new. The first instance of it emerged in 2002, only 14 years ago. The author claims that *zhī* developed the usage as a degree adverb because of the influence of other degree adverbs. At first, *zhī* was attached to the degree adverb *fēicháng* for emphasis. The paradigmatic relation of *fēicháng zhī* was later extended to include all degree adverbs. This extension affected the syntagmatic relation within the combinations, affecting *zhī* in the collocations. Because *zhī* frequently appeared with other degree adverbs, people tended to associate one with the other. Therefore, *zhī* inherited a degree meaning from degree adverbs. Originally, *zhī* had a close relationship with the aforementioned degree adverbs. However, as the relationship loosened, other words could also be attached to *zhī*. Eventually, *zhī* was separated from degree adverbs. When *zhī* was eliminated from the degree adverbs, it naturally became one itself.

Analyzing the excessive meaning of *zhī* from the perspective of a collocation relationship has three advantages: a systematic property, authenticity, and reasonableness. Discussing all of the collocations with *zhī* and the process of derivation by degree adverb would be time-consuming. Focusing on the collocation relationship between *zhī* and degree adverbs enabled for a systematic examination, rendering learning and memorizing easier. In addition, examples of the collocations discussed in this study were collected online and exhibited authenticity. Semantic inheritance occurred to *zhī* because of its long-term collocation with degree adverbs in "degree adverb + *zhī* + predicate" constructions. A degree meaning was given to *zhī* by its preceding degree adverbs. This result was reasonable.

It is unnatural that a function word becomes a content word. At first glance, *zhī* could not possibly function as a degree adverb; nonetheless, collocation made it. Through the study, it is obvious that collocation relationship creates a syntactic context for reanalysis; in addition, the words in a collocation tend to share some semantic features.

As for other related studies in the future, such an analysis is necessary to be taken into consideration.

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