

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The Cantonese utterance particle "jē"

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**THE CANTONESE UTTERANCE PARTICLE**

**“JĒ”**

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## Abstract

The present study aims at examining the core meaning of the Cantonese utterance particle “*jē*” (嘅) (high-level tone), as well as to investigate how the core meaning relates to other extended functions. It is believed that the core meaning of “*jē*” simply means “only”. This core meaning of restriction is similar to the meaning of the restrictive adverb (只係 *jihaih* or 淨係 *jihnghaih*) in Cantonese, it serves as a conjunction with “*jē*” to find out the restriction scope of the utterance. In this case, “*jē*” serves as a focus particle to restrict to the specific part of the utterance. If the restrictive meaning does not focus on any specific part of the utterance, then “*jē*” extends to the restriction of contextual understandings, serving as a discourse marker. In this case, we have to refer to a larger context so as to analyze how the other discourse meanings are related to the restrictive meaning. The result is that it is believed that the restrictive meaning, the core meaning of “*jē*” is systematically extended to a number of discourse meanings through contextual interpretations.

## 摘要

本文旨在考察廣州話語氣助詞“啫”的語意和功能，藉著瞭解它的核心語意，探討這個核心語意如何規律地引申出其他功能。考察結果指出“啫”在話語中主要起低限作用，表達“僅此而已”的意思。“啫”表低限的意思能夠限定話語中（句法平面）的句子成分，而在這個功能裏，我們可以透過加插廣州話限定副詞“只係”或“淨係”找出“啫”的限定範圍（restriction scope）。因此，如果“啫”與“只係”或“淨係”能共同在話語裏找出句子成分的限定範圍，“啫”就是“焦點小品詞”（focus particle）。相反，如果“啫”表低限的限定意思不能限定話語中的句子成分；而要經過上下文的分析才能夠找出其限定的意思，“啫”就“篇章標誌語”（discourse marker）。這時候，限制的功能已經從句法平面進入篇章平面。研究結果能夠瞭解“啫”表低限的核心語意如何有系統地通過上下文的分析所引申出其他的篇章意思。

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