Cognitive Interpretation on Typological Framework of Motion Event in Chinese Language

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Abstract. Beginning with motion conceptualization and linguistic representation, the article testified Talmy’s dichotomy as well as Slobin’s trichotomy typological frameworks with attempt to figure out the typological framework of motion event in Chinese language. Different categories of languages presents discrepancy in representation methods in motion event frame. It is revealed that Most Chinese motion event lexicalization patterns follow S-framed language type, while a small group of motion events adopt E-framed language expression way. In addition, V-framed takes the smallest share which can not be neglected. Therefore, Chinese is not a pure S-framed language, yet embodies both S-framed and E-framed language characteristics. Chinese illustrates more S-framed and then E-framed language characteristics, which indicates the complexity of Chinese motion events representation.

Introduction

Human form their image schema in the dynamic coordinate of time and space, and map physical spatial concepts onto other abstract domains by the way of metaphor and metonymy. Human’s experiential knowledge of spatial cognition has been recognized as the prerequisite cognitive ground for concept interpretation of spatial motion. Spatialization of Form Hypothesis proposed by Lakoff is built on the basis of the categorization and conceptualization of the spatial relationship. Motion event is defined as “a situation containing motion and the continuation of stationary location” (Talmy 2000b:162). The conceptual structure of a basic motion event is composed of four primary internal constituents and two external components labelled as Co-event. To elaborate, the former can be illustrated as follows:

1. Figure: the moving object in “a situation containing movement of an entity” (Talmy 2000).
2. Motion: As part of physical spatial system, the motion concept in space domain is a dynamic location relationship.
3. Path: the course followed or site occupied by the Figure with respect to the Ground.
4. Ground: the reference object with respect to which the Figure moves whereas the latter identified as the optional complement to the main motion event consists of the following two semantic components (Ungerer, Schmid 2001):

   (1) Manner: the way motion occurs;
   (2) Cause: the reason complementing or modifying Figure’s moving

Ideally, Figure usually acts as an Actant (<ACT>) moving (<MO>) from Starting Point (<SP>) via Passing Point (<PaP>) to Endpoint (<EP>) or Goal (<GO>) along its Path (<Pa>). These 6 constituents could be configured as follows: (The example is adopted from John Fox’s The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.)

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Down the spur they went swiftly -- across the river and up the slope of Pine Mountain.
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Challenging traditional motion event schema “source-path-goal” (Fillmore 1982, 1985, Lakoff and Johnson 1999), Talmy put forward his schema “figure-motion-path-ground” (Talmy 2000). According to Talmy’s dichotomy typology, the world’s languages could be categorized as either
verb-framed or satellite-framed in terms of motion events. Chinese, as well as English could be characterized by Satellite-framed language category and marked as typical representatives. However, this two-way typology is argued by Slobin (2004) with another category termed equipollent-framed language.

Emerged in 1970s and developed in 1980s, foreign frame theory researches have shed light on domestic cognitive linguistic research field. However, there is yet no general consensus reached inside domestic academic circle on typology of Chinese language. Shen (2003) is the strong proponent of Talmy. Tai (2003), however, throws doubts about that, and identifies Chinese as primarily a verb-framed language and then secondarily a satellite-framed language. Luo (2008) articulates that Chinese is, in essence, a parallel-framed language, which coincides with Slobin’s hypothesis.

**Talmy’s Typological Dichotomy**

Being inspired by Fillmore’s cognitive semantics theory (i.e., “Source-Path-Goal”motion event schema), Talmy proposed the motion event schema in his book *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. The main event (the framing event), together with the co-event, composes macro-event. To be more specific, Figure usually represented by a subject noun refers to the object that moves or locates. Motion describes the action of moving. Path presents the moving route. And Ground is served as a reference object which Figure moves through, from or towards. Whereas Manner and Cause complement the way and the reason of the Figure’s moving. Among those six constituents, Path is taken as the most fundamental semantic component regardless of its realization means, that is, it might be embodied in verbs (e.g. enter) or in prepositions (e.g. in, out).

According to Talmy’s Motion-framing typology, the criterion of identifying the typological framework of a certain language consists in lexicalization patterns of motion verbs, that is, the realization of the invariant Path in the motion event. The characteristics of satellite-framed language are that co-event components (Manner and Cause) are conflated into Motion verbs, while Path is highlighted by satellite Components (e.g. preposition or particle). Such languages as English and Chinese as well as other Indian-Euro languages (except Romance languages) are classified as S-framed languages. In verb-framed languages, the verbs exhibits Motion and Path simultaneously, while co-event (Manner or Cause) is usually expressed by participles (like -ing participle) or even doesn’t appear at all. S-framed languages and V-framed languages are frequently exemplified with English and Spanish as representatives respectively. Typical bipartite-verb languages can be illustrated as follows:

(1) Typical satellite-framed language: English (Ungerer & Schmid, 1996: 237-238)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Motion+Manner</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The boy</td>
<td>rode</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>of the courtyard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Typical verb-framed language: Spanish (Talmy, 2000II: 49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Motion+Path</th>
<th>Ground</th>
<th>Manner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La botella</td>
<td>salio</td>
<td>de la cueva</td>
<td>flotando.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Slobin’s Typological Trichotomy**

As the most influential one among Talmy’s opponents’ works, Slobin’s typological trichotomy theory (2004) presents a tripartite typology, that is, verb-framed language, satellite-framed language and equipollently-framed language. The former two categories are exactly analogous to Talmy’s classification, while the third category, a newly-introduced type, expresses motion events by remaining Path and Manner elements in equilibrium at grammatical level. Equipollent means equivalent both in strength and value, which indicates co-event verb and Path verb share the same importance at lexical and syntax level, in brief, constituents of Path and Manner are expressed by equivalent grammatical structures.
Based on extensive studies concerning the organization of information about spatial relations and motion events by speakers of different languages, Slobin tabulated modified motion event language types as follows. He has even argued that a proficient command of a language necessitates learning its language-specific modes of thinking. Taking text structure and language application into account, Slobin proposed Thinking-for-speaking Hypothesis which replenishes and improves Talmy’s motion-verb-based language typology theory. Slobin’s Thinking-for-speaking, viewed as a contemporary, moderate version of the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, claims that the language learned shapes the way people perceive reality and think about it.

Table 1. Modified motion event language types (Slobin 2004: 259).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language type</th>
<th>Expression method</th>
<th>Typical structure</th>
<th>Language example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V-language</td>
<td>Path conflated in verbs, Manner expressed by subordinate structure</td>
<td>Path verbs+Manner subordinate</td>
<td>Romance languages, Semitic, Turkish, Basque, Japanese, Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-language</td>
<td>Path expressed by non-verb components</td>
<td>Manner verbs+Path satellite</td>
<td>Germanic languages, Slavic, Finland-Ugric language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-language</td>
<td>Path and Manner both represented by equal-type grammar forms</td>
<td>Manner verbs+Path verbs</td>
<td>Niger–Ki kongo, Hmong, Sino-Tibetan language, Thai, Mon Khmer language, Austronesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Manner+Path) verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Algonquian language, Athabaskanlanguage, Klamath language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manner preverbs+Path preverbs+verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan in jungan language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typological Framework of Motion Event in Chinese Language

Lexicalization Pattern of Chinese Verbs

The versatile potential of Chinese Motion verbs consists in its representations of Manner (e.g. 漂, 滚), Path (e.g. 上, 下) or Cause (e.g. 推, 举). Chinese motion event expressions might be realized by such individual verbs as 跳 (tiao, jump), 出 (chu, leave), 冒 (mao, emit). However, the combination of V1+V2 shares the overwhelming majority at lexical level, for example, 跳过 (tiaoguo, jump across), 出来 (chulai, come out), 冒出来 (maochulai, pop up). Besides, those two constituents are presented in two verbs which can exist independently.

1) S-framed language motion event representation

男孩跑了出了院子(Nanhai pao chule yuanzi, the boy ran out of the court.)

Figure 1. Satellite-framed Chinese Language.

In the above example, “跑” functioning as the main verb conflates both Motion and Manner. By comparison, “出” acting as Path element can never be surviving without a Motion, which triggers its
attachment to the Motion verb. Thus, the Path element here is coded in the satellite part, which is the
typical characteristic of S-framed language.

(2) E-framed language motion event representation
小狗跑过来. (Xiaogou pao guolai. The puppet ran over.)

Domestic articles concerned piling up focus on the controversial categorization of V₂. In the above
example, both “跑” and “过来” belonging to the same category which is verb component at linguistic
surface level, refer to Motion and Path respectively at semantic level. Neither the Motion verb “跑”
nor the Path verb “过来” can exist independently. They have to inextricably bound up with each other
to present two individual complete motion event expressions, which testify the partial characteristics
of E-framed typology in Chinese language.

(3) V-framed language motion event representation
她出了门. (Ta chu le men. She’s out the door and into a cab.)

Chinese “出” is generally categorized as directional verb in Chinese. However, in the above
example, the only verb “出” (chu, out) integrating both Motion and Path elements, hereby, functions
as a main verb(Dai, 2002).

Typological Framing of Chinese Language
In both Talmy and Slobin’s language typology studies, the criterion of defining certain language type
is to determine how the semantic constituent PATH is represented. To be more specific, is the PATH
represented independently or conflated within the Motion-verb? Talmy classified Chinses language
as S-framed on the ground that Chinese Path is presented by such satellite components as preposition
and particle, while Co-event constituent (Manner and Cause) are conflated within Motion verbs. By
contrast, Slobin preferred E-framed categorization of Chinese language, since co-event verbs and
Path verb exert equivalent importance of value lexically and syntactically. Therefore, Chinese motion
event expressions challenge Talmy’s dichotomy and Slobin’s trichotomy typology theory, since
language characteristics of three types have been found in Chinese real representation.

Studies conducted from the cognitive perspective concentrates on the role Chinese language plays
in the reflection, the mapping system of the semantic components to the linguistic forms and the
representation of motion events. It is revealed that Chinese is characterized by untypical satellite-
framed language category, which is roughly accordance with Talmy’s classification, and
equipollently-framed language, in conformity with Slobin’s identification. Besides, Chinese
illustrates partially V-framed language characteristics, which can not be neglected.

Summary
In terms of the lexicalization pattern of Path constituent in the motion event, Chinese language is
marked by embracing language typological characteristics of three types which are S-framed, E-framed and V-framed with different weight. It is such an interesting and bewildering language
phenomenon which results in the controversy of Talmy’s dichotomy and Slobin’s trichotomy
typology theory. Actually, there is no such clear-cut categorization criterion, neither is strict boundary
between different language types. Each language just presents tendency in mainstream of one specific
type. Chinese language embodies more S-framed and then especially E-framed language features,
since it presents more low meaning-conflation capacity in conceptual structure while more
complexity in semantic components combination.

References
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