Language Productivity and Representation: A Corpus-Based Study of [da - NP] Construction

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Polysemy is ubiquitous in a language in that nearly every word is polysemous to a certain extent. Ever since the term 'polysemy' was introduced into linguistics, its existence and definition have been the subject of intense debate within the field. Generally, polysemy is defined as "the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form." (Taylor 1995: 99). This definition, however, is problematic due to its presupposition that the meanings of linguistic units (e.g., lexical items) can be identified, characterized and enumerated (Taylor 2003). An important question that then arises is: whether and in what way the meanings are related? Furthermore, despite many problems raised by polysemy, surprisingly, speakers of a language are rarely aware and troubled by it. Therefore, it is necessary to explore human cognition and conceptual organization to understand the networks of meaning relations.

In cognitive semantics, polysemy is regarded as patterns of flexibility (or nonfixed) in meaning. Certain contextual patterns in which a polysemous word embedded can be interpreted in multiple ways. Since exploring schematic collocations and analyzing symbolic units are helpful to understand language users' underlying knowledge and processing of co-occurrence patterns (Langacker 1987; Logan 1988), the present study explores the schematicity and productivity of [*dǎ* - NP] pattern through a large online Chinese corpus – BLCU Corpus Center (BCC). Although some scholars have explored etymology of *dǎ* 'to strike' and tried to explain its extended meanings (e.g., Huang 2000; Lee 2010; Zhu 2004), the schematicity and productivity of [*dǎ* - NP] construction remain unknown.

Drawing on Construction Grammar and usage-based constructionist approach, this study aims to clarify what polysemy is, why a word is polysemous, and how people process a polysemous word and assign its meaning by analyzing the synchronic usage of [*dǎ* - NP] construction in Chinese. As the frequency of use has an impact on a speaker's language processing and memory representation (Bybee 2007), two types of frequency data, the type frequency of the conceptual category [*dǎ* - NP] (i.e., the number of different tokens) and the token frequency (i.e., the number of times a certain type is observed in the data), are analyzed to elucidate the productivity of [*dǎ* - NP] construction. Furthermore, the schema-driven and exemplar-based models will be presented to explain how new concepts are developed through the extension of a prototype. So far, none of the studies on the pattern of [*dǎ* - NP] have scrutinized its token frequencies and sorted them based on current usage via Chinese corpus. Hence, the current study is expected to explain language productivity and cognitive representation with solid evidence.

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