

Evidential Perception Verbs and (Inter)subjectivity in English and Chinese

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Perception verbs—verbs referring to visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory perception, can not only denote the perceptual act but also serve as the speaker/writer's evidence of an asserted proposition. As for evidentiality, visual perception verbs encode the source of information of the speaker/writer, indicating that the offered information is visually perceived by the speaker/writer or a larger speech community (Whitt 2010, 2011). Based on Langacker's strata of basic evidential system (2017), the information provided by the speaker/writer can either be direct evidence (visual evidence) or inference. This research is a contrastive analysis of evidential perception verbs between English and Mandarin Chinese, attempting to elaborate the similarities and differences of visual perception verbs when they express evidential meaning and signal subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

In this paper, *see* and *look* in English and *kan+X* in Chinese have been examined in terms of frequency of usage, frequency of evidential usage, and ways of expressing evidentiality, and the cases without evidential meaning are ruled out. The sentences with evidential perception verbs are further classified into sub-groups according to the complementation patterns. The criteria of classification include the complements, subject-oriented (a perceiver as the grammatical subject) vs. object-oriented (a percept as the grammatical subject), subjective vs. intersubjective evidence (personal vs. collective, implicit vs. explicit viewer), as is shown in the following example:

(1) 路过第五个套院时，我们看到院子里躺着十几个伤兵。(Finite Complement Clause, Subject-oriented, Collective, Explicit)

In the fifth courtyard, we saw a dozen or more wounded soldiers lying on the ground.

(2) “为什么？它看起来像个无害的艺术品。”一名军官说。(NP, Object-oriented, Personal, Implicit)

“Why? It looks like a harmless work of art.” an officer said.

(3) 鲁大海（忽然）刚才我看见一个年轻人，[Ø]在花园里躺着，[Ø]脸色发白，[Ø]闭着眼睛，[Ø]像是要死的样子，听说这就是周家的大少爷，我们董事长的儿子。(Direct Object with a Subject Topic Chain, Subject-oriented, Personal, Explicit)

HAI (with sudden scorn): Just now as I was coming in, I saw young man in the garden. He was lying there with his eyes closed and his face so pale that I shouldn't think he'd last much longer. And they tell me this is our chairman's eldest son.

The findings of this research have shown that both Chinese and English can express evidential meaning in a large number of complementation patterns, but there are still many distinctions: Chinese has more complementation patterns than English, and the evidential usage in Chinese is of greater diversity in some patterns. Besides, the SO perception verbs occur much more frequently than the OO perception verbs in English, but the results in Chinese opposed to that in English. The topic construction is another major difference, which only occurs in the Chinese corpora. Furthermore, there are many attestations of Chinese subject-oriented verbs that have no explicit viewer, in which the conceptualizer is backgrounded, and a more objective stance towards the communicated information is evoked.