Trajector-object Variants in Chinese BA-construction—A Cognitive Approach

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Following Talmy's (1988a, 2000) force-dynamics theory, the trajector-object (meaning-function) in BA-constructions is understood as the agonist involved in an interaction with other entities of the same force-dynamic event frame. The agonist is realised as the grammatical object (BA-marked). The trajector suggests that the entity is possibly involved in a change. Various trajector-object can occur with the same verb in BA-construction. I name these trajector-object variants.

The choice of trajector-object in BA-constructions has surprisingly larger coverage than that of in English causative constructions. The former includes acted, the place where the action happens, an instrument, actor, time and etc. Talmy's (2000) event frame excluding "peripheral" elements (such as place, instrument, time and etc), I argue, is too narrow for the trajector-object variants in BA-constructions. To account for this, I propose the Cognitive Event Frame (CEF) which is richer than Talmy's (2000) event frame. CEF includes not only the core frame elements but the peripheral, extended frame elements, and gapped elements. All the CEF elements including peripheral and extended are possible to be the agonist, realised as the trajector-objects in BA-constructions. Besides, CEF consists of several sub-events with logical linkage to maintain the semantic coherence. A single CEF covering the variants indicates that the CEF is an economic model.

The trajector-objects have different distribution with different verbs. I assume the distribution is associated with the semantics of co-occurring verb. The collostructional analysis, investigating two groups, the wrap group [*guo* (wrap), *gai* (cover), *bao* (wrap)] and the load group [*tian* (fill), *zhuang* (load), and *sai* (stuff)] supports my assumption. I draw out the BA-examples with these verbs from the CNC (Balanced National Corpus of Modern Chinese). The trajector-object functions as (M)aterial or the acted-upon (O)bject/final goal. In terms of motion, they are marked as either (Th)eme or a patient (Pt). I calculate their token frequencies with the investigated verbs respectively and run the distinctive collexeme analysis (Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004) in R software. The analysis yields the results indicate that *wrapping* verbs and *tian* (fill) are more attracted to the resultative BA-construction with the O-Pt trajector-object; while the rest (*sai* (stuff), *zhuang* (load)) to caused-motion BA-construction with M-th trajector-object. These attractions match with the verb meanings－i.e., the former four verbs emphasis more on the change in state of the acted-upon entity/final goal; while the latter two are more focusing on expressing the motion of the involved material/media.

References

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