

Abstract for theme session: Macro-events, Grammaticalization, and Typology

Evolutionary Order of Macro-events in Mandarin

Fuyin Thomas Li
Beihang University, Beijing
thomasli@buaa.edu.cn

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A “macro-event” is a fundamental concept on the basis of which Talmy proposes his two-way typology. In this typology, languages characteristically adopt either verb roots or satellites to encode the core schema of a macro-event (Talmy 2000). Talmy has identified five types of macro-events, including motion, temporal contouring, change of state, action correlating, and realization. The macro-event is mainly realized by “verb + complement” construction (“V + C”) in Mandarin, which includes two further types: “verb + directional complement” and “verb + resultant complement”. Li (2018) argues that the grammaticalization of directional complements caused the typological shift of Mandarin from verb-framed to satellite-framed, but the diachronic order of the five macro-events is only hypothesized, not empirically supported. That is, when and how the typological shift happened are not addressed in Li (2018). Aiming to locate the evolutionary order of the five types of macro-events, this article traces through five historical stages of the evolution of the eleven simplex directional complements, when they started as independent verbs expressing solely “motion + Path” in the earliest stage. As a methodology, a closed corpus is set up for each stage: Stage I, ancient Chinese, BC1600-24; Stage II, middle Chinese, 25-618; Stage III, pre-modern Chinese, 619-1279; Stage IV, post-modern Chinese, 1280-1911; and the last stage, Stage V, modern Chinese, 1912-present. The data are elicited from the most representative works for each stage. It is concluded: 1) The “V+C” constructions started to appear from Stage III and continued to be used until the present stage; 2) “V+C” constructions can only represent four out of five Talmy’s macro-events, action correlating is not systematically represented; 3) The four types of macro-events appeared at relatively similar time period, the proportion is as follows: Motion > State change > temporal > Realization; 4) The PATH verbs in the V2 position is prone to grammaticalization than in the V1 position in the serial verb construction “V1+V2”. This research is significant in bridging the areas of event structure, grammaticalization and typology, and might have implications for other languages as well.

References

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