

Beyond Typology: How Event Integration Works in Motion Events

– A Case Study of “V + Dào” Constructions in Mandarin

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Mandarin is considered as a “strongly satellite-framed language” (Talmy 2000: 272). However, some linguists contend that Mandarin is a verb-framed language (Tai 2003) or an equipollently-framed language (Slobin 2004, 2006). This paper argues that these different claims of Mandarin’s typology hinge on the process of event integration.

Event integration refers to the cognitive process of reconceptualization that involves the conceptual integration or conflation of events (Talmy 2000: 216). However, Talmy (1985, 1991, 2000) only discussed the event integration occurring either in the main verb or in the satellite, but this paper claims that the event integration also occurs between the main verb and the satellite. For this reason, we propose that the internal event integration describes the process in which the main verb or the satellite per se can conflate two or more conceptual components or subevents, and the external event integration designates the process in which two or more conceptual components or subevents are integrated between the main verb and the satellite.

As a typical verb complex that consists of the main verb and the satellite, the “V + Dào” construction is pervasive in Chinese, and it is also a hot topic with controversies in different perspectives, such as the word class of “Dào” in the “V + Dào” construction, the syntactic properties of “Dào” in the “V + Dào + X” construction, and the verb-complement variations of the “V + Dào” construction, etc. Moreover, motion events are the most characteristic expressions across languages (Talmy 2000: 27). Therefore, we collected 611 sentences of “V + Dào” constructions as motion events from a closed corpus of spoken Chinese, aiming to answer the following questions from the perspective of event integration: (1) What possible event integration patterns are involved in the motion events of “V + Dào” constructions? (2) How does event integration work in the motion events of “V + Dào” constructions? (3) What are the underlying principles that constrain the event integration between “V” and “Dào”?

As a result, we preliminarily find that:

(1) “V + Dào” constructions contain 12 event integration patterns, including “(motion+manner) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+path) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+cause) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+concomitance) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+subsequence) + (motion+path)”, “(stationariness+cause) + (stationariness+site)”, “(stationariness+manner) + (stationariness+site)”, “(stationariness+subsequence) + (stationariness+site)”, “(motion+cause+path) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+path+path) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+manner+path) + (motion+path)”, “(motion+figure+manner) + (motion+path)”.

(2) Based on the event integration patterns, the internal event integration relates to the conceptual conflation (Talmy 2000) either in “V” or in “Dào”, and the external event integration involves the conceptual mapping (Fauconnier & Turner 1998, 2002) and conceptual overlap (Langacker 1987, 2005, 2008) between “V” and “Dào”. For instance, the event integration pattern of 飞到 (fly and arrive) is represented by “(motion+manner) + (motion+path)”. In the internal event integration, 飞 (fly) conflates the subevents of “motion” and “manner”, and 到 (arrive) conflates the subevents of “motion” and “path”. In the external event integration, the subevent of “motion” is the common-shared basis for the conceptual mapping between 飞 (fly) and 到 (arrive), and the “manner” of 飞 (fly) and the “path” of 到 (arrive) can be conceptually overlapped together for providing elaboration-sites to each other.

(3) The internal and external event integration observe some principles. Firstly, the participant role(s)-sharing principle requires that the subevents between “V” and “Dào” can share one or more participant roles. Secondly, the event topology principle enables the integration between the subevents of “V” and “Dào” to obtain an event gestalt, such as the relations of “cause and effect”, “part and whole”, and so forth. Finally, the event completion principle can activate the peripheral subevents of “V” or “Dào” so as to enrich the whole event gestalt.

Main References

Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a Cognitive Semantics: Typology and Process in Concept (Vol. 2)*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.