



Once and Twice

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Abstract

The study of English *once* and *twice* yields evidence that each of them is actually a complex phrase containing two visible morphemes and one silent one. Neither is a simple lexical item. The *-ce* morpheme is akin to a postposition, despite English being primarily prepositional. The silent element associated with *once* and *twice* is a silent counterpart of *time*, represented as TIME. This instance of TIME is singular, even in the case of *twice*. There appears to be a link between TIME and the syntax of classifiers.

The presence of silent TIME with *once* and *twice* indirectly provides evidence for the presence in the human language faculty of other antecedentless silent nominal elements such as NUMBER. Silent elements of this sort are not visible (even via an antecedent) in the primary data available to the learner. Their properties, for example, their singularity or plurality and their licensing conditions, therefore provide us with a privileged window onto the invariant core of the language faculty itself.

The presence of silent elements such as TIME and NUMBER can, in part, be traced back to a principle of compositionality, to the effect that the human language faculty imposes a maximum of one interpretable syntactic feature per lexical item.

Keywords

time, silent, classifier, compositionality, interpretable

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提要

本研究的證據顯示，英語 *once* 和 *twice* 實際上是一個包含兩個可視語素和一個無聲語素的複雜短語，兩者都不是簡單的詞項，當中的 *-ce* 語素類似後置詞，雖然英語以前置詞為主。*once* 和 *twice* 的無聲成份是時間成份，以 *TIME* 來表示。這個 *TIME* 是單數成份，即使用於 *twice* 當中也如是，而 *TIME* 與量詞句法似乎有一定的關聯。

無聲的 *TIME* 出現在 *once* 和 *twice*，間接證明了其他諸如 *NUMBER* 等沒有先行語的無聲名詞性成份，存在於人類的語言機制之中。這一類無聲成份不論有沒有先行語，均隱現在學習者的基礎語料中，其特性（如單數性、複數性及允許條件等）猶如一扇特意打開的窗，讓我們窺見語言機制中恆定的核心。

無聲成份 *TIME* 和 *NUMBER* 的出現或多或少可以追溯至分解原則之上，即人類的語言機制要求每個詞項最多只能有一個可解的句法特徵。

關鍵詞

時間，無聲成份，量詞，分解性，可解性