

SEMANTIC-TO-MORPHOLOGICAL SEQUENCING: CONSTRAINTS ON MANDARIN SERIAL MOTION PREDICATION


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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to probe into the semantic constraints that dictate the morphological make-ups of motion sequences. Given that Mandarin allows serial motion construction with multiple verbal morphemes, it is always an intriguing question as to how the morphemes are combined and ordered. To account for the allowed and disallowed sequences of prototypical motion verbs, three sequencing principles are proposed on par with the Proto-Motion Event Schema proposed in Liu et al. (2015). The proposed principles help to set the semantic boundary of a serial motion sequence (The Boundary-Setting Principle), rule out morphological combinations that are against the default order (the Non-Regression Principle), and account for the prominence and characteristics of Path in motion predication (the Path-Delimiting Principle). As Path is an integral part of motion, it has to be properly delimited with a Path-delimiting element. These three principles may together account for the multi-morpheme motion sequences whose morphological structures are highly correlated with lexical semantic structures. By characterizing the semantic-to-

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morphological correlations, the study ultimately shows how morpho-syntactic patterns are motivated and shaped by semantic and functional considerations in operation.

KEYWORDS

Mandarin motion verbs Serial motion predication Sequencing constraints
Semantic-to-morphological sequencing Proto-Motion Event Schema

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of motion provides an important cognitive basis for understanding a variety of spatial as well as non-spatial relations. Motion-related issues have always been one of the core concerns in linguistic studies. Previous works have studied motion from various perspectives and suggested that motion is one of the basic constructs underlining human conceptual structure (Jackendoff 1993; Langacker 1987) and a central property showing typological variations (Peyraube 2006; Slobin 2004; Talmy 2000, 1985). It is evident that motion plays a crucial role in language-specific as well as cross-linguistic research on the interplay of cognition and language.

1.1 Characteristics of a Motion Event

A motion event is in general characterized with the essential components of Theme, Motion, and Path. In FrameNet¹, motion verbs are defined as depicting “some entity (Theme) starts out in one place (Source) and ends up in some other place (Goal), having covered some space between the two (Path)”, such as in “The ball (Theme) flew (Motion) over the fence (Path)”. A state-of-the-art definition is given by Talmy (2000, 1985) who introduced a more elaborated set of semantic components to depict motion: “The basic Motion event consists of one object (the Figure) moving with respect to another object (Ground). It is analyzed as having four components: besides Figure and Ground, there are Path and Motion. The Path is the path followed by the Figure object with respect to the Ground object. The component of Motion refers to the presence per se of motion in the event... In addition to these internal components, a Motion event can be associated with an external Co-event² that most often bears

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语义对构词序列的制约:中文移动动词的排列组合原则

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摘要

旨在探讨中文移动事件中支配动词序列形态的语意制约原则。鉴于中文可使用多个动词语素来表达移动事件，关于词素间如何组合排列始终是一个有趣并待解决的问题。为了解释典型的移动动词序列，Liu et al. (2015)曾提出中文移动事件的原型基模，在此基础上，本文进一步提出支配移动事件的三种排序原则，用以解释常态（允许）与非常态（不允许）的动词序列制约机制。所提出的三个原则有助于界定移动序列的语义范畴（语义范畴设定原则），排除违背常态序列的组合形态（无逆转原则），并可强调路径的显著性和特征预测（路径制约原则）。由于路径是移动事件的必要成分，路径元素成为界定移动事件的关键要素。这三个原则可以解释构词形态与词汇语义间的高度相关性，提供多语素排列组合的语义机制。通过描述语义与构词序列的互动关连，本研究显示语义功能是激发塑造构词和句法形式的推手，语义的构成要素直接影响动词词素的排列组合。

关键词

中文移动动词 多语义移动事件 语义与构词的互动 序列制约原则
移原型基模