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**A Contrastive Study on the Ways of
Lexicalization of Direction in English
and Chinese Motion Verbs**

Meixia Li

Professor

Beijing International Studies University

China

Ruicheng Luan

Beijing International Studies University

China

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr
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A Contrastive Study on the Ways of Lexicalization of Direction in English and Chinese Motion Verbs

Meixia Li

Professor

Beijing International Studies University

China

Ruicheng Luan

Beijing International Studies University

China

Abstract

Motion verbs are prompts for us to construct motion events. Motion events contain such conceptual elements as mover, motion, goal, path, manner, direction, etc. Motion verbs and motion events have been a hot issue in linguistics study. Hence many insightful research results have been proposed. Yet, up to now, the research concerned with how English and Chinese motion verbs lexicalize not only motion but also direction is scarcely conducted. Therefore, the present study will attempt to inquire into this issue so as to expose similarities and differences of the ways of lexicalization of direction in English and Chinese motion verbs.

Keywords: English and Chinese motion verbs, direction, lexicalization, contrastive study

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Introduction

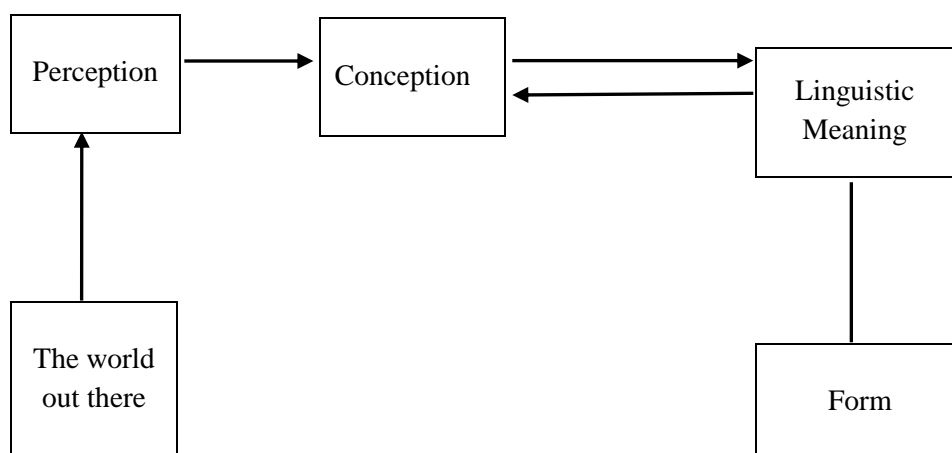
Motion verbs, simply speaking, are those verbs which are related with motion events. In motion events, the mover and motion (in semantic terms, they can be called as Trajector and Motion) are the obligatory elements. If the mover or Trajector actively moves, the motion event contains such elements as mover or Trajector, Landmark, motion, goal, path, manner, direction, etc. If the motion is caused by external forces, the motion event may include an additional element: the driving force. These elements are conceptual or semantic in nature. They can be specified by different lexical patterns. It is obvious that the mover or the Trajector is encoded by nominal expressions, and the motion by motion verbs. Yet it has also been discovered that motion verbs in both English and Chinese lexicalize not only motion but also motion and direction. So in the present article we will attempt to inquire into how English and Chinese motion verbs lexicalize direction so as to expose similarities and differences of the ways of lexicalization of direction in English and Chinese motion verbs.

The Relationship between Semantic Structure and Conceptual Structure

Signifying of Words

Words are essential building blocks in languages. Without words, nothing can be communicated. Then what do words signify? Do words directly signify entities in the world or do they signify a kind of mental image? Up to now, a number of theories have been proposed to account for the above conflicting questions, among which two are very important: one is referential; the other is representational. The basic premise of referential is “that we can give the meaning of words and sentences by showing how they relate to situations. Nouns, for example, are meaningful because they denote entities in the world and sentences because they denote situations and events.” (Saeed, 2000:24) The representational emphasizes that “our reports about reality are influenced by the conceptual structures conventionalized in our language.” (Saeed, 2000:25) Thus, “in referential theories, meaning derives from language being attached to, or grounded in, reality. In representational approaches meaning derives from language being a reflection of our conceptual structure.” (Saeed, 2000:25) For representational approach, one theory ---- cognitive semantics is prominent in recent years. For cognitive semanticists, words refer to concepts in the mind of the speaker rather than entities in the reality. The relationship among reality, concept and words can be depicted though the following Figure (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Levels of Representation*



Source: Evans and Green (2006:7)

From Figure 1, we can arrive at the following conclusions. First, words consist of two components: Form and Linguistic Meaning. Form-meaning pairing constitutes a symbol. This symbol connects to a concept which is linked to perception which links the entity in the external world.

Therefore, it can be stated that according to cognitive semantics, words signify concepts formed through perception based on “the world out there”. This idea is applied to this study.

Conceptual Structure VS. Semantic Structure

It has been taken for granted that conceptual structure is abstract, decontextualized. But for cognitive linguistics, conceptual structure arises from bodily experiences, which can be proved by Figure 1. Semantic structure refers to conventional meaning associated with linguistic units (i.e. words) and other linguistic units. Semantic structure is equated with concepts, so semantic structure is conceptual structure. (Evans and Green, 2006:164)

Word Forward

With the above theoretical discussion available, it can be deduced that motion, direction, etc. in motion events are concepts at the conceptual level, and the nature of the conceptual organization of these concepts is experiential. Furthermore, the semantic structure of motion, direction, etc. in motion events is equal to their conceptual structure in motion events. As for the relationship between these semantic structures (or conceptual structures) and linguistic expressions, we can say it is not a one-to-one correspondence. Linguistic expressions “say nothing independently of the richly detailed knowledge and powerful cognitive processes we bring to bear.” (Turner, 1991:206) Thus, it can be inferred that motion verbs are not just prompts for us to construct the meaning of motion, instead, they may be prompts for us to construct the meaning of direction along with the meaning of motion. Then, in English and Chinese, what types of motion verbs are prompts for us to construct the

meaning of motion and direction? Are there any similarities and differences between English and Chinese? In the following, these questions will be dealt with.

Methodology

Methods

In this study, two methods are used: one is corpus-based approach, the other is contrastive analysis.

Corpus-Based Approach

In the 1960's, as against Noam Chomsky's impact on modern language studies, a new approach to language ---- corpus linguistics emerged, and now it has become a widely-known influential linguistic paradigm. Within this paradigm arise two different approaches: corpus-based and corpus-driven (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). "Linguistic findings are corpus-based if everything that is being said is validated by corpus evidence. Findings are corpus-driven if they are extracted from corpora, using the methodology of corpus linguistics, then intellectually processed and turned into results." (Teubert & Čermáková, 2009:57) In this study, the two approaches are used and we use corpus-based approach to cover the two approaches.

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis (CA) was originally developed for second (or foreign) language teaching and learning, and translation. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the development of such disciplines as pragmatics, discourse studies, corpus linguistics, etc., contrastive analysis develops so fast, its areas of study have been broadened; more theoretical perspectives and more new methods have been emerged. In this study, this method is employed to make a contrastive study of the similarities and differences of how the concept "direction" in English and Chinese motion verbs is lexicalized.

Data Sources

The data employed in this study mainly comes from two types of sources: one is the dictionary, the other is corpus. The dictionaries we use include Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (Hornby, 2003), the third edition of Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Pearson Education Asia Limited, 2004), the fifth edition of Modern Chinese Dictionary (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2007), and the Dictionary of the Usage of Chinese Verbs (Meng, 1995). The corpora we employ include British National Corpus (BNC), Corpus of contemporary American English (COCA), and corpus established by the Center for Chinese Linguistics PKU.

Lexicalization, Conceptual Structuring and Schematic System

Lexicalization

Lexicalization, by its name, refers to the process whereby words are formed. The study of lexicalization can be traced back to Saussure (quoted in Luo *et al.* 2007:414), who used the term “agglutination” to discuss the process of word formation. For Saussure, lexicalization is equal to word formation. Following Saussure, many scholars have touched on this issue. Some (i.e. Bauer, 1983) regard lexicalization as a process. Some (i.e. Blank 2001: 1596-1608, quoted in Luo *et al.*, 2007:414) treat it as a result of semantic development. In addition, some other scholars discuss a lot about the pattern of lexicalization, among whom Talmy (1985, 2000) is influential, in particular, in terms of the motion verbs and language typology.

In this study, based upon cognitive semanticists’ point of view, we propose that lexicalization is a dynamic process starting from conceptual level (namely semantic level) to lexical level. In this way, the study of lexicalization involves two aspects: the conceptual (or semantic) level and the lexical level. During the discussion, Talmy’s research result is referred to.

Conceptual Structuring and Schematic Systems

To analyze the ways of lexicalization of the concept “direction” in motion verbs, we have to find the structuring properties of motion events, which is specified by conceptual structuring system, just as what Evans and Green (2006:192) said, “Conceptual structuring system delineates structural properties of a given scene”. However, in terms of cognitive semantics, “the conceptual structuring system is based on a limited number of large-scale schematic systems.” (Evans and Green, 2006:194) Talmy (2000) identified four systems: (1) the Configurational System, (2) the Perspectival System, (3) the Attentional System, (4) the Force - Dynamics System. Croft and Cruse (2004) listed such categories as (1) Attention/Salience, (2) Judgment/Comparison, (3) Perspective/Situatedness, (4) Constitution/Gestalt. Simultaneously, other scholars (i.e. Langacker) proposed their classification of schematic systems. In other words, it can be asserted that motion verbs together with “our richly detailed knowledge and powerful cognitive processes” help us to construct motion events and the structuring properties of motion events.

Structuring Properties of Motion Events

What structuring properties does a motion event have? Talmy (2000) stated that a motion event consists of an object, called Figure, and its movement through a Path with respect to another reference object, called Ground, which is exemplified as (1):

- (1) The students came into the classroom.
 [+Figure] [+Motion] [+Path] [+Ground]

In reference to Talmy and our encyclopedic knowledge, it is believed that a motion event should be composed of a moving object, (a driving force), a motion, position change and a path. By using semantic terms, figure can be

equated to agent or patient (in case of internal driving force, the agent is equal to patient, otherwise they differ.); position change refers to motion, and direction makes itself recognized when subjects compare the position in one moment with the position in next moment. So a motion event can be described as having following five semantic components:

[+Motion], [+Agent], [+Patient], [+Driving Force], [+Path] and [+Direction].

The Ways of Lexicalization of Direction in English and Chinese Motion Verbs

Lexicalized Direction in English Motion Verbs

Levin (1993) proposed that in English there are altogether 238 motion verbs. Based on Levin's study, we put these 238 motion verbs into the corpus and discover that there are only 109 English motion verbs which have lexicalized direction. According to the conceptual (semantic) structure, these lexicalized directions can be roughly classified into the following types: [unordered direction], [unfixed direction] and [definite direction]. These categories can be regarded as semantic components of direction. They can be further defined as follows. [The unordered direction] lexicalized in motion verbs refers to unsteady movements which we cannot accurately predict their specific direction, which may follow an alternative left, right, forward and back direction. In this type, the English word 'stagger' is the best example. [The unfixed direction] lexicalized in motion verbs expresses a casual movement, showing that the moving object (i.e. agent or patient) walks or goes, or travels without a fixed purpose or direction. Even with unfixed purpose, we may have the experience that when people are ambling or roaming, they are likely to go aimlessly and get back. The direction of such movement is led by subject's will. [Definite direction], as its name indicates, refers to a specific direction, which may include [to-the-goal direction], [forward direction], [downward direction], [off-the ground] direction, [circle direction], [away direction], [curve direction], [front direction], [up-and-down direction], [toward-and-back direction], [upward direction], [backward direction], [into direction], [internal-to-around direction] and [Z shape direction], etc. These categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Lexicalized Directions of English Motion Verbs*

Verbs	Direction	Verbs	Direction
stagger, dodder, lollop, mince, shamble, mosey, lurch, stumble, toddler, totter, waddle, hobble, limp	unordered	amble, ramble, rove, wander, sashay, shamble, stray, roam, prowl, sleepwalk, slither, saunter, stroll, traipse, promenade, perambulate	unfixed
trail, track, tail, shadow, pursue, follow, chase, come, arrive, cross, return	to the goal	advance, stride, march, parade, file, charge, goosestep, inch	forward
descend, fall, plunge, tumble, parachute, drop, coast, recede	downward	hop, gambol, jump, leap, skip, prance, cavort, vault	off the ground
roll, coil, revolve, spin, whirl, rotate, turn, swirl, twist, wind, somersault	circle	depart, escape, flee, leave, exit, stray, skedaddle, scam, bolt, abandon, desert, go	away
turn, twist, wind, sweep, swing	curving	shepherd, lead, guide, conduct	front
bounce, bound	up and down	bounce, carom	toward and back
ascend, balloon, climb, rise, rocket, clamber	upward	recede	backward
enter	into	balloon	internal to around
		zigzag, meander, wind, tack	Z shape

From Table 1, it can be found that [the unordered direction] is lexicalized in 13 motion verbs and [the unfixed direction] in 16 verbs. For specific types of [definite direction], the situation is different. It can be seen that [to-the-goal direction] is lexicalized in 11 verbs, [forward direction] in 8 verbs, [downward direction] in 8 verbs, [off-the ground direction] in 8 verbs, [circle direction] in 12 verbs, [away direction] in 13 verbs, [curve direction] in 5 verbs, [front direction] in 4 verbs, [up-and-down] in 2 verbs, [toward-and-back] in 2 verbs, [upward direction] in 6 verbs, [backward direction] in 1 verb, [into direction] in 1 verb, [internal-to-around] direction in 1 verb and [Z shape direction] in 4 verbs. Additionally, this Table demonstrates that for [unordered direction] words and [unfixed direction] words, no specific direction words can be followed. But for the other types, [the specific direction words], prompted for almost all kinds of directions, are necessary.

Lexicalized Direction in Chinese Motion Verbs

By investigating every Chinese verb in Usage Dictionary of Chinese Verbs and the fifth edition of Modern Chinese Dictionary (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2007), we find that 150 Chinese motion verbs involve the

change of position, path and time, among which 114 have their lexicalized directions. These directions can be roughly divided into the sixteen categories.

First, [unfixed direction]. This direction is lexicalized in Chinese verbs *guang* /逛/ stroll, *sanbu*/散步/ go for a walk, *benzou*/奔走/rush about, *ben* /奔/rush, *pao* /跑/run. The mover in the movement indicated by these verbs goes with an unfixed direction.

Second, [curve direction]. Such verbs as *bai*/摆/swing, *diao* /掉/fall, *guai*/拐/limp, *hui* /回/turn around, *niu*/扭/twist, *yao* /摇/rock, *yaohuang* /摇晃/wobble, *zhuan* /转/turn, and *shan*/闪/dodge, etc. indicate the path of the movement going in a curving line, expressing the curve direction.

Third, [circle direction]. Motion verbs as *rao*/绕/roll, *xuanzhuan*/旋转/rotate and *zhuan*/转/turn show a circumference movement in a circle line with a certain axis.

Fourth, [away direction]. [+Away] is lexicalized in verbs as *li* /离/be away from, *likai* /离开/departure, *baituo* /摆脱/cast off, *tao zou* /逃走/flee, *pao* /跑/run away, *tao*/逃/take flight, *zou* /走/ leave, *gaobie*/告别/bid farewell to, *fenbie*/分别/say good-bye, *xia* /下/descend, *qu* /去/go, *qi*/起/rise, *chuchai*/出差/be on a business trip, *chufa*/出发/set out and *pen* /喷/gush. These verbs show the movement following a track of leaving an original location or somewhere the speaker refers to.

Fifth, [to the goal direction]. The semantic element [+to the goal] is lexicalized in such verbs as *cou* /凑/gather together, *jiejin* /接近/approach, *dai* /逮/catch, *daibu* /arrest, *kao*/靠/lean on, *kaojin* /靠近/close to, *dao*/到/arrive, *daoda*/到达/reach, *wang*/往/be toward, *zhua* /抓/grab, *zhui* /追/chase, *zhuo* /捉/seize, *pu* /扑/snap, *gongji* /攻击/attack, *ben*/奔/run quickly, *shang* /上/get on, *gan* /赶/chase after, *gen* /跟/go with, *gensui* /跟随/follow, *lai*/来/come, etc. These words imply the meaning of going toward a certain goal.

Sixth, [the peripheral to the center direction]. This direction is lexicalized in these verbs as *baowei* /包围/surround, *wei*/围/enclose, *jihe* /集合/gather, *jizhong* /集中/concentrate, etc.

Seventh, [the center to the peripheral direction]. This direction, in contrast to the sixth, means the moving object goes from the center to the peripheral direction. For example, *jiesan* /解散/dissolve, *san*/散/scatter, etc. are typical examples in this category.

Eighth, [off the ground direction]. The verbs *beng* (蹦) and *tiao* (跳) implicate the meaning of [+off the ground], signifying that the direction is going from an original ground to a distance very near.

Ninth, [into direction]. This direction [+into] is lexicalized in verbs as *cha*/插/insert, *zuan*/钻/drill, *ru*/入/enter, etc.

Tenth, [out direction]. This direction is lexicalized in verbs as *chu* /出/go out, *chulai* /出来/come out, *dao* /倒/discard, *chuqu*/出去/go out. They demonstrate that objects go out of somewhere.

Eleventh, [forward direction]. Verbs lexicalized this direction include these typical examples: chaoguo /超过/ surpass, chong /冲/dash, kai /开/start, kaidong /开动/set going, mai /迈/stride, qianjin /前进/march on, shang /上/face, youxing /游行/march. These verbs show that the movement goes in the forward direction.

Twelfth, [front direction]. This direction is best represented in these verbs: dai /带/lead, shuailing /率领/head, etc. These verbs indicate a motion that the agent goes in front while the patient follows.

Thirteenth, [backward direction]. This direction is opposite to forward direction, which is fossilized in che /撤/withdraw, daotui /倒退/retrogress, hui /回/go back, dao 倒/back, tui /退/retreat, etc..

Fourteenth, [downward direction]. This direction is embedded in the following verbs: dao /倒/ topple over, chen /沉/sink in, di /滴/drip, diao/掉/drop, die /跌/fall, jiang /降/decrease, luo /落/fall down, jiangdi /降低/lower, etc..

Fifth, [upward direction]. This direction is opposite to going downward, which is lexicalized in these verbs: tai /抬/lift up, tigao /提高/increase, deng /登/mount, ding /顶/stand up to, ju /举/raise, qi /起/hold up, qilai /起来/rise , shang /上/ go upward, sheng /升/hoist up, etc..

Sixteenth, [mutual direction and opposite direction]. The former refers to a motion with two objects going toward each other, which is lexicalized in laiwang /来往/come and go, zou /走/get around, etc.. The latter refers to a special motion that an agent or patient does with his whole body moving from one posture to another, for instance, in Chinese, fan /翻/”turn over” is an idealized example.

The above sixteen categories can also be taken as semantic components of Chinese motion verbs. In order to make these sixteen categories easily identified, we list them into the following Table (Table 2).

Table 2. *Lexicalized Directions of Chinese Motion Verbs*

Verbs	Direction	Verbs	Direction
guang (逛)/ stroll, ben (奔)/rush , pao (跑)/run, sanbu (散步)/ go for a walk, benzou (奔走)/rush about	unfixed	rao (绕)/roll, xuanzhuan (旋转)/rotate, zhuan (转)/turn	circle
bai (摆)/swing, diao(掉)/fall, guai (拐)/limp, hui(回)/turn around, niu(扭)/twist, yao (摇)/rock, yaohuang (摇晃)/wobble, zhuan (转)/turn , shan(闪)/dodge	curve	tai (抬)/lift up, deng (登)/mount, ju (举)/raise, ding (顶)/stand up to, qi(起)/hold up, sheng (升)/hoist up, tan (探)/explore, qilai (起来)/rise, shang (上)/go upward, tigao (提高)/increase	upward

li (离)/be away from, pao (跑)/run away, li kai (离开)/departure, bai tuo (摆脱)/cast off, tao zou (逃走)/flee, tao(逃)/take flight, qu (去)/leave, pen (喷)/gush, diu (丢)/, zou(走), gaobie (告别)/say goodbye, xia(下)/descend, qi(起)/rise, chuchai (出差)/be on a business trip, chufa (出发)/set out, fa (发), reng (扔), she (射), gan(赶), tou(投) pao (抛), quzhu (驱逐), fenbie (分别)	away	chen (沉)/sink in, di (滴)/drip, jiang (降)/decrease, luo (落)/fall down, diao(掉)/drop, die (跌)/fall, za (砸)/smash, zai (栽)/plant, jiangdi (降低)/lower, jiangluo (降落)/landing, ta (塌)/collapse, shuai (摔)/throw, tui(退)/back, sa (洒)/spray, xia(下), xiajiang (下降), sa (撒), xialai (下来), xiaqu (下去), dao (倒)/topple over	downward
cou (凑)/gather tighter, jiejin (接近)/approach, dai (逮)/catch, la (拉)/, daibu (逮捕)/arrest, kao (靠)/lean on, kaojin (靠近)/close to, dao(到)/arrive, zhui (追)/chase, daoda (到达)/reach, qian (牵), zhua (抓)/grasp, zhua (捉)/seize, pu (扑)/snap, gan (赶)/chase after, wang (往)/be toward, lai (来)/come, gen (跟)/go with, gongji (攻击)/attack, gensui (跟随)/follow, shang (上)/get on, ben (奔)/run quickly	to the goal	chaoguo(超过)/surpass, chong (冲)/dash, kai (开)/start, kaidong (开动)/set going, mai (迈)/stride, qianjin (前进)/march on, shang (上)/face, youxing (游行)/march, tan (探)/move forward	forward
baowei (包围)/surround, wei (围)/enclose, jihe (集合)/gather, jizhong (集中)/concentrate	peripheral to center	chu(出)/go out, chulai (出来)/come out, chuqu (出去)/go out, dao (倒)/discard, xiaoshi (消失)/vanish	out
cha (插)/insert, chunxian (出现), zuan (钻)/drill, ru (入)/enter	into	che (撤)/withdraw, daotui (倒退)/retrogress, hui (回)/go back, dao (倒)/back, tui (退)/retreat	backward
beng (蹦)/leap, tiao(跳)/jump	off the ground	jiesan (解散)/dissolve, san (散)/scatter	center to peripheral
dai (带)/lead, shuailing (率领)/head	front	diao (掉)/drop, laiwang (来往)/come and go, zou (走)/get around	mutual
tiao (跳)/bounce	up and down	fan (翻)/turn over	opposite
		dian (点)/click	toward and back

Similarities and Differences in Terms of Quantity

From the English corpus, we find that among 238 English motion verbs, only 109 have lexicalized direction, accounting for 45.8%, while from the Chinese corpus, we select 150 Chinese motion verbs, among which 114 have lexicalized direction, taking up 76%. So comparatively speaking, Chinese motion verbs are more powerful in lexicalization of direction than English motion verbs are.

As for semantic elements of [+Direction], in English motion verbs there are seventeen kinds of directions lexicalized, whereas in Chinese motion verbs there are nineteen types of directions lexicalized, and both English and Chinese have fourteen directions in common.

Similarities and Differences in Terms of Semantic Components and Lexicalized Patterns

The types of directions that English and Chinese share consist of the following types: [+unfixed], [+to the goal], [+downward], [+forward], [+front], [+upward], [+up and down], [+off the ground], [+away], [+circle], [+curve], [+backward], [+toward and back] and [+into].

In addition, English and Chinese motion verbs have their own respective ways of lexicalizing directions, which, in English, include such types as [+unordered], [+internal to around], and [+Z shape], and in Chinese, is composed of such types as [+out],[+opposite], [+mutual], [+peripheral to center] and [+center to peripheral].

Last, as for the lexicalized pattern, it is obvious that English and Chinese differ a lot in spite of the fact that there are a few similarities between them. For example, both English and Chinese share [unfixed] semantic component, yet, the words used to lexicalize this semantic component are mostly different, and only a few are complete counterparts. In English, sixteen words are frequently used to lexicalize this semantic component; whilst in Chinese only five words have this function.

Reasons Underlying Similarities and Differences

The above analysis reveals that there are greater differences and fewer similarities in lexicalization of direction in English and Chinese motion verbs. Superficially, the similarities and differences are reflected in the usage of words, actually, it is the result of the functioning of the conceptual structuring system, which is based on schematic systems. And the formation of these schematic systems is inseparable from perception.

When we perceive “the world out there”, such perception mechanisms as figure-ground segregation, principle of proximity, principle of similarity, principle of closure, principle of continuity, principle of smallness, etc. are in operation (Evans and Green 2006: 67). Obviously when we (i.e. both Englishmen and Chinese) perceive things, actions, scenes, etc., these mechanisms will vary for English and Chinese because the operation of these mechanisms is to a great extent influenced by language which “splits up the world and converts the infinite diversity of reality into a manageable and

divisible network” (Baldinger 1977:93). But we can also image that since we are human beings, who are determined by some universal core features like [+animate], [human], etc., thus we share some of these mechanisms, which determine our commonality in perception and even in conceptualization.

Conclusion

In the above, starting from a corpus-based approach, we first analyzed how English and Chinese motion verbs respectively lexicalize direction, and then made a contrastive analysis of the ways of lexicalization of direction in both English and Chinese motion verbs. The study reveals that, in the first, Chinese motion verbs tend to be more powerful in lexicalizing directions than English motion verbs do; secondly, the types of directions lexicalized in Chinese motion verbs are more than those of directions lexicalized in English motion verbs; thirdly, greater differences exist between the ways of lexicalization of direction in English and Chinese motion verbs; fourthly, the differences are not just the matter of lexical usage, but also that of conceptual structuring. This study presents us with a new perspective to examine motion verbs and will shed us a light on avoiding bad diction while expressing motion and direction in English or translating motion verbs between English and Chinese.

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