

The Eventuality of Mandarin Chinese

By Sun Zhaochun



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By Ann Hanks

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前 言

本书的研究对象是汉语单语素动词 (Mono-morphemic Verbs) 的事件结构 (Eventuality)。人们普遍认为动词有四种体 (Aspect): 状态体 (State), 行为体 (Activity), 完成体 (Achievement) 和完结体 (Accomplishment)。在英语中, 上述四种体都是在词库 (Lexicon) 中表达的。但汉语的情况有所不同。由于汉语中的单语素动词没有结点 (Telicity), 因此汉语只有状态体和行为体是在词库中表达的。那么, 汉语中的完成体和完结体是如何表达的呢? 这是本书所关注的主要问题。

本书首先从探讨汉语如何表达状态体和行为体开始。状态体和行为体分别具有 [- stages, - telic] 和 [+ stages, - telic] 的特征。由于汉语中单语素动词也具有 [- telic] 的特征, 因此这两种体在汉语词库中直接表达。我们在这一部分还探讨了状态体和行为体的事件结构 (Event Structure), 或称词汇关系结构 (Lexical Relational Structures) (Hale and Keyser 1991, 1993)。

本书第二部分探讨了汉语如何表达完成体。本文认为, 汉语的完成体是通过句法手段来表达的, 即在状态动词和行为动词的基础上加上一个体标记词 (了, 着, 到等), 如: 红了, 见到。体标记词用来表达事件的终点 (Endpoint), 功能相当于事件谓词 BECOME, 表示状态变化 (Inchoative Change of State)。这一部分还讨论了体标记词的共存现象。体标记词相当于一个标界词 (Delimiter), 表示事件的终结。因此, 每个事件只能允许出现一个体标记词作为标界, 我们称其为“一个事件一个标界词原则” (One Delimiter Per-Event Principle)。这可以解释为什么一个事件不允许出现多个体标记词。

本书最后部分探讨了汉语如何表达完结体。汉语有两种方式表达完结体: 第一种方式是在行为动词上加一个表达结果的体标记词 (了, 着, 到等), 如: 抓到, 吃了, 表示事件的结果。这类行为动词必须是可持续性动词, 具有 [+ stages] 特征。表达完结体的另一种途径是动结结构 (Resultative Verbal Constructions)。动结结构是复杂事件结构, 其中一个事件表示动作 (Activity), 另一个事件表示结果 (Result)。根据语段理论 (Phase Theory) (Chomsky 2000), 我们认为动结结构是一个 *vP*-壳 (*vP*-Shell) 结构, 也就是

说，动结结构是由两个 *vP* 嵌套在一起的，它们是两个独立的语段，在概念结构上蕴涵着致使关系 (Causal Relation)。完结体的事件结构可以表达为 [CAUSE (DO) BECOME (BE)]，其中 CAUSE 和 BECOME 是两个功能语类，DO 和 BE 是两个实体 (Entity)。这两个实体间并没有致使关系。它们之间的致使关系是通过功能语类 CAUSE 和 BECOME 表达的。根据完结体的事件结构，我们分析了汉语中不同动结结构的句法生成。本书认为，动结结构的释义和歧义现象是由句法结构的差异造成的。完结体的事件结构可以给汉语中的“得”字结构和英语的动结结构一个统一的解释。本书在结语部分提出两个值得思考的问题：第一个问题是“论元结构 (Argument Structure) 是什么”；第二个问题是“论元结构在哪里”。对于这两个问题，人们看法不同。站在乔姆斯基生成语法的角度，我们认为论元结构是句法结构 (Syntactic Structure) 的一部分，论元结构生成于句法结构。

Abstract

This book is dedicated to a research on the eventuality of Mandarin Chinese (MC). It is acknowledged that state, activity, achievement and accomplishment are the four basic aspectual types of verbs. In some languages like English, the four lexical aspects are denoted in the Lexicon, but in other languages, such as in MC, this is not the case. As we know, the mono-morphemic verbs in MC are void of telicity. And due to this property, we claim that they can only denote the eventuality of state and activity in the Lexicon. Then, how MC denotes the eventuality of achievement and accomplishment arouses our interest.

Our study begins from how state and activity are denoted in the Lexicon in the verbal system of MC. Meanwhile, the event structure of them have been explored. Then, the book proceeds to explore how achievement and accomplishment are denoted in MC. Through our study, we have found that MC has to take advantage of grammatical means to denote the two eventualities; to denote achievement, MC has to add aspect markers to shift the eventuality of state or activity into achievement. Aspect markers function as the eventuality predicate BECOME, which denotes the inchoative change of state; to denote accomplishment, MC has mainly two ways—one is to add aspect markers to activity verbs to denote a result, and the other is to make use of resultative verbal constructions (RVCs). RVCs are complex events which denote accomplishment, with one subevent denoting a cause event and the other subevent denoting a result event. The formation of RVCs can be accommodated in our accomplishment event structure. In addition to RVCs, we have found that DE constructions and English resultative constructions can also be accommodated in the accomplishment event structure. Our book comes to a conclusion that in MC state and activity are denoted in the Lexicon and achievement and accomplishment are denoted in syntax.

Key words: eventuality; state; activity; achievement; accomplishment; lexical aspect; grammatical aspect

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Introduction

This book studies the eventuality^① of Mandarin Chinese (MC). Specifically, it is dedicated to how MC denotes the four types of eventuality proposed by Vendler (1957, 1967). According to Vendler (1957, 1967), English verbs are of four aspectual classes: state, activity, achievement and accomplishment. In contrast, the mono-morphemic verbs in MC can only denote two lexical aspects—state and activity. This contrast motivates us to carry out the present study.

Our study is done within the Principles and Parameters (P&P) framework in the spirit of MP (Minimalist Program) (Chomsky 1995, 2000). Chomsky (1995) articulates an extremely stringent hypothesis about the architecture of FL (Faculty of Language): Universal Grammar has only one computational system and any variation between languages reduces to differences in the lexical items that enter the computational system. Our study in this book can be a very good annotation of his hypothesis.

This book, which consists of five parts, is structured as follows:

In Chapter One, we introduce the previous approaches to eventuality and the Chomskyan light verb. Regarding the approaches to eventuality, we introduce two mainstreams. One is Vendler's (1957) template approach, in which English verbs are classified into four aspectual classes: state, activity, achievement, and accomplishment. We examine and compare the features of each of the event types, which can be represented distinctly with respect to the features [\pm telic, \pm stages]. The other approach to eventuality is along the line of lexical decomposition. We introduce four representatives along with the historical development of this approach. As for the Chomskyan light verb, we introduce its origin and development. The light verb we adopt in this book is in strict accordance with the

① In this book, we distinguish “eventuality” from “event”; the former is a cover term for all the event types (state, activity, achievement, and accomplishment).

concept of the Chomskyan light verb.

Chapter Two discusses how MC denotes the event types of state and activity. An examination of the properties of the verbs in MC shows that the mono-morphemic verbs in MC are void of telicity, which leads to the fact that there are only two lexical aspects in MC: state and activity. That is to say, mono-morphemic verbs in MC cannot denote the event types of achievement and accomplishment, both of which are telic. Then, we discuss how the event types of state and activity are realized in MC. The eventuality of state is denoted by adjectives and stative verbs, and the eventuality of activity by activity verbs. In addition, we explore the inner structure, i. e. the event structure, of the two eventualities in line with Hale and Keyser's (1993) Lexical Relational Structures (LRSs).

Chapter Three is devoted to the study of the achievement eventuality, which cannot be denoted in the Lexicon as mono-morphemic verbs in MC are void of telicity. According to our research, to denote achievement, MC has to make use of syntactic devices by adding to an adjective or an instantaneous activity verb aspect markers like *le*, *dao*, *zhao*, *qilai*, etc., which shift the eventuality of state or activity into achievement. Our study finds that aspect markers function as delimiters which indicate the telicity of an event. We propose the principle of One Delimiter Per-Event Constraint (ODPEC) which claims that one event only allows one delimiter indicating the endpoint of the event. We also discuss the co-existence of aspect markers in one sentence.

Chapter Four is a study on the eventuality of accomplishment in MC. According to our study, this eventuality can be realized in two ways, which are both syntactic. The first is to add aspect markers, like *le*, *dao*, *zhao*, etc., to activity verbs to shift their eventuality into accomplishment. The other way is to resort to Resultative Verbal Constructions (RVCs), which are our foci of study in this chapter. RVCs are complex events composed of two subevents, which entail a causal relation; one denotes the cause and the other denotes the result. We propose that the two subevents, each headed by light verb *v*, form a *vP*-shell structure, denoting an accomplishment event. We analyze the syntactic structure of four types of RVCs on the basis of the accomplishment event structure. Our study shows that the argument structures of the four RVCs are different, which explains why some RVCs have more than one interpretation. Before ending the chapter, we touch on the event structure of English Resultative Constructions (ERCs), the aim of which is to find a unified

account of the resultative constructions in different languages.

Chapter Five gives the conclusion of the study.

Chapter One

Approaches to Eventuality: A Review

Introduction

The study on eventuality dates back to the time of Aristotle, who distinguished *kineseis* (movement) and *energiai* (actualities) both in *Metaphysics* (1048) and in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1074). The two categories roughly correspond to “accomplishment” and “activity/state” (Kenny 1963, Dowty 1979). Since then, eventuality has attracted the attention of many philosophers and linguists. In this chapter, we shall review two mainstreams of approaches to eventuality. One is the “template approach” represented by Vendler (1957, 1967), and the other is the “decompositional approach” represented by McCawley (1968), Dowty (1979), Hale and Keyser (henceforth, H&K 1991, 1993), Huang (1991, 1997), and Lin (2001).

This chapter is structured as follows: in section 1.1, we give a detailed introduction to the Vendlerian four-way aspectual classes of verbs, which are featured by [\pm telic] and [\pm stages]; in section 1.2, we present some of the researches on eventuality in the decompositional approach; section 1.3 is a brief introduction to the origin and development of the Chomskyan light verb; and section 1.4 is a brief summary.

1.1 Vendlerian Aspectual Classification of Verbs

In this section, we will introduce Vendler’s aspectual classification of English verbs. This section consists of six subsections: in 1.1.1, we give a general introduction to the four aspectual classes of verbs in English; in the next four subsections, from 1.1.2 to 1.1.5, we examine the properties of state, activity, accomplishment, and achievement respectively; in 1.1.6, we give a summary.

1.1.1 General Introduction to Vendler's Aspectual Classes of Verbs

The classic twentieth-century philosophical sources for classifying verbs into aspectual classes^① are Ryle (1949), Vendler (1957, 1967), and Kenny (1963). Ryle (1949) crucially distinguishes between the event types of achievement and accomplishment: accomplishment denotes a change of state which has some “task” associated with it, whereas achievement involves a change of state without such an associated task, i. e. the bare change of state itself. Kenny (1963) ignores Ryle's (1949) distinction and concentrates on the differences between state, activity and performance, where performance indicates an event which has a natural endpoint. Actually, he is concerned mainly about accomplishment, and tacitly he would probably categorize achievement as performance.

Vendler's (1957, 1967) classification of verbs into state, activity, achievement, and accomplishment^②, encompassing both Ryle's (1949) and Kenny's (1963) intuitions, has proved very fruitful, probably the most influential in the relevant linguistic research over the last 40 years, and it provides the basis for Dowty's (1979) seminal semantic analysis. Dowty (1979) discusses and develops Vendler's (1957, 1967) classification of verbal predicates into four different classes according to their logical entailments, interactions with temporal modifiers, and interactions with tense, though he retains the same terminology. Our study on eventuality in MC is based mainly on Vendler's (1957, 1967) and Dowty's (1979) classification of aspectual classes of verbs. Roughly, in Dowty's sense, states are non-dynamic situations, such as *be ill* or *feel*; activities are open-ended processes, such as *cry* or *run*; achievements are near instantaneous events which are over as soon as they have begun, such as *see* or *notice*; and accomplishments are

① In this book, as we will clarify soon, “aspect” does not refer to the grammatical aspect such as “progressive” and “perfective”; and “aspectual class” is sometimes used interchangeably with “eventuality class”.

② Smith (1991) adds a fifth aspectual class, “semelfactive”. Semelfactive verbs, or semelfactive uses of verbs, are verbal predicates used to denote single instances of events usually considered to be activities. Classic examples are *jump*, *wink*, and *kick*. In her definition, achievements are instantaneous culminating eventualities, while semelfactives are instantaneous non-culminating eventualities. Unlike achievements, semelfactives result in no change of state (cf. Rothstein 2004: 183 – 187). In our book, we will not discuss semelfactives since they do not belong to the canonical classification of eventuality types.

processes which have a natural endpoint, such as *build a house* or *read a book*. The examples in (1) are given by Dowty (1979: 54).

(1)

States	Activities	Achievements	Accomplishments
know	run	recognize	paint a picture
believe	walk	spot	make a chair
have	swim	find	deliver a sermon
desire	push a cart	reach	draw a circle
love	drive a car	die	build a house

The four aspectual types above are referred to as “lexical aspect”, which is different from “grammatical aspect”. Lexical aspect, sometimes called situation aspect or “aktionsart”, covers distinctions between properties of event types denoted by verbal expressions, which linguists have tried to capture by classifying verbs into verb classes. Grammatical aspect, sometimes called viewpoint aspect, concerns the distinction in perspective on events, in particular the contrast between perfective and imperfective. The distinction between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect is quite essential since the interaction of them is an important and fascinating question, but it is beyond the scope of this book^①. This book is concerned about lexical aspect and the properties we can ascribe to event types in the denotations of particular lexical items.

The four-way Vendlerian classification of eventuality entails two crucial properties of eventuality, that is, whether an event type has a natural endpoint (whether it is telic) and whether it is progressing or developing (whether it is dynamic, or has stages). We will discuss the properties themselves before going on to look at the aspectual classes of verbs.

The first property [\pm telic] targets the Aristotelian distinction *kineseis* vs. *energiai*. Eventuality of the first kind is [+telic], and it is a movement towards an endpoint where the properties of the endpoint are determined by the description of the event. Eventuality of the second kind is [–telic]. Once it has started, it can go

① In Section 1.1.3, we will give some examples to show how lexical aspect and grammatical aspect interact with each other.