

# 现代汉语 动量词层现的 认知研究

张媛 著

A Cognitive Study  
on the Emergence of  
Mandarin Chinese Verbal Classifiers

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# 前言

博士生入学的第一次师生见面,我的导师刘振前教授就教导我要研读认知语言学领域的奠基性著作和最新研究成果,并将该领域理论和方法应用于汉语研究,只有扎根于汉语这片土壤,国外的语言学理论才会更有生命力。于是,在导师的指导下,我将研究对象逐渐锁定在汉语动量词上。

现代汉语动量词最大程度地反映了汉语语言的复杂性(郭绍虞,1979:27)。以往的研究在一定程度上反映了量词的语法表现及本质,并且推动了量词研究的进程,深化了我们对量词的理解。然而,一些主要问题仍然存在。一方面,大多数研究都是描写性质;另一方面,重名量轻动量的现象一直存在,致使动量词的许多语法表现还未被发掘并深入分析。直到20世纪末,这种趋势有所改观。研究者们已经意识到动量词在现代汉语语法中的特殊性,它们在形式和意义方面都表现出多样性。研究这一语言现象不仅有助于对语言共性的理解,也能够进一步揭示汉语语言的个性。

随着研究的深入,我在理论框架的建构方面遇到了难题,语法转喻理论、构式语法理论和认知语法理论对于动量词本身、动量词的语法表现等具有很强的阐释力,但对于动量词的具身基础和认知成因似乎还需要深究。正在我对此迷茫时,徐盛桓教授在山东大学所做的一次关于心智哲学的学术讲座给了我启发,随后我便向徐教授请教,说明了自己的研究现状和困惑,徐教授当时就提出了将心智哲学作为理论框架一部分的建议。在此基础上,整个研究的理论框架便建构起来了。

本研究以认知语言学作为主要理论基础,借用了心智哲学中的发现,二者相得益彰。然而,认知视角下的研究常常受到质疑,因为研究结果往往被认为过于依赖于个体的内省。因此,实证的方法必不可少。本研究借助语料库,总结出了动量词在自然语言中的用法以及使用频率,基于对动量词用法的描写,逆推出动量词层现的过程,建构了理论框架,并从认知角度进行细致阐释。为了深入研究,本研究对三类动量词次类中的三个使用频率最高的动量词作了个案分析。

本研究认为对动量词的认知阐释以及认知分类应作为进一步研究的基础。从认知角度来看,动量词是范畴化的方式,是行为或事件的某一侧面突显的结果,反过来又对行为或事件加以界性。这一认知阐释为分类问题提供了理据,根据动词语义框架内的参与者角色,动量词可被分为若干类,基于参与者角色的不确定性,动量词次类划分也具有开放性。

动量词在心智中的认知层现过程分为三个阶段:语前思维阶段、语言思维Ⅰ和语言思维Ⅱ。这三个阶段符合人类认知从低级形式向高级形式发展的过程。而且,这三个层次的发展也体现出认知科学的基本原则,即体验性。

首先,在语前思维阶段,三类动量词次类历经了相似的心智活动:

意向——活动思维——意象思维——内容思维——概念形成。

其次,在语言思维Ⅰ这一阶段,语法转喻机制发挥作用,某些参与者角色或行为框架本身作为整体会突显,并转喻动量。名词或动词也被再归类为动量词。

然后,在语言思维Ⅱ这一阶段,动量词进入不同的形式-意义的搭配体——构式。形式是意义在句法层面的映射,意义又是对同一场景不同识解角度的反映。三类动量词在构式行为上体现出相似性以及不同特点,语料库检索有利于发现构式类型、个体及使用频率等方面的特点。通过对比,已经发现它们之间形成了种种连续体。

总之,现代汉语动量词,无论是暂时借用的,还是已经语法化了的,虽然在各个层次上可能会有一定的区别,但都经历了相似的认知层现过程。

本研究在以下几方面也具有一定的启示:(1)反映了语言共性和语言个性的互相作用;(2)跨学科的方法有利于相对全面和系统的研究;(3)依据内省法做出的假设应该用实证方法加以论证;(4)多种研究方法为阐释同一语言现象提供了汇流的证据;(5)研究结果对对外汉语教学具有一定的启示。最后,本研究对动量词的后续研究提出了建议。

本书从选题到完成,离不开恩师刘振前教授的悉心指导,也幸得徐盛桓教授的不吝赐教,更离不开家人在背后的支持和鼓励,还有许许多多以各种方式帮助我的老师、同学和朋友们,对他们感恩在心。

张 媛

2016年3月

# List of Abbreviations

ACls	Adjective Classifiers
CCxG	Cognitive Construction Grammar
CIP	Classifier Phrase
Cls	Classifiers
Comp.	Complement
FAR	Full Argument Realization
ICM	Idealized Cognitive Model
NCls	Noun Classifiers
NP	Noun Phrase
Num.	Numeral
Pass.	Passive
Poss.	Possessive
VCls	Verbal Classifiers
VP	Verb Phrase

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The classifiers in Sino-Tibetan languages constitute a word class worthy of being studied with much effort (Ma, 1998, p. 15). Mandarin Chinese is a numeral classifier language, the most common type among classifier languages<sup>①</sup> (Jenny & Sera, 2009, p. 2). Classifiers in Mandarin Chinese were defined as words indicating the number unit of things or actions. Their word class status has been established formally since the publication of “*A Brief Introduction to ‘a Temporary Chinese Teaching Grammatical System’*”<sup>②</sup> in the 1950s. This word class reflects the complexity of the Chinese language to a great extent (Guo, 1979, p. 27).

Even though the functions of classifiers were touched upon in many grammatical studies in the 19th century, the class status of Chinese classifiers was not established until the 1950s. Since Chinese grammarians shifted their focus from the universality of languages to the distinctiveness of Chinese, classifiers have received more and more attention. Many detailed studies focusing on one or another aspect of classifiers have been carried out, from the definition and classification of classifiers, to their syntactic functions, and further to their semantic features. These studies have deepened our understanding of classifiers and laid a solid foundation for further studies.

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① Three criteria for distinguishing classifier languages from non-classifier languages are “(1) classifier languages have classifiers that are restricted to characteristics of entities; (2) classifier languages have classifiers that are restricted to certain constructions; (3) classifier languages belong to one of four types—(i) numeral classifier languages, (ii) concordial classifier languages, (iii) predicate classifier languages, and (iv) intra-locative classifier languages (Allan 1977)” (Jenny & Sera, 2009, p. 2).

② 《“暂拟汉语教学语法系统”简述》(1954~1956年拟订)。

However, the literature indicates that there is an imbalance in earlier studies on the two main sub-categories of classifiers. Researchers have mainly put emphasis on noun classifiers (NCLs) while verbal classifiers (VCLs) have been deemed as less important and not worth studying. This phenomenon may be due to two facts: one is that VCLs account for a smaller proportion than NCLs in the category of classifiers; the other is that the syntactic behaviors of VCLs are not as rich as those of NCLs. This trend in research lasted more than thirty years until the 1990s when researchers had gradually found that VCLs have their own special characteristics in both semantics and syntax.

VCLs are more distinctive in the Chinese language than NCLs, since few languages have particular linguistic representations for measuring actions. For example, Chinese and English have the same way of expressing *yi bei cha* (一杯茶, "a cup of tea"), but the Chinese way of expressing "give a kick" is "*ti yi jiao*" (踢一脚). The use of *jiao* reflects the characteristics of the Chinese language in contrast with English.

Most studies conducted in the past decades are descriptive in nature. They not only analyze general and static semantic features and grammatical functions at the synchronic level, but also search for the sources of VCLs and their changes through time at the diachronic level. Descriptive research is necessary and crucial especially at the beginning of any linguistic research. Rich findings of descriptive research necessarily contribute to explanatory research. In recent years, more studies related to the interrelations among verbs, VCLs and nouns have been conducted in a dynamic way, in order to further reveal more features of VCLs, as well as the underlying reasons for their semantic and syntactic behaviors.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most recent studies of VCLs have been conducted by combining description with explanation. In addition to the angle of traditional grammar, perspectives like functional and cognitive ones have been adopted in order to gain deeper insights into the subject. Cognitive linguistics, an approach to integrate languages, the world and human beings, has been introduced into the analyses of Chinese linguistic phenomena including VCLs. Previous cognitive studies of VCLs mainly touched upon the following aspects: the cognitive features of verbs that can be measured (e. g. Xiao &

McEnery, 2004; Shui, 2005; Shu, 2007; Zhou, 2007, etc. ), the collocational rules or priority sequences among verbs, VCLs and nouns ( e. g. Shao, 1996; Liu, 2003; Fang, 2008, etc. ), the classification of VCLs from a cognitive perspective, and the cognitive mechanism of VCLs ( e. g. Shao, 2005; Zhou, 2007; Zhou, 2006; Zong, 2007, etc. ) and so on. The literature indicates that the study of VCLs is on a stage of transformation starting with the language structure itself and moving to the inner level of its cognitive foundation. It is only in recent years that the cognitive approach has been applied to VCL studies. These studies are far from being mature. There still exist problems.

To start with, most cognitive studies are conducted on the the premise of traditional definitions of VCLs which are mainly based on the traditional views of syntactic functions and semantic features of VCLs. For example, VCLs are words measuring actions; VCLs are words attached to verbs. This casts doubt on the basis and precondition of further cognitive analyses, since these definitions focus on the language itself instead of the cognitive nature of VCLs.

Secondly, linguistic phenomena are closely related to human cognition and the physical world. Human beings, the world and the mind meet at the same point—the linguistic phenomenon of VCLs. How these factors contribute to this linguistic phenomenon has not been discussed in previous studies. An exploration of this aspect will contribute to a deeper understanding of VCLs.

Thirdly, studies of the cognitive mechanism of VCLs are important in the exploration into the underlying motivations for linguistic phenomena. However, previous analyses of VCLs are very limited in this regard. Even though there is general consensus that metonymy motivates the prominence of VCLs, there have been very few observations on the grammatical consequences brought about by metonymy. This is the point that should be explored in depth.

Finally, rich research results of previous studies on VCLs' syntactic and semantic features contribute much to later studies. The cognitive perspective is a new approach to research. However, it will be seen that previously employed ways are not without limitations. In particular, more focus is put on one or another special syntactic structure of VCLs, while general syntactic behaviors of VCLs are not tackled adequately due to the lack of usage-based studies. Our understanding of VCLs' features at syntactic and semantic levels is pretty much limited and previous hypotheses have not been testified by empirical data. Many syntactic and semantic

features have even been neglected. The analyses are still far from being comprehensive. Given the importance of usages of VCLs in natural language, it is highly advisable to conduct corpus-based research with a combination of different cognitive methods to make up for the deficiency in the previous studies.

In all, despite the progress of VCL studies and advantages of cognitive approach shown by recent studies, there are still many problems to be tackled. How to interpret and classify VCLs from a cognitive perspective? How are VCLs related to the mind? What cognitive mechanism functions motivate the prominence of VCLs and what are the accompanying grammatical consequences? How do VCLs behave at the syntactic level and what semantic features are reflected? Is there any inner relationship among the above several aspects? These questions deserve further investigation.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the corpus, the present study has been designed to explore the emergence of VCLs from the mind. Take a closer look at the the several cognitive aspects mentioned in the previous section, and it is not hard to find their intimate connections. The mind is where cognition starts, so the cognitive studies of VCLs cannot evade the study of the mind. Cognitive mechanism motivates the prominence of VCLs at the lexical level. VCLs must further play their roles in certain structures to indicate certain meanings. From the most fundamental mind activities to the motivational cognitive mechanism, and to the explicit syntactic and semantic features, VCLs enter natural language system step by step and its communicative function is gradually realized. Accordingly, the following objectives are to be achieved in the present study:

(1) Interpreting and classifying VCLs from the cognitive perspective. This is the pre-condition for the analysis of VCLs within the framework of cognitive linguistics.

(2) Constructing the framework to account for the emergence of VCLs. The framework has the following characteristics: (i) starting from the mind activity—intentionality to explore the most fundamental biological basis; (ii) exploring the way



from innate language<sup>①</sup> to natural language, and from pre-linguistic thinking to linguistic thinking; (iii) progressing from the lexical level to syntactic structures, in line with the continuum between lexicon and grammar; (iv) being in accordance with the basic cognitive rule: progressing from low form of cognition to high form of cognition.

(3) Exploring how the cognitive mechanism motivates the prominence of VCLs at the lexical level.

(4) Investigating the syntactic behaviors and semantic features of VCLs from the cognitive perspective, and finding out the commonalities as well as differences across sub-categories of VCLs.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study is among the rare ones to investigate the cognitive emergence of VCLs in Mandarin Chinese from the mind. “There is no doubt that the study of classifier systems in natural languages has much to contribute to a better understanding of the nature of categorization in human cognition on one hand, and to the nature of semantic structure of language on the other.” (Craig, 1986, p. 3) Aimed at a deeper understanding of VCLs’ cognitive nature in terms of pre-linguistic mind activities, cognitive mechanism, syntactic behaviours and semantic features, the present study is of significance theoretically, methodologically and pedagogically.

Theoretically, for one thing, cognitive linguistics is the product of the interaction between cognitive science and linguistics. As a branch of linguistics as well as a research approach, it places emphasis on the effect of the embodied experience and encyclopedic knowledge on the understanding and interpretation of linguistic phenomena. One of the most important goals it endeavors to reach is to explore the cognitive universality underlying languages. The universality is usually abstracted from individual languages. Therefore, the application of cognitive linguistics to the study of Mandarin Chinese is a development and enrichment for this branch of linguistics. For another thing, a theoretical framework is going to be constructed to account for the emergence of VCLs in Mandarin Chinese. This framework may contribute to further studies.

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① “Innate language” to the mind activities is what “natural language” to linguistic activities (for a detailed discussion, see 3.2.3).