

L2 Acquisition of English MC and Its Related  
Structure by Chinese and Korean Learners:  
Towards an Event Structure-based Account

以汉语和韩语为母语的英语学习者  
对英语中动及其相关结构的习得：  
基于事件结构理论的解释

高育松 著



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## 前言

本书旨在探讨以汉语和韩语为母语的英语学习者如何习得英语中动及其他去及物结构。研究以 Pustejovsky (1990a, 1990b, 1996) 扩展的事件结构理论 (EEST) 为理论框架。鉴于该理论没有细化(复杂)事件分解为子事件的条件, 尚不能充分解释英语去及物结构, 本研究对 EEST 做了进一步修正, 提出了(复杂)事件分解为子事件的三个条件, 即“子事件独立表达条件”、“事件参与者表达条件”和“子事件-结构性事件参与者一致条件”。

基于修正后的扩展的事件结构理论 (EEST), 本研究提出英语去及物化过程是一个将复杂事件分解为子事件的过程, 其中一个子事件被前景化、另一个子事件被背景化。就语义限制而言, 动词的内在体和施动性是决定一个动词能否进入英语去及物结构的两个关键语义因素。不同的去及物结构突显了不同的子事件, 反映了不同程度的施动性和终结性。研究发现, 英语中动结构受三个语义限制条件的制约: 中心事件限制条件、事件自主性限制条件和事件焦点一致性限制条件。从跨语言的角度考察, 研究同时发现汉语中动仅受中心事件限制条件和焦点一致限制条件制约, 所以比英语中动更加能产。韩语由于施动性扩展能力有限, 不能生成像英语中动一样的句子结构。

基于 Montrul (1997, 2000) 二语致使转化的习得理论和 Gleitman (1990) 的透镜假设, 本研究探讨了英语中动及其相关结构习得的发展路径及习得机制。研究假定, 学习者在习得初始阶段主要依赖一个省却的事件结构和一些基于标准事件结构的策略, 而一语形态则会以模块化的方式影响二语中动及其相关结构的习得。在第二阶段, 学习者会意识到  $NP_{(P)}$  VP 结构描述的是一个可以自主发生或施事介入程度较低的动态事件, 而  $NP_{(A)}$  VP 结构则聚焦于施事的行为活动, 描述一种非自主性的事件。发现这些事件特征有助于使学习者注意到静态动词和修饰施事的附加语与  $NP_{(P)}$  VP (中动和去使役结构) 结构不相匹配, 而能够表达自主事件的动词则与  $NP_{(A)}$  VP 结构 (去被动结构) 相排斥。在第三阶段, 学习者

会注意到 NP<sub>(P)</sub> VP 描述了两不同的事件类型: 中动结构描述的是一个以起始为焦点的半自主性事件, 去使役结构描述的是一个以结果为焦点的自主性事件。学习者在这一阶段还会意识到达成动词和具有强施动性的动词不能进入中动结构。

为了在事件结构理论框架下检验这些假说的合理性, 本研究提出了 7 个假设, 设计了 5 个调查工具来验证这些假设。5 个调查工具分别是可接受性判断任务、引导性翻译任务、强制选择任务、句子纠错任务和后续访谈任务。共有 90 名分属三个水平组的以汉语为母语的英语学习者、16 名以韩语为母语的英语学习者和 24 名英语本族语人士作为对照组参加了本研究。

本研究结果在很大程度上验证了本研究所预测的发展路径, 发现静态动词构成的中动结构要比达成动词构成的中动结构更易于为学习者所拒绝, 自主性事件和非自主性事件要比半自主性事件和非自主性事件更易于区分。研究同时发现, 动词语义不是学习者判断一个去及物句是否合法的唯一依据, 他们对动词之外的语义、语篇等因素同样敏感。

研究还发现中韩英语学习者的系统性差异是由于学习者所依赖的省却结构受一语影响所致。此外, 一语形态对二语的影响并非呈模块状, 而是与其他因素共同作用于学习者。基于此, 本研究提出了一语介入式省却事件结构假设来解释去及物性结构习得的初始状态。

本研究的理论贡献主要体现在以下几个方面。首先, 考虑到前期研究提出的语义限制条件的不充分性, 本研究提出的语义限制条件有助于我们更好地理解英语中动及其相关结构的生成条件。其次, 本研究提供了一个统一的框架, 来解释英语去及物性结构习得的过程和特点, 弥补了以往研究中忽视中动和去被动结构的不足。最后, 本研究认为模块式一语迁移说不能成立, 一语形态和其他因素相互作用、共同影响二语中动及其相关结构的习得。学习者的某一具体习得行为, 或是句法形态的影响所致, 或是语义、语篇因素的影响所致, 亦或是多种因素相互作用的结果。

高育松

2010 年 3 月

## Preface

This book sets out to investigate, within the framework of an event structure theory, the problem of how Chinese and Korean EFL learners<sup>1</sup> acquire the English MC and its related structures. The conceptual framework of the present study is based on Pustejovsky's extended event structure theory (EEST). However, EEST does not specify the conditions for the well-formedness of event decomposition, which weakens its power in explaining English detransitivization. Given this inadequacy, EEST is further revised in this study. The revised EEST delineates three conditions for the well-formedness of event decomposition (*i.e.*, Subevent Individualization Condition (SIC), Event Participant Expression Condition (EPEC), and Subevent-Structural Participant Agreement Condition (SPAC)).

On the basis of the revised EEST, the present study proposes that English detransitivization can be viewed as a process undergoing event decomposition in which one sub-event is foregrounded while the other is backgrounded. Throughout the process, two semantic properties, *i.e.*, aspect and agentivity, figure prominently in determining whether a transitive verb can undergo detransitivization. Different detransitized structures, thus, are shown to manifest different degrees of agentivity and telicity, denoting different event types. As to English MC, three semantic constraints are identified, *i.e.*, Headedness Constraint, Event Autonomy Constraint, and Event Focus Agreement Constraint. Moreover, cross-linguistically, Chinese MC is more produc-

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1 In this book, Chinese EFL learners, Chinese learners of English, and Chinese-speaking learners of English are used interchangeably, referring to learners of English whose mother tongue is Chinese. Similarly, Korean EFL learners, Korean learners of English, and Korean-speaking learners of English all refer to learners of English whose mother tongue is Korean.

tive than its English counterpart because it is only susceptible to the Headedness Constraint and Event Focus Agreement Constraint. Korean has no English-like MC due to its restricted extension of agency.

The route of L2 acquisition of English MC and its related structures, together with the mechanisms underlying the route, is explored on the basis of Montrul's (1997, 2000, 2001a, 2001c) proposal of L2 acquisition of English causative alternation and Gleitman's Zoom Lens Hypothesis (Gleitman, 1990). It is assumed that use of a default event template and some canonical schema strategies characterizes the initial stage. In addition, although L1 semantics would not be transferred to L2, L1 morphology itself would impact L2 acquisition in a modular way. In the next stage, L2 learners would notice that NP<sub>(P)</sub> VP frame depicts dynamic events which can occur with little or no human involvement, and that NP<sub>(A)</sub> VP frame, by contrast, focuses on agent's activity. Discovery of these properties would enable them to notice that stative verbs and agent-oriented adverbs do not go together with NP<sub>(P)</sub> VP frame (*i.e.*, MC and AC) and that verbs denoting autonomous event are not likely with NP<sub>(A)</sub> VP frame. In the third stage, they would notice that NP<sub>(P)</sub> VP frame denotes two different event types: MC depicts a semi-autonomous event which focuses upon the initiation, and AC denotes an autonomous event which focuses upon the resulting state. L2 learners at this stage would find that achievement verbs and verbs of strong agentivity are incompatible with MC.

On the basis of the above assumptions, seven specific hypotheses were generated and then investigated using five tasks, *i.e.*, an Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT), a Guided Translation Task (GTT), a Forced-Choice Task (FCT), an Error-Correction Task (ECT) and a Follow-up Interview Task (FIT). Ninety Chinese EFL learners who represented three English proficiency levels, sixteen Korean EFL learners of low-level English proficiency, together with twenty four English-speaking native controls, participated in the investigation.



The results, to a large extent, confirmed the hypothesized developmental route. More specifically, L2 learners were found to initially adopt the default event template and some canonical schema strategies. In the subsequent learning stages, MCs formed with stative verbs were unlearned earlier than MCs formed with achievement verbs. The distinction between autonomous event and non-autonomous event was drawn earlier than that between semi-autonomous event and non-autonomous event. In addition, sensitivity to the compositional aspect of event properties was observed.

It was also found that the systematic performance differences between the Chinese and Korean learners were due to the fact that so-called default event template was susceptible to L1 influence. Moreover, contrary to the expectation, L1 morphology did not play its role in a modular way. As an alternative to Montrul's proposal, an L1-mediated default event template was proposed to account for the initial stage of L2 acquisition of English MC and its related structures.

The contribution of this study rests in the following aspects. First, it contributes to a better understanding of the semantic constraints upon English MC since previously identified semantic constraints turn out to be descriptively inadequate in accounting for English MC formation. Second, it provides a unified account for L2 acquisition of English detransitivization, which is otherwise addressed in a rather isolated manner, as is notably manifest in the studies of causative alternation in which MC and antipassive were not considered at all. And finally, a modular view of L1 transfer has been disconfirmed. It is proposed that L1 morphology interacts with other factors to influence L2 acquisition of English MC and other detransitivized structures. A particular learner behavior may have a morph-syntactic source, a semantic, or a pragmatic source, or arise as a problem of the interface between them.

Yusong Gao

March, 2010

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## List of Abbreviations

- ABS: Absolutive case marker
- AC: Anticausative construction
- ACC: Middles formed with accomplishment verbs
- Acc: Accusative case marker
- ACH: (illicit) middles formed with achievement verbs
- ACT: Middles formed with activity verbs
- AIH: Aspect Interface Hypothesis
- AJT: Acceptability Judgment Test
- AP: Antipassive construction
- ARB: Arbitrary agent
- AgrO: Object agreement
- AspP: Aspect Phrase
- Cau: Causative marker
- CH: Chinese learners of English
- CL: Classifier
- Dec: Declarative sentence-type suffix
- ECT: Error Correction Task
- EEST: extended event structure theory
- EFL: English as foreign language
- EPEC: Event Participant Expression Condition
- FIT: Follow-up Interview Task
- FCT: Forced-Choice Task
- GJT: Grammaticality Judgment Task
- GL: Generative Lexicon
- GTT: Guided Translation Task

HDLS: Middles formed with headless verbs or antipassives formed with this verb type

Incho: Inchoative

INSTRU: Instrument middles

IPF: Inherent Property Foregrounding

Is: Instigator

KOR: Korean learners of English

L1: First language

L2: Second language

LDCE: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

LF: (illicit) Middles formed with left-headed verbs

MC: Middle construction

Me: Medium

Mid: Middle marker

MF: Middle formation

Nom: nominative case

NP: Noun Phrase

NONAUTO: (illicit) middles formed with verbs denoting strong agentivity

Pass: Passive marker

Past: Past tense

PER: (illicit) Middles formed with perception verbs

Perf: perfective

PJT: Picture Judgment Task

Pres: Present tense

Prog: progressive

PSYOBJ: Psych verbs of object experiencer or middles formed with this verb type

PSYSUB: Psych verbs of subject experiencer or middles formed with this verb type

REFL: Reflexive

RT: (illicit) Middles formed with right-headed verbs

SIC: Subevent Individualization Condition

SPAC: Subevent-structural Participant Agreement Condition

STA: (illicit) Middles formed with stative verbs

Top: Topic marker

UTAH: Universal Theta Assignment Hypothesis

VP: Verb phrase

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