

【汉语语法研究】

从认知语言学的角度探讨汉语量词教学*

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[关键词] 汉语量词的语法范畴; 认知; 界定

[摘要] 汉语中量词的语法范畴研究一直是一个难点和重点。本文从认知语言学认为语法范畴内各独立单位既有共性又有个性的观点出发, 指出汉语量词的语法范畴研究应充分认识到汉语量词的语法范畴内的界定问题, 深层理解汉语量词的语法范畴的意义及其内部结构。

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A cognition-based approach to the teaching of Chinese measure words

Almost everybody would agree that the Chinese grammatical category of measure words is difficult. After an extensive review of the literature on the subject, I have come to the conclusion that the difficulties and controversies surrounding this category are due to the categorisation concept from which it is approached; in other words, my contention is that the difficulties are not intrinsic to the category itself, but rather stem from the focus adopted in its study.

This focus is commonly based on an Aristotelian view of categories, in which the latter are conceived as separate compartments in which all the elements share one or several common characteristics; that is to say, they are discrete, homogeneous sets, each having a number of necessary and sufficient properties. Convinced that such a blueprint is inappropriate when it comes to Chinese categories, I decided to search for a theoretical framework of reference that was more cognizant of the reality which confronted me.

Cognitive linguistics provides a heterogeneous, interdisciplinary and holistic model, postulating that language is inseparable from the other

facets of human cognition, and therefore syntax, semantics and pragmatics form an indissoluble whole. Moreover, according to cognitive linguistics, categories are fuzzy, are defined by groups of family features and relationships, and are made up of both prototypical and peripheral members, which means that some members are better examples of their respective categories than others. Such a blueprint offers a set of conceptual tools and a methodological framework which are particularly apt for an applied approach such as the one which concerns us here.

As a result of this new focus, discussions concerning the delimitation of the category, in other words, what should or should not be considered as a measure word, cease to be relevant because the problem is no longer black and white but rather one of degree. There may be measure words which are more central and therefore more representative of the measure word category, while others are more peripheral (and even overlap with other categories), marking fuzzy boundaries with other categories, but which are nonetheless measure words. Categories therefore

include marginal examples whose membership to the category is doubtful or indecisive.

Secondly, in cognitive linguistics categories are formed by the intersection of one or several typical properties which tend to coincide. Whether or not an individual belongs to a category depends on the degree of its similarity to the prototype (principle of family resemblance). In other words, even though the system may not appear to be very "logical", we must accept that it is semantically motivated and that we must therefore work out the internal networks of associations which make up the category, thus following the lead of Lakoff (1987) in *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, based on a study by Dixon on the Dyrbal, and Tai and Wang (1990) in the case of 条 (tiao) and Tai and Chao (1994) in respect of 张 (zhang). It may be, however, that the internal semantic networks of categories have become blurred due to historical and social reasons. Thus, in some cases, it may not be possible to elucidate entirely the relationships which have given rise to the chains. Categorisation depends more on the properties that we attribute to entities than to their intrinsic properties, which is why cultural conventions play such an important role in categorisation.

We can see, therefore, that the application of cognitive linguistics to the study of measure words permits multiple categorisation; that is to say, a single entity may belong to more than one category, either because it can be analysed from different points of view or because it naturally straddles two or more categories. This has emerged clearly

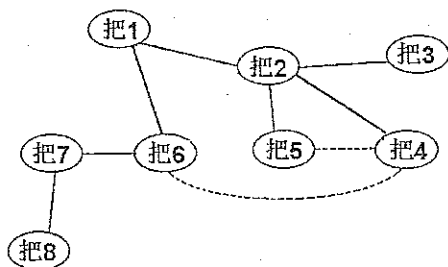
from our detailed study of the categories 双 (shuang), 对 (dui), 副 (fu) and 套 (tao), along the lines of Tai and Wang (1990) and Tai and Chao (1994). Although these four categories cannot be considered to be synonyms, they do have many points of intersection as well as sharing numerous members (some respondents considered that 耳环 (erhuan) and 拍子 (paizi) could be included in any of the four categories). The lines of association linking the members of a category are not necessarily established between the individual examples and the prototype, but rather because a given element resembles another and it is the latter which shares a certain attribute with our mental image of the prototype. It is therefore not necessary for all the members of a category to share any single attribute, or even for them to share any single attribute with the prototype; indeed, the possible lines of association are multiple. Accordingly, the members which make up a category are not necessarily homogeneous.

Thirdly, with cognitive linguistics the classification of measure words into subtypes could give rise to a more flexible system, whereby it was possible for measure words to belong to more than one category. In order to represent the internal structure of a complex category, we have taken as our example the polysemic measure word 把 (ba). In the following table, a number has been assigned to the more or less different meanings that we have identified as pertaining to the category, and we have given what might be regarded as a number of prototypical examples, together with their approximate English equivalents.

TABLE 1 Different meanings of the category 把 (ba)

| 把 1 (ba1) | 把 2 (ba2) | 把 3 (ba3) | 把 4 (ba4) | 把 5 (ba5) | 把 6 (ba6) | 把 7 (ba7) | 把 8 (ba8) |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 一把壶 一把刀 | 一把花儿 一把米 | 一把野火 一把怒火 | 一把眼泪 一把冷汗 | 一把年级 一把骨头 | 拉一把 洗一把脸 | 帮一把 | 一把好手 |
| A tea-pot A knife | A bunch of flowers A handful of rice | A wildfire A fit of rage | A flood of tears Copious perspiration | Several years A bag of bones | To pull To wash one's face | To lend a hand | To have skil- ful hands |

The relationships linking the different meanings could be represented thus:



The nodes represent the cores of meaning around which the various subcategories are formed. The continuous lines show the origin of the extensions of the different meanings, while the broken lines show the possible less obvious tensions existing between the meanings. We can therefore see that, whilst the different meanings of complex categories are semantically related, they do not all stem from the prototypical members; nor do they all share a common feature. The values which take precedence when it comes to including a new member within a category vary from case to case. For example, one of the defining traits of 把1 (ba1) is that the object grasped by the hand incorporates a part which is specifically designed to come into contact with the hand. This value is lost in the other extensions of the category. Sometimes the predominant value is one of quantity, sometimes it is the part of the body which performs the action, and sometimes there is a balance between the two. As already observed, not all the meanings are equally representative of their respective categories. The central members are more active than the non-central members and, in this case, one might say that the more active meanings revolve around 把1 (ba1), 把2 (ba2) and 把6 (ba6).

Fourthly, the functions of measure words should be analysed as a range of possible and simultaneous uses which become more or less relevant, depending on their context. From the perspective

of cognitive linguistics, these functions are inter-related and therefore are not bound by the hard-and-fast limits which give rise to the classification/quantification dichotomy (which has traditionally been applied to measure words). Tai and Wang (1990), for example, propose "the distinction between 'permanent' and 'temporary' properties of entities as a fundamental cognitive basis for the distinction between classifiers and measure words". In our view, such a dichotomy poses a number of problems. For instance, the noun socks, which often collocates with the measure word 双 (shuang) 'pair'. Is the property of being one of a pair temporary or permanent? Although a sock is still a sock even when it occurs singly, it ceases to be useful as such, since socks are used in pairs. Should we therefore conclude that the paired property is a permanent one in the case of sock (much more so than the fabric of which it is made) and, consequently, that 双 (shuang) merely classifies as opposed to quantifying? Should the character 副 (fu), which may categorise 对联 (duilian), 扑克牌 (pukepai), 耳机 (erji), 中药 (zhongyao), 本领 (benling), 眼镜 (yanjing) and 表情 (biaoqing), among others, be regarded as a classifier or a measure word? There are also some entities which are never categorised by their permanent properties; one such is water, which is colourless, tasteless and odourless. Such entities are in fact categorised by their manner of presentation, associated with quantity. And what of abstract nouns: what is the permanent property of hatred or hope?

Fifthly, viewed from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the translation of measure words is no longer seen in terms of translatable or untranslatable, but rather as a concept of degree, which moreover implies a notion of equivalence which is more pragmatic or discourse-based than purely linguistic. If we start with the premise that the use of measure words is in fact a mechanism for the creation of metaphorical images, we shall see that a

whole panoply of examples can be found, ranging from the dead (conventional) metaphor to the most poetic literary creation. The possibility and the need to translate these measure words will increase as we progress from the former to the latter. Is it acceptable that the following poetic images, to give just a few examples, should be lost in the translation process?

(1)《一梳月亮》像形容未长成的女孩子,但见人已不羞缩,光明和轮廓都清新刻露,渐渐可烘托夜景。》(钱钟书《围城》)

(2)《阿Q没有说完话,拔步便跑;追来的是**一匹很肥大的黑狗**。》(鲁迅《阿Q正传》)

(3)《昨天囫圇吞地忍受的**整块痛苦**。》(钱钟书《围城》)

(4)《听说你俩要来,他就说:“得,来了**两块麻烦**!”》(老舍《女店员》)




(5)《还有一问:“公理”,**几块钱一斤**。》(鲁迅《“公理”之所在》)

(6)《他望着我,眼睛里竟出奇地**一汪平静**,

像那个晚上淡淡的月色。》(张大春《鸡翎图》)

(7)《车过了松江,风景又添了**一味和平的景色**。》(郁达夫《还乡记》)

Finally, we should also take into account the role of measure words from the cognitive point of view. The same reality may be viewed from different perspectives; in other words, the same situation may be represented by the mind according to various different parameters (one good example of this phenomenon being the half—full as opposed to the half—empty glass). Thus, all situations allow of different approaches and interpretations and, depending on how the proposition is constructed, we shall project one image or another to our audience. For example, camel, 骆驼 (luotuo), can be preceded by any one of the following three measure words: 峰 (feng), 头 (tou) and 匹 (pi), which we have represented graphically in the following illustration:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| yi feng luotuo | yi tou luotuo | yi pi luotuo |
| a[peak]camel | a[head]camel | a[horse—like animal]camel |
| 一峰骆驼 | 一头骆驼 | 一匹骆驼 |

In the first case, one's attention is focussed on the distinctive shape of the animal's back, which is metaphorically likened to a peak or hill. In the second case, the categorisation centres on the image of domestic animals which are commonly counted by the head. In the third case, the use of 匹 (pi) simply indicates that it is an animal of large proportions, with a robust body and four legs, similar to a horse in both shape and function. Although these differences in perspective will pose problems for the translator, it should be recognised that the three possible propositions are semantically different, since they present semantically different images and as such they are not strictly synony-

mous, even though they all possess the same values of truthfulness. The following quotation from Bisang (1999, 142) describes the situation very well:

In the process of actualizing individualization there may be a competition between different properties. The choice of one of these properties depends on the perspective from which the speaker looks at the object to be individualized and from the discourse pragmatic situation in which he wants to present it to the hearer.

I realise that in this paper I have touched on a number of topics and that, for reasons of space I have been unable to examine them in any great

depth; nevertheless, I hope that my presentation will serve to point towards new avenues of analysis which thus far have been relatively unexplored. By way of conclusion, I would like to add that the learning of measure words is perceived as a stumbling block in Chinese grammar because this category has not yet been studied in sufficient depth, and more cognitive studies of individual measure words are required, such as those which have already been carried out on 张 (zhang) 和 条 (tiao), as well as global studies dealing with the entire classification system. This, together with a more flexible approach to collocation, would lead to a less rote learning — based study of measure words. Finally, understanding of the meaning and internal structure of categories, as well as a less rigid view of the functions of measure words (taking into account their poetic or other than "normal" uses), would detract currency from the view that they are somehow arbitrary, superfluous, lacking in meaning and untranslatable.

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