

A Dynamic Construal Approach to Lexical Transcategorial Shifts in Mandarin*

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Abstract—A dynamic construal approach is adopted to address the word class transcategorial shifts in Mandarin. It is pointed out that the dispute on the classification of Chinese word classes and the consequent controversial proposals of nominalization, verbalization, etc. is in essence a matter of categorization. Instead of the static views, it holds that the categorization of word classes is dynamic and a cluster of factors affects the on-line categorizing process. From the dynamic construal view, Indo-European languages and Mandarin share analogous transcategorial shift processes.

Index Terms—dynamic construal, categorization, transcategorial shift

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of word classification is, in essence, a matter of categorization. Because of the lack of inflectional changes, which has been taken as a typological characteristic of Mandarin from that of the Indo-European languages, the classification of word classes and their correspondence with syntactic roles in Mandarin pose as a century-long dispute in the Chinese literature. Scholars have been contributing to the discussion of the issue and different proposals were made from different schools of thought. The resolution of the problem bases on and goes hand-in-hand with the findings about human categorization, which goes beyond the sphere of mere language and into the field of psychology and cognition at large.

We consider the classical model and the prototypical model as static models of categorization. Each of them has great influence on the classification of word classes in Mandarin but both of them are flawed in some aspects as we will sequentially examine. The classical model of categorization entails word classes with clear-cut boundaries and equal membership. This classification seems to be in severe conflict with language users' intuition. As a grammar founded mainly on the basis of Indo-European grammar system, which features neat correspondence between word classes and syntactic roles, the Chinese language's lack of inflectional change makes the issue even more complicated in that there's no tenable evidence for a large number of verbalization and nominalization in word class shifts.

Inspired by the psychological findings by Rosch (1973, 1978) and Rosch and Mervis (1975), the prototypical model of categorization, which features graded centrality, prototypes (the best example of a category), family resemblance and fuzzy boundaries, was introduced into the research of word classes. Liu (1996) found that the most typical nouns in Mandarin are disyllabic while verbs tend to be monosyllabic. It is implied that words within the same part of speech form a graded configuration. However, the validity of applying the prototypical model of categorization to the issue is questioned in several aspects, namely the determination of defining features for the membership of a category, the difficulties in the differentiation of analogous but contrasting categories and the lack of a clear and sharp boundary or borderline region would lead to the failure of the functioning of categories.

Taking the shortcomings of the static views of categorization into consideration, the dynamic construal model of categorization is proposed to be a more satisfactory approach to the research of word classes in Mandarin. It is argued that word usage is constantly in a dynamic condition and its categorial status is changing. The immediate context of usage determines their on-line parts of speech or the choice of entrenched parts of speech. Employing the nominalization and verbalization in Mandarin as an example, it is proved that people's cognitive capacity for alternating profile makes transcategorial shift possible.

II. STATIC MODELS OF CATEGORIZATION

A. The Classical Model of Categorization

To be a member of a category, the classical model of categorization requires a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, usually binary features. The features must be necessary and sufficient in that no entity that does not possess the whole set of features is a member of the category while the possession of all the features surely guarantees membership in the category. Consequently, all categories are endowed with clear boundaries. One entity can be considered as a member of the category or not is decided on a clear and definite basis. For example, BACHELOR could

* Abbreviations: V., verb; N., noun; ASP, aspect markers; Nr, nominalizer; CLAS, classifier; PRT, particle; S., Subject; O., object; Attr., attribute; Adj., adjective; Adv., adverb; ADV., adverbial; P., predicate; PART., particle; Tr., trajector; Lm., landmark.

be defined by the features [+MALE] [+ADULT] [-MARRIED]. All these three values count as the necessary and sufficient features for a person to be included in the category. The loss of any one of the features leads to the disqualification of a person to be considered as a member in the category. Within the category, all the entities enjoy equal membership. There is no differentiation between better bachelors or not-so-good bachelors.

In accordance with the classical model of categorization, which features binary values, clear boundary and equal membership, words are believed to belong to a part of speech with clear-cut boundaries and enjoy equal membership of the category as a natural consequence. For example, a noun is a word that refers to a thing (e.g. desk, pen), a person (e.g. Chuck Lorre, Susan Frank), an animal (e.g. dog, giraffe), a place (e.g. New York, Canada), a quality (e.g. warmth, hospitality), an idea (e.g. righteousness, justice), or an action (e.g. yell, jumping). The nouns could be further divided into common nouns and proper nouns, count nouns and mass nouns, singular nouns and plural nouns in a binary fashion and also collective nouns named in term of their contents, gerunds in terms of their way of formation and attributive nouns in terms of their function. Its function of acting as the subject or object of a sentence has been so firmly entrenched that any other usage would be considered as abnormal and, thusly, transcategorial shifts must have taken place in the process. In the case of nouns acting as verbs, the shifting process is called verbalization, while the vice versa is named as nominalization¹.

The classical categorization of word classes is in perfect match with the neat correspondence between word classes and their syntactic roles. Nouns take the role of subject and object, while verbs and adjectives act as predicates. Changes of the correspondence are accompanied by shifts of the part of speech of the words, which could be illustrated with massive examples in ancient Chinese.

- (1) a. 廉颇老矣，尚能饭否？
Lian Po lao yi, shang neng fan fou?
Lian Po old, still can meal not?
Lian Po is old now, can he have a meal by himself?
- b. 韩信将兵，多多益善。
Han Xin jiang bing, duo duo yi shan.
Han Xin general soldier, more more better.
Han Xin command soldiers; the more the better.

In (1)a, the word Fan (meal, N.) is originally a collective noun referring to all the food for a meal. However, it is used as a verb denoting the action of having a meal. The noun goes through a verbalization process, which is metonymically motivated. (1)b is more complicated in that Jiang (general, N.) originally refers to a general who commands the soldiers and makes strategies for carrying out a war. In the example, it is used as a verb denoting the action of commanding soldiers, which contains the metonymy of PERSON FOR THE ACTION OF THE PERSON.

- (2) a. 漂亮 有 罪 吗？
Piaoliang you zui ma?
Beautiful has guilt PART.?
Is beauty guilty?
- b. 写作 使 人 明智。
xiezuo shi ren mingzhi.
Write make people wise.
Writing makes wise men.

Verbs and Adjectives can also convert to nouns. Piaoliang (beautiful, Adj.) in 2(a) is an adjective originally used to modify things or persons with pleasant appearance. Here it acts as the subject of the sentence and is used as a noun referring to the quality of being beautiful. Similarly, Xiezuo (write, V.) in 2(b) is used as a noun to refer to the action of writing something. The conversion of the underlined words in (1) is called verbalization and the two words in (2) are considered as the outcome of the conversion of nominalization.

Because of the high frequency of these borrowing or transcategorial shifts, scholars (Li, 1924/1955; Shi, 1960; Gao, 1960; Li & Liu, 1960; Chomsky, 1970; Hu & Fan, 1994; Cheng, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c;) claim that verbalization and nominalization happens in the process despite of the lack of inflectional change. Different from Indo-European languages, English for example, the verbs and nouns in Mandarin which shift from one category to another do not have morphological change.

The latest development in this perspective could be found in Cao (2019), who, from the cognitive perspective, claim that the cognitive mechanism of the phenomena is ontologicalization. The notion of ontologicalization originates from Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) theory on ontological metaphor and, more fundamentally, the classical model of categorization. The change of the words' syntactic relations and performance (the sufficient and necessary features which qualify a word to be a member of a category) surely changes their status in the previous category. Therefore, a shift of their membership from one category to another is nothing but natural and necessary.

¹ It should be noted that because of the high frequency of usage and the consequent entrenchment in language usage, some words are considered as multi-categorial words. For example, Diaocha (investigate, V.; investigation, N.), Yanjiu (research, V. & N.) are marked both as nouns and verbs. An extraordinarily larger number of words not being used in their usual syntactic slots is taken to be temporary borrowing.

There are also scholars who are against this view. Zhu, Lu & Ma (1961) and Zhu (1999) deny the tenability of verbalization and nominalization without morphological change. Verbalization or nominalization without morphological change is an untenable imagination. Instead, they claim that, as a unique characteristic from that of the Indo-European languages, Chinese words are multi-functional and the idea is illustrated as follows:

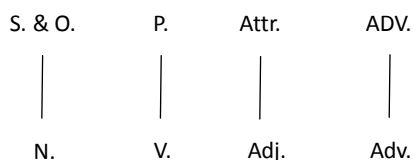


Figure 1: Word and Syntactic Role Correspondence In Indo-European Languages

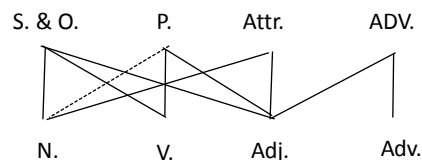


Figure 2: Word and Syntactic Role Correspondence In Mandarin

Both of the figures are quoted and translated from Zhu (1999). Figure 1 manifests the correspondence between word classes and syntactic roles in Indo-European languages, like English, while Figure 2 illustrates the complicated relation between words and their sentential roles. Zhu (1999) holds that, different from Indo-European language as shown in Figure 1, words in Mandarin are multi-functional. Besides their roles as subjects and objects, nouns in Mandarin can also act as attributives and, sometimes (as shown by the dotted line), predicates. Verbs and adjectives in Chinese can take far more syntactic roles than their counterparts do in English. Therefore, Zhu concludes that, in regards of taking syntactic roles, Chinese words are multi-functional and there is no conversion of part of speech for these words. Consequently, there is no categorial shift at all.

In line with the study of Zhu, Shen (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011) took one step further and claimed that the categories of Chinese words follow an inclusion fashion as shown by Figure 3. The noun is a superordinate concept which includes verbs, which, in turn, include adjectives. There are scholars who are against this view. Lu (2013) holds that the class inclusion model for Chinese words is untenable because it is just another name for the traditional classification of words and, thusly, does not solved the dispute at all.

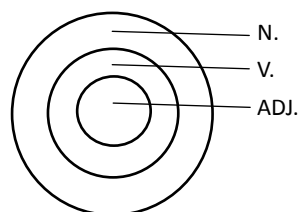


Figure 3: Word Class Inclusion Model

The classification of Chinese words with the classical model of categorization is of great influence because of its economy. All dictionaries available are compiled in this clear-cut fashion. Every word belongs to one or two specific part of speech neatly. It is true that this classification is useful for Indo-European languages because they are inflectional and fixed morphemes are available for words of different part of speech. This comes into big problem with Mandarin because this language is not inflectional and its words cannot be easily told which part of speech they belong to. The shortcomings are obvious in two aspects. First, it is hard to determine whether the extra functions of Chinese words from those of Indo-European language as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 should be considered as their original functions or functions gained through processes of verbalization and nominalization. Second, the fact that not all words perform similarly in terms of transcategorial shifts and that not all functions of the words are equal questions the claim of equal membership in this model.

B. The Prototypical Model of Categorization

As we can tell from intuition that, for each conceptual category, there seem to be some best examples that come into our mind spontaneously and some examples that we can hardly be sure about. When we are talking about FRUIT, we are thinking of apples, bananas, etc. as the best examples. When we are talking about VEGETABLE, cabbages, carrots come into mind first. However, tomato is hardly thought of as a good example for neither of the two categories. It resides somewhere in-between, being not a typical kind of VEGETABLE, nor a typical kind of FRUIT. Although this is culturally and geographical different and the concepts may vary individually, what for sure is that there are better examples in a category and there are not-so-good examples too.

In line with our personal experiences, Rosch and her co-workers' (Rosch 1973, 1978; Rosch and Mervis, 1975)

discoveries from psychological researches support a prototypical model of categorization. The core features of this model are the existence of prototypes, graded centrality and fuzzy boundaries, on which we will briefly address.

The notion of Goodness-Of-Exemplar is frequently employed by cognitive psychologists. The best example of a category is called the prototypes or prototypical members of the category. The members in a category are arranged in a graded style. Some members locate in the center of the category and act as the archetypes of the category while some reside at the periphery region of the category. Prototypes differ from the non-typical members in the frequency and order of mention, the order of learning, family resemblance and verification speed, to name but just a few. The prototypes have higher frequency of usage and are usually quoted as examples of the category. Usually they are first learned by children and have higher family resemblance than other members do to other members in the category. In experiment, they have a higher verification speed.

The prototypical model of categorization fits our intuition on how we recognize the world. In a category, there are good members as well as not-so-good members. All these members are linked through family resemblance. Although the prototypical model of categorization is usually considered to be divided into two versions, one in terms of a list of attributes of category members and the other depending on the notion of similarity, the shared notion of the versions is graded centrality and best examples.

Studies on word classes from prototypical model of categorization are many. Liu (1996) holds that, based on the analysis of statistics, Chinese nouns prone to be dissyllabic while typical verbs are monosyllabic. As prototypes in the category of nouns, proper nouns exhibit a higher level of stability and are not easily changed into other part of speech. Also, as central members of the category of verbs, monosyllabic verbs do not usually change into nouns or adjectives². Therefore, transcategorial shifts do not usually happen to typical words. Multi-categorial words are not considered as typical words in either of the categories.

However, the shortcomings of applying the prototypical model of categorization to the classification of words are also obvious. According to Croft and Cruse (2004), the first shortcoming lies in the excessively simplistic nature of feature list. Also, the “odd number paradox”, with which people may grade the odd numbers, poses as a challenge to the theory. Moreover, how to determine the defining features and how to differentiate neighboring categories have also been put forward as challenges for the model. Most importantly, proponents of the theory paid insufficient attention to the boundaries of the categories.

“There is no fixed limit on how far something can depart from the prototype and still be assimilated to the class, if the categorizer is perceptive or clever enough to find some point of resemblance to typical instances.”

--- Langacker (1991, p. 266)

From the quote above, Langacker claimed a very fuzzy boundary for a category. However, for a category, a boundary is so important that, without it, a category cannot function anymore. “A fundamental problem with boundaries is that they do not arise naturally from a prototype representation” (Croft & Cruse, 2004, p. 91). Accordingly, the boundary between different word classes is fuzzy in accordance with the prototypical model of categorization, which is, of course, against the principles of scientific research and our language intuition.

III. A DYNAMIC CONSTRUAL MODEL OF CATEGORIZATION: A NEW PROPOSAL

The shortcomings of the classical as well as the prototypical model of categorization, together with the researches by Guo (2000, 2010) and Croft and Cruse (2004), necessitate a reexamination of categorization which may better reveal its dynamic nature and, specifically, its inspiration to the classification of Chinese words.

Both of the two models of categorization mentioned in section II have in common a belief that, for each category, there is a constant underlying mental representation, which is our reason for subsuming them as static models of categorization. Smith and Samuelson (1997) questioned the notion of fixed categories with permanent representations with a number of experimental results. They claim that a concept is created out of past history, recent history and current input. In term of past history, memories of accumulated experiences have a permanent effect on our way of thinking and the tendencies may become so strong that they will not be easily perturbed and seem fixed. Recent history refers to the preceding mental activity while current input means the immediate context. Barsalou’s (1983) experiment shows that subjects are constantly forming new and contextually coherent categories which show similar features of well-established categories. Therefore, it is proposed that categories are variable and created on-line as and when needed (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

The dynamic construal model of categorization features variable but determinate boundaries. As we have seen in section II, one of the inadequacies of the classical model of categorization is that it entails sharp boundaries while natural categories are claimed to have fuzzy boundaries. However, the notion of fuzzy boundaries needs reexamination.

“...(D)ifferent subjects make different judgements as to the location of the boundaries, and the same subject will make different judgments under different contextual condition.”

--- Croft & Cruse (2004, p. 95)

² Lu (2013) holds that monosyllabic verbs, such as Gan (do, V.), Qu (go, V.), etc. acting as subjects are not nominalized. They are the remaining parts of clauses.

According to the dynamic construal model, boundaries are sharp, definite and variable. They are lines of division between what are inside and what are outside. Categories are results of the on-line construal processes and their contents change with regards to dynamic processes.

The dynamic construal model of categorization shed light on the research of Chinese word class classification and related phenomena. Guo (2000, 2010) took a motional view towards this issue as he claimed that part of speech resides on two levels: lexical and syntactical. Lexical part of speech refers to the fixed and deeply entrenched part of speech that words have, while syntactical part of speech refers to the temporary part of speech of the words that gained through on-line cognitive manipulation such as metaphor and metonymy. In actuality, Guo's differentiation between lexical and syntactical parts of speech reflects the effect of past history and immediate, contextual input to the categories of words. Of course, just as Smith and Samuelson claims, the accumulation of scattered cases and weak tendencies may become strong tendencies and, through repeated usage, the syntactic part of speech may become lexical part of speech, being fixed and stable.

It is not difficult to conclude that the proposal of the dynamic construal model of categorization provides new evidences for the tenability of transcategorial changes in Mandarin, namely, verbalization and nominalization.

IV. A DYNAMIC CONSTRUAL APPROACH TO THE DISPUTE OF WORD TRANSCATEGORIAL SHIFT

“Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there?
-Or is the use its life?”

--- Wittgenstein (quoted from Croft and Cruse, 2004, p. 98)

A dynamic construal approach is taken to account for the transcategorial shift of word classes in Mandarin. In accordance with the claims of the dynamic construal model of categorization, we hold that there are clear and definite boundaries between word classes in Mandarin at the first place. Second, verbalization and nominalization do exist when the words take different syntactic roles and the shifts are cognitively evidential.

A. *Nouns and Verbs*

Scholars of different grammatical theories (e.g. Ross, 1972; Langacker, 2004, 2013) have agreed upon the maximal opposition of nouns and verbs³. In accordance with the government-binding theories, nouns are represented as [+N, -V] while verbs are represented as [-N, +V], the two categories pose as polar opposites. By contrasting the prototypes of nouns and verbs, Langacker (2004, 2013) claims that nouns and verbs are contrasting in all their basic properties.

Nominal archetypes are physical objects composed of material substance, residing primarily in space, where it is bounded and have their own locations. From a temporal view, they may persist indefinitely and are not thought of having any particular location in time. Also, they are conceptually autonomous and, therefore, people can conceptualize them independent of their participation in any event. A noun profiles a thing, which Langacker (2013) defines as “a set of interconnected entities which function as a single entity at a higher level of conceptual organization” (p. 107). It is a result of people's general cognitive ability of grouping and reification. Grouping is such a simple and general human capacity that any more detailed explanation would seem superfluous. Reification refers to the ability of treating a group of entities as a unitary entity for higher-order cognitive purposes. For example, 20 students may form a CLASS. The CLASS is reified through its conception as being a single unit and later may be referred to as a single thing.

The verbal archetypes are diametrically opposed to prototypical nouns. Typical verbs denote, instead of physical material, to energetic interactions consisting of the change and transfer of energy. The event denoted by the verbs locates in time, i.e., having its location in the flow of time. They are conceptually dependent because they cannot be conceptualized without conceptualizing the entities that are engaged in the event. Thusly, they are considered as relational and their schematic characterization includes both relational and nominal predications. Verbs are the products of our cognitive capacity to apprehend relationships and track them through time.

In terms of the manner of the perception of continuity through expanse⁴, generally nouns are considered as the products of our capacity of summary scanning while verbs are taken as the linguistic expression for sequential scanning. Through cognitive manipulations or different ways of construal, the two manners of scanning or perception may interchange with each other⁵ and result in nominalization and verbalization, which we will address next.

B. *Nominalization and Verbalization*

Nouns and verbs reside in two polar extremes of our cognitive conceptualization. As products of two different ways of perception in two expanses, one being space while the other being time, they form two distinctive categories. According to the dynamic construal model of the categorization, both of the two categories have sharp and determinate boundaries. The transcategorial shifts between the two categories involve changes in the ways of construal.

³ We disagree with Shen's (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011) claim that Chinese nouns, verbs and adjectives forms a hierarchical inclusion model. From the cognitive perspective adopted by the current paper and analogous papers, nouns and verbs resides at two polar extremes with adjectives, prepositions in-between.

⁴ This perception of continuity is called scanning by Langacker (2004). Nouns are results of the scanning in the expanse of space, while verbs are products of scanning in the expanse of time.

⁵ For researches on subjective motion or fictive motion, see Tao & Mao, 2011; Matsumoto, 1996; Talmy, 1996, 2000a, 2000b; etc.

Conceptually, nominalization and verbalization are asymmetric. As we have discussed in the previous part, verbs are dependent in that they contain series of component states in which the participation of things or entities is indispensable. Therefore, nominalization, which mostly from verbs and, secondarily, from adjectives, is inherently easy and nouns can be derived just by shifting the profile of conceptualization. The profiled element in a verbal conceptualization could be the subject (e.g. complainer, dancer, blender, judge, cook in English; and Daoyou (guide, V. →guide, N.), Daoyan (direct, V. →director, N.), Bianji (edit, V. →Editor N.) in Mandarin), the object (e.g. draftee, advisee, choice in English; and Tihui (feel, V. →feeling, N.), Chuandai(wear, V. →clothes, N.), Yimin (immigrate, V. →immigrant, N.) in Mandarin), the instrument (e.g. rocker, walker, probe in English; and Shache (brake, V. →brake, N.) Zhengming (verify, V. →certificate, N.), Zhuangshi (decorate, V. →accessories, N.) in Mandarin), the product (painting, bruise, mark in English; and Bianhao (Number, V. →Number, N), Fayan (speak, V. →speech, N.), Faming (invent, V. →invention, N.), Zhuzhuo (write, V. →work/books, N) in Chinese) or the setting or location of the action (diner, lounge, bowl in English; and Guaiwan (turn, V. →corner, N.), Fengkou (seal, V. →seal, N) in Mandarin).

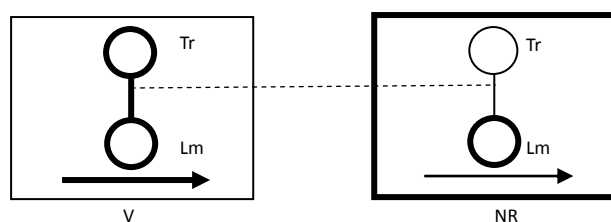


Figure 4: Nominalizing Process and the shift of profile

The process of the nominalization is diagramed in Figure 4. The simplified interpretation of the figure would be that the box on the left signifies the conceptualization of a verb where two entities or things are marked as trajector (Tr.) and landmark (Lm.), and the line connecting them represents the interaction between the two. The arrow below signifies that conceptualization of the interconnections are conceived through time. While the box on the right profiles just the landmark of the relation as indicated by the heavy-line box⁶.

On the other hand, since nouns are conceptually independent and autonomous, the verbalization of nouns requires the addition of conceptual content. For example, denominal verbs include “add N.” (e.g., salt, water, beautify in English; and Lu (bittern, N. →stew meal in bittern, V.), zao (e.g., vinasse, N. →add vinasse to (meat), V.), “remove N.” (e.g., weed, peel, declaw in English; and Niao (urine, N. →urinate, V.), Bian (excrement, N. →defecate, V.) in Mandarin), “use N. as an instrument” (e.g., glue, pencil in English; and Du (poison N. - Poison, V.), Bing (ice, N. →cool Sth. with ice, V.), Chan(shovel, N. →remove Sth. with a shovel, V.) in Mandarin) and so on (cf. Clark and Clark, 1979; Wang, 2010).

Because of the conceptual asymmetry, the numbers of the deverbal nouns and denominal verbs differ dramatically. According to Wang’s (2010) statistics, there are 2737 deverbal nouns while the denominal verbs are only 48 in her database which amounts to 200,000 words. High frequency of usage leads to the entrenchment of temporary transcategorical shifts. It is found that over 500 entrenched deverbal nouns but only 149 denominal verbs are considered as entrenched or multi-categorical words in modern Chinese.

Consider the boundary between verbalization and nominalization. The division is clear and sharp in the cases of both temporary borrowing and entrenched usages. The major determinant of the differentiation lies in the varying manners of construal that people carry out when they are engaged in linguistic interactions. Scholars (Zhu, 1960; Zhu, Lu & Ma, 1961; Zhu, 1999) argue against the tenability of nominalization based mainly the vast number of its occurrences in Mandarin and the lack of inflectional changes. We agree with Zhu (1960) that the classification of word classes should not solely depend on their syntactic roles and the falsehood of the argument that there are no word class based on the infeasibility of word classification as claimed by Gao (1955a, 1955b, 1956). However, the pervasiveness of deverbal nouns reflects people’s general cognitive capacity of alternating profile and construing a relation as a thing. Furthermore, the lack of inflectional changes does not invalidate the tenability of nominalization, no matter they are just temporary on-line manipulation or already entrenched as multi-categorical words.

C. Dynamic Construal of Meaning

Let’s return to the saying by Wittgenstein quoted at the very beginning of this section. Its inspiration with regard to the part of speech of words, no matter they are in Indo-European languages or Mandarin, would be that a coherent account can only be reached by considering both the determinate structural properties in the lexicon just as Zhu (1999) claimed and the infinite flexibility of dynamic construal in context as we emphasize in the current research. The “life” of a sign is breathed into it by its contextualized usage and dynamic construal of human cognition.

For an isolated word, its part of speech can only be judged by our accumulated experience of usage, which we call

⁶ There are other types of nominalization in Indo-European languages, like the profiling of a single episode of the process as denoted by the verb, action nominalization and gerundive nominalization. The current paper just focuses on the archetypes.

the entrenched categorization. The judgement may vary from person to person since people have individual past history and memory with the same words. Take Diaocha (research, V. & N.) for example, at the first sight it is considered as a verb because of its archetypical meaning and usage. Later, some people may realize that it is also a noun, reflecting the summative perception of the whole event. Generally, it is taken as an entrenched multi-categorial word.

What's more important is our capacity of the dynamic construal of meaning and, more specifically in our research, the on-line conceptualization of word classes. The categorization of words is subjected to the immediate linguistic context. For example, Lei (thunderstorm, N.) refers to the peals of thunder accompanied by lighting. However, its frightening characteristic enabled its verbalization into a verb, meaning to frighten and surprise people in an unexpected way.

- (3) 这部电影太雷人了。
 Zhe bu dianying tai lei ren le.
 This CLAS movie too surprise people PART.
 This movie is frightening and awkward.

Even a person who has never got to know the transcategorial change of Lei will soon understand the meaning of the word in this sentence, accompanied by its linguistic context, and its change from a noun to a verb. And this immediate understanding of its meaning and instant shift of its category manifests people's flexible, on-line, dynamic construal.

V. CONCLUSION

This article introduces a dynamic construal approach to the dispute of the classification of word classes in Mandarin. It is pointed out that the classification of word classes is in essence an issue of categorization. The current research shows that the static views of category, namely the classical model of categorization and prototypical model of categorization, cannot accommodate all the peculiarities demonstrated by different languages in terms of transcategorial shifts. We focused on the exposition of the basic principles and key concepts underlying the dynamic construal model of categorization on a cognitive basis. Exemplified by the new proposal's solution of the century-long dispute on word classification in Mandarin, it is shown that the dynamic construal approach can address the traditional concerns of theorists in a more satisfactory way.

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