

## Postverbal Argument Selection of “Chi (Eat)” in Modern Chinese

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Argument realization presents a thorough survey of current theories that deal with the relationship between a verb and its arguments (Kipper, 2006). The stipulation of the Chinese verb “chi (eat)” appeals to many scholars to explore the realization mechanism of unconventional argument. The verb “chi (eat)” with the lexical meaning of eating is a typical instance of multiple argument realization in modern Chinese. There are various kinds of “chi (eat)+NP” expressions with a variety of lexical-semantic representations, which provide abundant material. The research explores the mechanism of argument realization by solving the two following questions: (1) what is the constructional meaning of “chi (eat)+NP” construction? (2) how to explain the mechanism and motivation of multiple argument realization of “chi (eat)” in modern Chinese?

On the basis of previous studies of argument realization (Chomsky, 1957; Chomsky, 1965; Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 1998; Pustejovsky, 2011; Ibanez & Hernandez, 2001; Wang, 2007; Dong, 2011), the study analyzes Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” construction from Construction Grammar approach. It applies thematic roles (Saeed, 2003), information packaging construction (Lambrecht, 1994), inheritance links and coercion principle (Michaelis, 2004). in Construction Grammar to discuss the semantic features and argument realization mechanism of target construction.

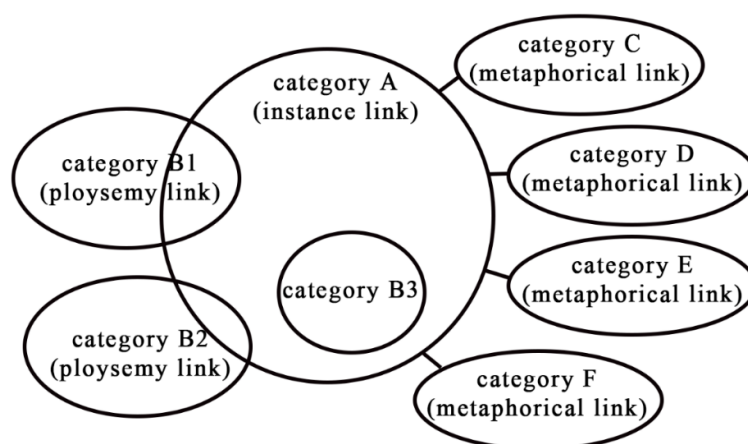
The study discusses the semantic properties of Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” phrases, and according to the discussion, classifies the phrases from the BCC corpus and the CN corpus into six main categories from usage-based approach. By means of corpus analysis, this thesis applies Construction Grammar to discuss “chi (eat)+NP” phrases in modern Chinese. Based on the interpretation of the phrases’ meanings, the research concludes the constructional meanings and inheritance links of Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” construction. This descriptive observation provides the material to explore the motivations and the mechanism of argument realization in Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” construction.

Three findings are concluded by the interpretation of the results: (1) Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” construction has five constructional meanings — one basic constructional meaning, the intake of food, and four extensive constructional meanings, to rely on, to absorb, to experience suffering and to enjoy. (2) In Chinese “chi (eat)+NP” construction, metaphor links connect the basic constructional meaning and the extensions. In addition, in the phrases with the basic constructional meaning, information packaging construction motivates the polysemy links between the prototype and other phrases with non-food arguments. (3) Unconventional complements of the target construction get syntactic realization under the coercion principle.

Table 1 Inheritance Links in “Chi+NP” Construction

| Inheritance link                | Category | Semantic feature                                      |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|
| instance link                   | A        | the intake of food into the mouth and digestive tract |
| polysemy link                   | B1       | to eat with a certain instrument                      |
|                                 | B2       | to eat in a certain place                             |
| instance link with repeated use | B3       | idiomatic expressions with central meaning            |
| metaphorical link               | C1       | to depend on somebody or something for a life         |
|                                 | C2       | to get benefits from something                        |
|                                 | D        | to absorb something                                   |
|                                 | E        | to experience suffering                               |
|                                 | F        | satisfaction  |

Figure 1 The Network of Inheritance Links in “Chi+NP” Construction



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