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Where is the Deictic Centre?
‘Come’ and ‘Go’ in Chinese Motion Construction

1. Background

- This study is concerned with distributional difference of the deictic verbs in Mainland China Mandarin Chinese (MC) and Singapore Mandarin Chinese (SC).
  - MC only allows \( V_m + V_d + \text{Loc} \), whereas SC permits other word order.
- This study aims to investigate the difference and find the possible constraints involved in such constructions in SC.

2. Preliminary Investigation

Data
- Singapore Chinese variety shows (around 360,000 Chinese characters in total).

Aim
- Identify the possible structures permitted by SC, with focus on the positions of 末来 ‘come’ and 去 ‘go’ in directed motion constructions.

3. Current Findings

SC has the following varying structures for self-agentic verbs, which are rarely used in MC:

<table>
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<th>Word Order</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>( V_m + V_d + \text{Loc} )</td>
<td>走进来我们家 ‘walk in our house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( V_m + V_d + \text{Loc} )</td>
<td>冲去任何一组的 (位置) ‘rush go any group’s (position)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( V_d + \text{Loc} )</td>
<td>下去楼下 ‘descend go downstairs’</td>
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- Also, there has been interesting use of the particle 到 dao ‘to reach’, where it comes after the deictic verb qu, e.g., 去到餐厅 ‘go to (and arrive at) the restaurant’, a construction generally not found in MC.
  - 去到 qu dao ‘go to’ is a very uncommon construction in MC but frequent enough in SC such that it has extended beyond spatial directional constructions, e.g., 去到什么样的程度 ‘to what extent’
- In comparison to other dialects, such as Wu, Fuqing, Hui’an, Chao’an and Cantonese (Yiu, 2014), and MC, SC seems to be the most open to all of the above mentioned structures.

4. Interim Conclusion

- At least for self-agentic directed motion constructions, SC seems to be the most accommodating for the various structures.
- Despite both being varieties of Standard Mandarin, SC lies somewhere in between the dialects and MC on the typological continuum of lexicalization patterns (cf. Talmy 2000, Slobin 2004, Chen and Guo 2009, etc.).
  - This is likely due to the influence of the Min (such as those similar to Fuqing, Hui’an and Chao’an) and Yue (such as Cantonese) dialects on SC.
  - At this point, SC and MC should still be classified under the same group in terms of typology.

5. Future Work

- Compare the structures of agentive motion events in the various dialects, MC and SC.
- Find out constraints in the formation of directed motion constructions of SC and compare them to those in MC.
- Investigate if speakers of SC prefers any particular structure with respect to directed motion constructions (both agentive and self-agentic) and compare the results to that of MC.

6. Selected References


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