

## Construal, Event Conflation and Argument Realization:

### A case study of multiple uses of *su*<sup>1</sup> ‘lose’ in Taiwanese Southern Min

This paper explores issues of construal (Croft and Cruse 2004), event conflation (Talmy 2000) and argument realization (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005) by a case study of multiple uses of *su*<sup>1</sup> ‘lose’ in Taiwanese Southern Min. There are at least five different but related uses of *su*<sup>1</sup>: 1) as a main verb which may take maximally three arguments, e.g. *gua*<sup>2</sup> *su*<sup>1</sup> *i*<sup>1</sup> *sann*<sup>1</sup>-*khoo*<sup>2</sup> ‘(lit.) I lose him three-dollars’, meaning ‘I lost three dollars in the competition with him.’ 2) as a resultative complement in a verb compound, e.g. *gua*<sup>2</sup> *lim*<sup>1</sup>-*su*<sup>1</sup> *i*<sup>1</sup> ‘(lit.) I drink-lose him’, meaning ‘I lost in the drinking competition with him.’ 3) following the comparative marker *khah*<sup>4</sup> ‘more’, e.g. *chit*<sup>4</sup>-*toh*<sup>4</sup> *khah*<sup>4</sup> *su*<sup>1</sup> *hit*<sup>4</sup>-*toh*<sup>4</sup> ‘(lit.) This-table more lose that-table’, meaning ‘The dishes on this table cannot compete with those on that one.’ 4) forming a phrasal verb with the reciprocal adverb *sio*<sup>1</sup> ‘each other’, e.g. *gua*<sup>2</sup> *kah*<sup>4</sup> *li*<sup>2</sup> *sio*<sup>1</sup>-*su*<sup>1</sup> *ci*<sup>8</sup>-*tng*<sup>3</sup> ‘(lit.) I with you each other-lose one-meal’, meaning ‘I’ll wager you one meal.’ and 5) forming a phrasal verb with the antonymous verb *iann*<sup>5</sup> ‘win’, e.g. *gua*<sup>2</sup> *lai*<sup>5</sup> *chue*<sup>7</sup> *i*<sup>1</sup> *su*<sup>1</sup>-*iann*<sup>5</sup> ‘(lit.) I come find him lose-win’, meaning ‘Let me compete/bet with him.’

As the examples show, different uses of *su*<sup>1</sup> are all related to some kind of competition, either physical or more abstract one. The relevant participants, or the “frame elements” (Fillmore and Atkins 1992) of the competition event include “Competitor”, “Opponent”, and “Prize” (cf. FrameNet). What is theoretically interesting is that in different uses of *su*<sup>1</sup>, some participants are profiled while some are shaded, which can be viewed as reflecting *the varied construal operations of human beings* (Croft and Cruse 2004). Take the case of *su*<sup>1</sup> serving as the resultative complement in a verb compound to illustrate. In *lim*<sup>1</sup>-*su*<sup>1</sup> ‘(lit.) drink-lose’, there are two events: drinking event and competing event. The former involves two participants, namely “Agent” and “Patient”, and latter three participants, namely “Competitor”, “Opponent” and “Prize”. Interestingly, when these events are contracted as one proposition, some participants are shaded (“Patient” in drinking event and “Prize” in competing event). As argued by Tai (1984, 2003) that “the resultative complement V2 seems to indicate foreground information and the action verb V1 seems to indicate background information” (Tai 2003: 306), the competition part is foregrounded. i.e. “Competitor” and “Opponent” are profiled as the event of competing is the focus of attention and the profiled participants are those overtly realized in syntax. Furthermore, the *su*<sup>1</sup> here is similar to the English *out-* prefix in that the addition of *su*<sup>1</sup> and *out-* plays a crucial role in the realization of surface arguments. For example, in the case of *outdrink*, e.g. *John outdrank Mary*, meaning ‘John beat Mary by drinking’, the focal point lies in the result of the competition, i.e. one exceeds another, rather than the event of drinking. Since the event of drinking is backgrounded and is interpreted as manner of the competition, the alcohol being drunk is shaded as an implicit argument.

To summarize, by a detailed analysis of multiple uses of *su*<sup>1</sup> in Taiwanese Southern Min, this paper discusses the interface between cognition, semantics and syntax, concerning specifically about the interaction between construal operation, event conflation and argument realization.

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