

## Chinese Serial Verb Construction: A Cognitive Semantics Analysis

The serial verb construction (SVC) displays the pattern of S VP1 VP2 (VP3) without morphosyntactic markings to indicate the relationship between the two or more VPs. It is found to exist in Hmong-Mien, Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Papuan, Austronesian, Semitic, Central-American, and African languages as well as many pidgins and creoles. Accounts of SVCs so far have been primarily generative and functional.

This presentation offers a cognitive semantics account of SVCs in Mandarin Chinese. Following Talmy's (2000, *Towards a Cognitive Semantics*, vol. 2) framework of event structure, we propose that Chinese SVCs instantiate a macro-event composed of (typically) two subevents. The relationship between the two subevents can be both subordinating and coordinating, as seen in (1) and (2), respectively:

- (1) 他上床睡觉了 (ta shang chuang shui jiao le).

He went to bed sleep ASP

'He's gone to bed (to sleep).'

- (2) 他在屋里走来走去 (ta zai wu li zou lai zou qu).

He in room inside walk back walk forth

'He walked back and forth in the room'.

In (1), one of the subevents—either the act of going to bed or the act of sleeping—can be analyzed as the framing event, the other the subevent, depending on context. In (2), neither event—walking back or walking forth—provides the overarching structure within which to view the other. Regardless of the relationship between the two verbs—whether it be subordinating or coordinating—however, Chinese SVCs force an interpretation of the several events expressed by the verbs in the series as one macro-event. The sequential scanning (Langacker 1987 and 1991: *Cognitive Grammar*, Vol. 1 & 2, Stanford University Press) that occurs with verbal processes has therefore to cover the entirety of the macro-event with its subevents. This is the major difference between verb serialization and its non-serial counterparts wherein a verb denotes a single event while accompanying events are denoted by other means such as clauses, gerunds, or prepositional phrases. In other words, we argue that SVCs provides a unique means to construe and to conceptualize. We will provide additional evidence for our hypothesis from phonology, polarity, and aspects. We will also discuss stylistic effects of SVCs, particularly when an SVC could have been expressed by a single verb. Example (2), for instance, could be replaced by 他在屋里踱步 'he paced the floor in the room', whereby the SVC in (2) is replaced by a single verb 踱步. But the sequential scanning that is required by the two predicates will result in different stylistic and conceptual effects. We hope that our analysis provides insights for the analysis of SVCs in other languages.