Theater Metaphor in Event Quantification: A Corpus Study

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Abstract : Numeral classifiers are common in Asian languages. Research on numeral classifiers primarily focuses on noun classifiers that quantify and individuate nominal referents. There is a scarcity of research on event quantification using verb classifiers. This study aims to understand the semantic and conceptual basis of event quantification in Chinese. From a usage-based Construction Grammar perspective, this study presents a corpus analysis of event quantification in Chinese. Drawing on a large balanced corpus of contemporary Chinese, we analyze 667 NOUN col-lexemes totaling 31136 tokens of a productive numeral classifier construction in Chinese. Using collostructional analysis of the collexemes, the results show that the construction quantifies and classifies dramatic events using a theater-based conceptual metaphor. We argue that the usage patterns reflect the cultural entrenchment of theater as in Chinese conceptualization and the construal of theatricality in linguistic expression. The study has implications for cognitive semantics and construction grammar.

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