

Verb Bias in Mandarin: The Corpus Based Study of Children

Authors : Jou-An Chung

Abstract : The purpose of this study is to investigate the verb bias of the Mandarin verbs in children's reading materials and provide the criteria for categorization. Verb bias varies cross-linguistically. As Mandarin and English are typological different, this study hopes to shed light on Mandarin verb bias with the use of corpus and provide thorough and detailed criteria for analysis. Moreover, this study focuses on children's reading materials since it is a significant issue in understanding children's sentence processing. Therefore, investigating verb bias of Mandarin verbs in children's reading materials is also an important issue and can provide further insights into children's sentence processing. The small corpus is built up for this study. The corpus consists of the collection of school textbooks and Mandarin Daily News for children. The files are then segmented and POS tagged by JiebaR (Chinese segmentation with R). For the ease of analysis, the one-word character verbs and intransitive verbs are excluded beforehand. The total of 20 high frequency verbs are hand-coded and are further categorized into one of the three types, namely DO type, SC type and other category. If the frequency of taking Other Type exceeds the threshold of 25%, the verb is excluded from the study. The results show that 10 verbs are direct object bias verbs, and six verbs are sentential complement bias verbs. The paired T-test was done to assure the statistical significance ($p = 0.0001062$ for DO bias verb, $p=0.001149$ for SC bias verb). The result has shown that in children's reading materials, the DO biased verbs are used more than the SC bias verbs since the simplest structure of sentences is easier for children's sentence comprehension or processing. In sum, this study not only discussed verb bias in child's reading materials but also provided basic coding criteria for verb bias analysis in Mandarin and underscored the role of context. Sentences are easier for children's sentence comprehension or processing. In sum, this study not only discussed verb bias in child corpus, but also provided basic coding criteria for verb bias analysis in Mandarin and underscored the role of context.

Keywords : corpus linguistics, verb bias, child language, psycholinguistics

Conference Title : ICLCTS 2017 : International Conference on Linguistics, Communication and Translation Studies

Conference Location : Kyoto, Japan

Conference Dates : April 27-28, 2017