

Associated motion as a descriptive and comparative concept applied to Sinitic languages

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Going beyond Guillaume & Koch (2021), a seminal typological investigation of associated motion (AM) in the world's languages, the present talk further explores various points which arise when we attempt to extend this “relatively newly established descriptive and comparative concept” (Guillaume & Koch 2021: 3) to languages with less typical AM markers. Ross (2021), who only considers languages with affixing morphology, does not list any Sinitic language as a language with AM in his typological survey. However, Lamarre (2020) provided preliminary evidence in favor of an AM analysis of two deixis-related enclitic particles attested in northern Mandarin motion-with-purpose patterns of the type ‘go and do / come and do something’. The realization of AM in Sinitic languages raises a number of methodological issues, and may also contribute to the ongoing debate on the core features of this concept. We discuss the following issues:

1. Sinitic varieties where grammaticalized AM markers are attested provide nice material for exploring the delimitation between deictic Directionals (deictic DIRs) and associated motion markers (AMs), and their possible overlapping, since they usually share the same etymology (deictic motion verbs). This delimitation can be discussed from several approaches.

(a) Sinitic DIRs are on the whole patient-oriented (Kimura 1981), and are felicitous with Differential Object Marking (DOM, such as *bǎ* sentences), whereas AM only involves a moving agent. DOM implies referential objects and is correlated in Sinitic with high transitivity and telicity (see Chappell 2015).

(b) The semantic features of verbs taking DIRs and of those taking AMs in Sinitic support previous generalizations: DIRs basically combine with motion verbs and AMs with non-motion verbs (Belkadi 2015, Voisin 2021, Dryer 2021). We further discuss the subset of verbs which may combine with both AMs and DIRs (an issue first discussed in Lu 1989 for ventive forms).

2. Sinitic motion-with-purpose patterns may express a realized motion without entailing the realization of the main verb event. We take here the stance that markers expressing motion-with-purpose should not be excluded from AM, and should be considered as a subtype of prior AM. This is an issue presently under discussion in the field of AM studies.

3. Most Sinitic varieties use a serial verb construction to express motion-with-purpose, which follows the order “motion verb + purpose VP”. In some varieties, an AM enclitic particle may occur after the purpose VP, providing additional data to the discussion on the so-called “echo” phenomenon.

4. We propose a tentative typology of AM marking in Sinitic, taking into account parameters such as: a) the presence or absence of grammaticalized AM marking; b) the morpho-syntactic realization of AM markers; c) the inventory of AMs (from 0 in Southeastern Sinitic varieties, 1 in some Mandarin varieties, to 2 in most Northern Mandarin and Jin varieties, and 3 in some Northwest Mandarin varieties).

5. Now more data are available both on Sinitic non-standard varieties and on neighboring languages, the geographical distribution of AM also raises the issue of language contact, and provides an interesting case study for testing the so-called “Hashimoto hypothesis”. Mantaro Hashimoto (1978, 1986, etc.) suggested that the distribution of some linguistic features in Northern and Southern Sinitic was partly the result of contact with Altaic and Tai languages, respectively. Recent studies on AM in Sino-Tibetan languages, such as Qiangic and Rgyalrongic languages spoken in Southwest China and Kiranti languages spoken in the Himalaya (see Jacques, Lahaussais & Zhang 2021, Zhang 2022), and on Tungusic languages (Alonso de la Fuente & Jacques 2018, Pakendorf & Stoyanova 2021), together with historical studies on Chinese documents (Yang 2012), help us discuss whether Sinitic could provide further evidence of the claim (based on Australian and Meso-American languages) that AM is “a highly diffusible category spread through language contact” (Guillaume & Koch 2021: 16).

Selected References

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