

**On Linguistic Universality:  
The spatial schema of Mandarin postposition *li3***

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This paper aims to use the fundamental system of spatial schemas (FSOSS) (Talmy 2005: 199- 234), to analyze the comprehensive semantic features of Mandarin Chinese postposition *li3*, IN, one of the most frequently used postpositions. In this thesis, Chinese locative nouns are taken as postpositions since they are usually used after nouns. Levinson( Haun and Rapold, et al, 2011: 70- 80) held that the differences between languages turn out to be so significant as to be incompatible with the stronger version of universal conceptual category hypothesis. And he further argued that fundamental cognitive parameters, like the system of coding spatial locations, can vary cross-culturally, in line with the language spoken by a community.

According to Talmy( 2000: 27), the characteristic data of linguistic study should meet the following three conditions: colloquial, frequent and pervasive. So this thesis mainly studied contemporary Chinese spoken data. The author gathered spoken data from field work and from a large contemporary Chinese corpus CCL as well.

This thesis, using SPSS 16.0, first made a statistic analysis of the spoken data obtained from the field work and the results showed that there are some basic spatial concepts which function in the subjects' choice of postpositions for each specific scene. The tested spatial elements in this thesis covered those of figure, ground, dimensionality of 3, boundedness, relative magnitude, motion, and stationariness. Then a comprehensive analysis was made for the data attained from CCL to support the conclusion drawn from the field work.

It is concluded that FSOSS put forward by Talmy can cover nearly all the underlying spatial concepts involving in *li3* schema. This result supports the claim of the existence of a universally available inventory of fundamental spatial categories and elements. This study also provides an evidence that indicates the existence of a core language system across both English and Mandarin Chinese.

**Key words:** Mandarin; *li3*; spatial schema; fundamental spatial categories; fundamental spatial elements

**References**

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