

## Which way to move: The evolution of motion expressions in Chinese

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Talmy (2000) proposes that, with regard to the linguistic encoding of motion events, languages can be classified into two major types, namely verb-framed and satellite-framed languages in terms of the way the core feature of a motion event is encoded, i.e., PATH of motion. Specifically, V-languages typically encode PATH in the main verb of a clause, and S-languages typically encode PATH in a satellite (e.g., particles, prepositions or prefixes) of the main verb. However, it has been observed that, in some languages, serial verb ones in particular, both PATH and MANNER are conveyed by verbs or verbal roots, and hence they should have equal grammatical weight. In view of this, Slobin (2004) proposes a third type of languages, namely equipollently-framed languages.

Although Chinese is generally considered a serial verb language, its typological status with regard to motion events has been of great controversy among linguists. Some claim that it is an S-language (e.g., Talmy 2000; Li 1993), some define it as a V-language (e.g., Tai 2003) and others argue that it is an E-language (e.g., Slobin 2004; Chen and Guo 2009). This article addresses the typological status of Chinese from an EVOLUTIONARY perspective. We investigate, with an emphasis on the roles of both LANGUAGE STRUCTURE and LANGUAGE USE, the four periods of Chinese (Old, Middle, Pre-Modern and Modern) in terms of parameters such as PATH, MANNER and GROUND, and make a comparison with typologically different languages, namely, V-languages like Spanish and S-languages like English.

Table 1. Summary of the rise and fall of each parameter

Changes	Parameters
Incremental rise	percentage of the types and tokens of manner verbs, the ratio of the types of manner verbs to those of path verbs, percentage of the manner + path verb constructions, percentage of events carrying grounds, percentage of Alternative Expression of Manner
Incremental fall	percentage of the types and tokens of path verbs, percentage of the path verb constructions, percentage of events without grounds

As Table 1 indicates, our statistical study shows that (i) Chinese has been undergoing a typological shift from a V-language to an S-language, and Pre-Modern Chinese is a distinctly stepped-up period in terms of speed of evolution; (ii) Modern Chinese adopts diverse patterns of encoding motion events, which are different from both typical verb-framed and typical satellite-framed patterns. Our findings strongly suggest that (i) contrary to Peyraube's (2006) claim, the typological shift in Chinese has not been completed yet; and (ii) there is no need to posit a third type of E-languages as Slobin (2004) does, and accordingly, there is little justification for classifying Chinese as an E-language as in Chen and Guo (2009).

### References

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