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# КИТАЙСКАЯ ЛИНГВИСТИКА И СИНОЛОГИЯ



Тезисы докладов  
международной конференции

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# *Aktionsart* (or Type of Process) and Its Parameters in Chinese

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to present a theoretical framework of *Aktionsart* in languages of different types such as French and English (inflectional) and Chinese (isolating) and to provide a possible methodology in comparative studies, to not to say typological, of languages in the field of *Aktionsart*. *Aktionsart* (or 'type of process' or 'actionality') describes the internal temporality of the process; we will analyze here the *Aktionsart*, adopting the presentation of Dik rather than that of Vendler, in terms of binary semantic features organized in Porphyry trees: the processes are distinguished according to whether they are [ $\pm$ dynamic]; among the [+dynamic] process, the [ $\pm$ telic] will be opposed; and, among the [+telic] processes, one will distinguish the [ $\pm$ momentaneous]; the features [ $\pm$ control] [ $\pm$ experience] multiply these oppositions.

**Keywords:** *Aktionsart*; types of process; temporal sequence; dynamic; telic; momentaneous; control; experience.

*Aktionsart* (or 'type of process' or 'actionality') describes the internal temporality of the process. The processes are distinguished according to whether they are [ $\pm$ dynamic]; among the [+dynamic] process, the [ $\pm$ telic] will be opposed; and, among the [+telic] processes, one will distinguish the [ $\pm$ momentaneous]; the features [ $\pm$ control] [ $\pm$ experience] multiply these oppositions. We will furthermore discuss about its binary parameters and its counter-examples as well.



The features [ $\pm$ dynamic] are verified by means of a test consisting in adding to the sentence an adverb of speed. For example, 快 *kuài*: 他跑得快 *tā pǎo de kuài* 'he runs fast'. Indeed, we can only measure the speed through a changing in time, which is the definition of a process [+dynamic] during which the state of the reference world changes.

Among the [+dynamic] processes, the [+telic] processes are those who intrinsically have a terminal point, and the [-telic] processes having no terminal point represent a homogeneous interval. The test verifying that a process is [+telic] consists, in a inflectional language like French, to add a complement of duration: if the complement of duration must be introduced by *during* or remain without preposition, for the process is [-telic]; if the complement of duration must be introduced by *en*, it is that the process is [+telic]:

<i>Il est allé à la gare en une heure</i>	[+telic]
vs.	
<i>Il s'est promené (pendant) une heure</i>	[-telic]

In Chinese, it is the position of the complement of duration which distinguishes [+telic] and [-telic]:

他一个小时走到车站	[+telic]
vs.	
他散步一个小时	[-telic]

The test for Chinese and that for Western languages are not unrelated: with a [+telic] process, we place ourselves within a limited interval known in advance: hence, fr.*en* 'within' (*Il est allé à la gare en une heure* 'he walked to the station within one hour'); with a [-telic] process *pendant* 'during' or the unmarked form (*Il s'est promené (pendant) une heure* 'he walked for one hour') measures the duration as the process unfolds. We have markers in Western languages, whereas we have in Chinese the sequence: if the limited interval is given in advance, the duration in which the process will take place is proposed to the verb; if there is no bound, the duration of the process can only be measured after the fact: the position of the duration complement also obeys the temporal iconicity.\*

Among the [+telic] process, [+momentaneous] processes are incompatible with phase expressions such as 'to start', 'to continue', 'to finish', for the good reason that, in a [+momentaneous] process, the initial point and the final point coincide. The test is obviously applicable to Chinese.

\* Temporal iconicity or iconicity of sequence means that the linear sequence of the constituents mimics temporal sequence of the events in the referential world [Jakobson 1965; Bolinger 1977; Greenberg 1963; Haiman 1985; Tai 1985; Givon 1990; Xiao 2019].

The test to establish a [+control] process is to check whether it is consistent with an injunctive type statement or whether it can be the complement of verbs like 'to promise' or 'to persuade': for example, in English, we cannot have *\*be sick!*, neither *\*I promise you to be sick tomorrow*. The test is obviously transposable in Chinese: *\*病 bing!*

The [+experience] processes (like 'to see', 'to know' or 'to experience', 'to learn', etc.) describe not the state of an external world, but the internal state of the subject who experiences the experience, the state of the outside world being in no way affected. So to 'see': Whether Paul sees (or does not see) Peter crossing the street does not change the fact that Peter crosses the street.

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