A Lexical Semantics Analysis of Xihuan w in Mandarin Chinese

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Abstract

Our analysis of Xihuan w in Mandarin Chinese has been done in four steps. First of all, we have understood the diachrony of Xihuan wand it turns out that it is a very ancient word and the uses are getting closed to Modern Chinese. With the sources from CCL, we make a data statistic of grammatical functions distribution of Xihuan w. Based on the corpora we conclude 4 different lexical semantics words of Xihuan w. The last step we apply Integration Lexical Semantics to each lexical word to find out their shared featured and differences. It is just a tentatively effort to analysis the polysemous in Mandarin Chinese. There exists many imperfect or unscientific fault design and limitation.

Keywords

Lexical Semantics; Mandarin Chinese; Integration Lexical Semantics.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Objective and Aim

The present essay is an attempt to analysis the lexical semantics of one of the high-frequency verbs in Chinese--Xihuan [w] in Mandarin Chinese based on the theory of Integrational Lexical Semantics. I will first introduce a literature review of Integrational Lexical Semantics. Next, sample sentences are provided to illustrate the development of Xihuan [w] in Chinese literature. The third section is a syntactic analysis to find out different syntactic structures and how many lexical words of Xihuan [w]. The forth section is the semantic analysis. This section is divided into two parts. The first part is to define each lexical word in the perspective of Integrational Lexical Semantics. The second part is to simply analyze the shared features and differences of these lexical words. The final section is summary of this study.

1.2. The Motivation

The study on verbs is one of the most important topics in the Chinese grammar study. Because compared with other words, verbs have more complex internal structures and are more active in syntax structures and most parts of sentences need to be combined with verbs. In many sentences, verbs are the most important parts, predicates which contain verbs or verb phases appear with the highest frequency and have the most abundant syntactic patterns. Verbs are the cores of the sentences in which they are embedded in and determine the basic syntactic structure(吕叔湘, 1942；Chafe, 1970；See in 陈昌来, 2000). The verb researches relate directly to establishing of the whole scientific modern Chinese grammar.

Generally speaking, the studies about verb have been one of the hottest topics for a long time. These studies have abundant achievements with a wide range. The related existing outcomes provide a basis for this essay. However, there are few studies focusing on specific verbs. I select Xihuan [w] as research subject with an attempt to find some principles or patterns of verbs study with application of Integration Lexical Semantics and also hope that it could provide some valuable references for other students.

2. Literature Review

Integrational Linguistics (IL) is a general linguistic approach developed mainly by the German linguist Hans-Heinrich Lieb and others since the late 1960s. IL takes a broad view of the range of linguistics, which is to deal with all aspects of nature languages that are directly or indirectly relevant to their use. IL proposes a theory of language (the Integrational Theory of Language) and a theory of linguistic grammars (the Integrational Theory of Grammars). The theory of language is to cover the system aspect in its entirety; thus, the theory has a phonological, a morphological, a syntactic and a semantic part. (Lieb1992;130)

2.1. Integrational Lexical Semantics

Integrational Semantics is the semantic part of the theory of language proposed in IL and has two major parts: the integrational theory of lexical meaning (lexical semantics) and the integrational theory of syntactic meaning. The theoretical framework adopted in this essay is the former.

Lexical semantics are conceived as potential concept in a sense that takes up the psychological tradition in semantics and combines it with the realist. Lexical meaning composition, the only semantic composition process to occur in morphosemantics is achieved by concept functions.

2.2. Basic Ideas for Lexical Meanings

There are two main ways for a speaker to acquire concepts that can be associated with lexical items: (i) perceiving real-world (extra-mental) entities by means of his sensory organs, and (ii) receiving cognitive information about (perceivable or non-perceivable) entities. Concepts in a psychological sense should therefore be based on (human) perceptions and conceptions.

A perception is a concrete (space-time) event in consciousness which is normally cause by a sense impression, and which consists in the assumption that (i) there is an extra-mental object that has caused a sense impression which led to the perception, and (ii) that the object has all attributes in the content of the perception.

Conceptions are similar to perceptions in a number of respects. However, while a perception is a concrete mental event usually caused by a sense impression, a conception is a concrete mental state of a person.

Concepts as lexical meanings are construed not as perceptions or conceptions, but as specific properties of perceptions or conceptions, namely, as the property of being a perception or conception in whose content a certain set of attributes occurs as a subset.

The number of complements which (certain but not all) forms of a lexical word require when used in a sentence is called the "valence" or "valency" of the word. By "selection" we understand the property of a lexical word to require certain types of complements. Valency and selection together form the government properties of the word. There is a connection between the valency of a lexical word and the place-number of the concept which is the meaning of the word. (Sackmann,2014)

3. The Diachrony of Xihuan w

The Chinese character Xi was polysemant in ancient Chinese. It represented "Joyful and Happy" as an adjective：

(1)既见君子,云胡不喜？（《诗·郑风·风雨》）

(2)却看妻子愁何在, 漫卷诗书喜欲狂.（杜甫《闻官军收河南河北》）

It also means pleasing and gratifying in causative usage:

(3)形势喜人.

It expressed "like or be fond of something" as a verb:

(4)公坊本不喜热闹。（《孽海花》）

Occasionally it illustrated an inclination or habitation:

(5)松喜干。（苏轼《格物粗谈°§树木》）

As a noun, "Xi" stood for a good news or something worth celebration:

(6)古者有喜，则以名物，示不忘也。（苏轼《喜雨亭记》）

It also means the news that someone is pregnant when it is a noun:

(7)叫大夫瞧了，又说并不是喜。（曹雪芹《红楼梦》第十回）

It's dated from the Eastern Han Dynasty (AC25-220) that the Chinese character "Xi" and "Huan" were functioned together as an adjective representing "Joyful; Happy". For example:

(8)知其安危问养，视其复闻小善言，心为之喜欢，是孝之所致也。（《太平经 庚部之十二》）

In the Six Dynasty：

(9)爽兄弟不达变数，即便喜欢，自谓不死。（南朝•裴松之《三国志裴注》）

(10)与辂相见，意甚喜欢，自说注易向讫也。（南朝•裴松之《三国志裴注》）

In Sui and Tang Dynasty (AC581-907), "Xihuan" became more popular but functioned as adjective:

(11)或即身贵荣贵，不殊梦里喜欢，忽然处在贫穷，还似梦中恶发。（《敦煌变文》）

(12)如今变作村园眼，鼓子花开也喜欢。（《全唐诗•睹野花思京师游》）

In Yuan and Ming Dynasty, there were some records of "Xihuan" used as verbs. But it was still not very common and usually were found in plays and novels of Ming：

(13)(梅香云)姐姐。你喜欢甚么？（《全元曲•杂剧》）

(14)王喜为差拨上，心上原也不曾喜欢他，只是思量要得赈济，没奈何去伺候他。（《型世言•第九回》）

Since Qing Dynasty, "Xihuan" has become more and more popular as daily words. Both function as adjectives and verbs can be found in many literatures and are getting similar to the use in modern Chinese. We also realize, with the development through time, the meaning of "Xihuan" focus more on the morpheme "Xi".

4. The Syntactic Study of Xihuan w

In this section, we are going through Xihuan w in modern Chinese sentences to study its syntactic function and syntactic structure. There are 27262 sentences of Xihuan ʷ in CCL(北京大学中国语言学研究中语料库网络版). In the terms of syntactic constituent, I make a statistics table as below:

Table 1. Syntax component statistics table

Syntactic Constituent	Subject	Predicate	Object	Attributive	Adverbial	Complement	Total
Xihuan (sentence Number/Percentage)	365(1.34％)	23300 (85.47％)	425 (1.56％)	3046 (11.17％)	119(0.44%)	7(0.03%)	27262 (100%)

According to the statistics, I divide the constituent into three groups to study and due to time and space the lowest two constituents (Adverbial and Complement) are not being displayed in this essay. All the sentence examples are from CCL.

4.1. Xihuan w as Predicates

It is obvious from the chart above that *Xihuan* w as predicates occupies the most percentages. In many simple syntactic structure, *Xihuan* w can independently work as predicate meaning that "be interested in something or someone",e.g.:

(1) 我喜欢读历史书和重要历史人物的传记。

(2)知道这段故事以后，她更加喜欢慧梅了。

(3)在所有动物中, 陈阡蕙最喜欢的是蝴蝶。

In the above sentences, *Xihuan* w is more inclined to a mental state. It is a psychological process or an emotion. In other predicate examples, the psychological properties of *Xihuan* w become less and it tells an information about a habit or a custom as we also discussed in ancient Chinese:

(4)哈萨克族人过年喜欢摔跤活动。

(5)正在上高中的英俊小伙健健是加勒次莱的小儿子, 闲暇时喜欢帮父亲做马鞍。

(6)韩国人在用餐时喜欢喝冰水, 所以食堂中还放置了巨大的饮水机。

(7)孩子们常常喜欢一边吃东西一边到处跑, 这样很容易呛到。

Therefore, we might conclude that there are two lexical words of *Xihuan* w in the Predicate use:
Lexical Word

Xihuan w_1 = < *Xihuan* $_p$, "Being interested in someone or something">

*Xihua*n w_2 = < *Xihuan* $_p$, "be used to do something (a habit or custom)">

4.2. Xihuan w as Attributive

As the second-high percentage, *Xihuan* w seldom independently functions as attributive and usually is accompany with "de"(的) or other subject-object phrases/verb-object phrase with "de",
e.g.:

(1)常言说："鸭是活食货", 一些蚯蚓、泥鳅、小鱼、蚱蜢等都是鸭子喜欢吃的食料。

(2)她最喜欢的明星竟然是中国影星成龙。

When it works independently as modifiers, the core it modifies must be relatively connected to *Xihuan* w semantically, like words represents degree "Chengdu"(程 度) 、 laws"Guilv"(规 律).Moreover, if there is already a "de" in front of *Xihuan* w, the "de" between *Xihuan* w and its modifier can be omitted to prevent too repetitive, e.g.:

(1) 然而,这支部队的官兵对高雅音乐的了解，喜欢程度绝不亚于某些"追星"官兵对流行歌曲的熟知.

In this case, *Xihuan* w is adjective therefore we might find another lexical word of "Xihuan":

Xihuan w_3 = < *Xihuan* $_p$, "enjoyable, joyful">

4.3. Xihuan w as Subject and Object

Xihuan w can be subjective independently, e.g.:

(1)喜欢就是艺术, 低价买张复制品, 起到欣赏的作用, 就值。

Most of time, there are modifiers in front of *Xihuan* w,e.g:

(2)对话剧的这份喜欢缘自谭路璐的童年。

(3)这种喜欢由来以久, AC 虽名次不佳, 但仍具有威胁慑力, 一种使人敬畏的贵族气。

What's more, it combines with "de" as Subject which also apply to the case of Object:

(4)我最喜欢的是《日子》的前一百页和后一百页。

(5)NBA 老板们普遍喜欢的还是赌城。

(6) 火箭队有我们喜欢的, 也有我们不喜欢的。

When *Xihuan* w functions as object, there are many verbs to go with:

(7)全场响起经久不息的掌声, 表达了观众对这一节目的喜欢。

(8)这些触摸社会脉搏、富于个性的新鲜形式受到家长和孩子们的喜欢。

(9)要是咱们不去买他的喜欢, 他没得到你, 就该跟咱们过不去了。

(10)他想应当给老人们买回一点应节的点心去, 讨他们一点喜欢。

(11)日常生活中的殷延平乐观开朗, 为人坦诚豪爽, 很得"哥们"的喜欢.

In general, *Xihuan* w is in the use of Noun. Therefore, we find out the last lexical word:

Xihuan w_4 = < *Xihuan* p, "joy, delight">

5. The Semantic Study of Xihuan w

5.1. The Concept and Valency

5.1.1. Lexical Word Xihuan w₁

(1) 我喜欢读历史书和重要历史人物的传记

　　Xihuan w_1 = < *Xihuan* p, "Being interested in someone or something">

　　'Xihuan' =df λz: perc(z) ∨ conc(z) ∧ {XIHUAN} ⊆ cont(z)

　　 XIHUAN= λ$x_1x_2x_3$:

　　　　　　a.x^1 is an animate subject;

　　　　　　b.x^2 is something or some events;

　　　　　　c.x^3 is a mental state of being joyful;

　　　　　　d.x^2 cause x^1 to experience x^3 during a time.

Therefore, the verb *Xihuan* w_2 itself has valency2. In the example sentence (1)above, the remaining two components of a Xihuan-event must be identified by tow complements of the predicate constituent, namely x_1 (agent), x_2 (theme).

5.1.2. Lexical Word Xihuan w₂

(2)韩国人在用餐时喜欢喝冰水, 所以食堂中还放置了巨大的饮水机。

　　Xihuan w_2 = < Xihuan p, "be used to do something(a habit or custom">

　　'Xihuan' =df λz: perc(z) ∨ conc(z) ∧ {XIHUAN} ⊆ cont(z)

　　XIHUAN= λ$x_1x_2x_3$:

　　　　　　a.x_1 is an animate subject;

　　　　　　b.x_2 is specific inside or outside conditions;

　　　　　　c.x_3 is a custom/habit or a conditioned reflex;

　　　　　　d. x_3 causes x_1 to have x_2.

Therefore, the verb *Xihuan* w_2 itself has valency2, namely x_1 (agent), x_2 (theme).

5.1.3. Lexical Word Xihuan w₃

(3)她最喜欢的明星竟然是中国影星成龙。

　　Xihuan w_3 = < Xihuan p, "enjoyable, joyful">

　　'Xihuan' =df λz: perc(z) ∨ conc(z) ∧ {XIHUAN} ⊆ cont(z)

　　XIHUAN= λx_1x_2:

　　　　　　a.x_1 is an animate subject;

　　　　　　b.x_2 a mental state of being joyful;

　　　　　　c. x_1 experience x_2 during a time;

Therefore, the verb *Xihuan* $^w_3$ itself has valency1 its forms requiring only one complement when used in a sentence. The lexical meaning of the verb *Xihuan* $^w_3$, the concept "xihuan", is 2-place: its extension is a set pairs each consisting of "a mental state of being joyful" and an animate subject who is capable to have this mental state.

5.1.4. Lexical Word Xihuan w₄

(4)喜欢就是艺术, 低价买张复制品, 起到欣赏的作用, 就值。

Xihuan $^w_4$ = < Xihuan ^{p}, "joy, delight">

'Xihuan' =df λz: perc(z) ∨ conc(z) ∧ {XIHUAN} ⊆ cont(z)

XIHUAN= {EMOTION, PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS, POSITIVE}

The noun *Xihuan* $^w_4$ has valency, i.e. its forms, when used in a sentence, do not require a complement. The concept "xihuan" is a 1-place concept.

5.2. Shared Features and Differences

Firstly, we will look at the properties of Xihuan ^{p}.

Def.: P is polysemous in L if and only if: There is a b1 and a b2 such that

a.<P, b_1> is a lexical word of L;

b.<P, b_2>is a lexical word of L;

c. b_1 and b_2 are (historically or systematically) related;

d. $b_1 \neq b_2$.

Based on the definition above, we can say the paradigm Xihuan ^{p}. is polysemous in Mandarin Chinese because of *Xihuan* $^w_1$, *Xihuan* $^w_2$, *Xihuan* $^w_3$, *Xihuan* $^w_4$.

According to the5.1 analysis, we realize that it involves a psychological process or mental state in *Xihuan* $^w_1$, *Xihuan* $^w_3$, *Xihuan* $^w_4$.. thereby all of them require the subject to be animate. They all convey the meaning of happy and joyful more or less. But the three lexical words are totally different n-place concepts with different valences. Also, they have different grammatical functions in the sentences and each of themselves are different constituent (Verb, Adjective, Noun respectively).

Xihuan $^w_2$ is the only lexical word slight related to the mental state and the meaning of joyful. Although it has the same function and structure with *Xihuan* $^w_1$, they don`t apply the same context actually.

6. Summary

Our analysis of *Xihuan* ^{w} in Mandarin Chinese has been done in four steps. First of all, we have understood the diachrony of Xihuan wand it turns out that it is a very ancient word and the uses are getting closed to Modern Chinese. With the sources from CCL, we make a data statistic of grammatical functions distribution of *Xihuan* ^{w}. Based on the corpora we conclude 4 different lexical semantics words of *Xihuan* ^{w}. The last step we apply Integration Lexical Semantics to each lexical word to find out their shared featured and differences. It is just a tentatively effort to analysis the polysemous in Mandarin Chinese. There exists many imperfect or unscientific fault design and limitation.

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