Framing Force Dynamics: A Case Study on Unilateral Force Interaction Verbs in Mandarin
Tzu-I Chiang
tzuiivivian@gmail.com
Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

This paper explores the issues of force dynamics discussed in Talmy (2000) by investigating Force Interaction Verbs (FIVs) that denote unilateral force interactions in Mandarin. The ways physical entities interact with each other in terms of force provide the conceptual bases for various causative relations. According to Talmy, force dynamics as a semantic category exhibits a force relation in which “one force-exerting entity is singled out for focal attention and the second one, correlative, is considered for the effect that it has on the first, effectively overcoming it or not (Talmy 2000: 413). Several major force schemas were distinguished. The Mandarin counterpart, however, displays a categorical complexity distinct from that of English in terms of how force schemas are lexicalized and how context helps to determine the balance of strength upon interaction. This study aims to investigate the possible range of force interaction distinguished in Mandarin FIVs as well as the constructional variations associated with each distinct lexicalization patterns.

Another issue that we tackle in the present study is the polysemy of the Manipulation causative 請 ràng. It is alternatively used to replace four different force interactions verbs as shown in (1) to (4):

(1) 他 迫使/讓 我逃跑。
    tā pòshǐ/ràng wǒ táo pāo
    3sg POSHI/RANG me run away
    ‘He makes me run away’

(2) 他 強迫/讓 我去幫他買咖啡。
    tā qiǎngpò/ràng wǒ qù bāng tā mài kāfē
    3sg QIANGPO/RANG me go help him buy coffee
    ‘He forces me to buy a cup of coffee for him.’

(3) 他 允許/讓 我先離開。

1 This paper is part of my MA research that is supervised and greatly benefited from Professor Meichun Liu.
This study helps to explore how Manipulation causatives such as 讓 ràng are used as a causative marker to lexicalize purposeful forces in variety in Mandarin.

Under the assumption that verb meanings are anchored in semantic frames with lexically-profiled specificities (Fillmore and Atkins 1992, Goldberg 2005), Verbs of relational force are analyzed and re-constructed with a frame-based taxonomy, following the classificational scheme established in Liu and Chiang (2008) with an extendable hierarchy of semantic scopes: Archiframe > Primary frame > Basic frame > Microframe. It is proposed that the correlations of semantic properties and syntactic behaviors characteristic of Mandarin FIVs are triggered and modeled upon a number of extensional patterns of force interactions.

By offering a cognitive semantic account and presenting a multi-layered hierarchical analysis of Mandarin FIVs, this study refines the force-dynamic schemas proposed by Talmy (2000) into a more complete mechanism and ultimately provides empirical evidences to support the cross-linguistic generalization that Force Dynamics is a fundamental category in Mandarin as it is in English and in German.

**Keywords:** Force Interaction Verbs, Force Dynamics, Frame Semantics
Selected Reference:


