Bridging East and West Median expressions: A comparative study of Chinese and Polish

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While genealogically unrelated, Standard Chinese (Sinitic) and Polish (Slavic) exhibit notable typological similarities in the expression of motion events. Both languages employ satellite-framed constructions (Talmy 1991, 2000) and feature a system of verb satellites – postverbal directionals in Chinese and verb prefixes in Polish – that indicate various segments of the path, and that are source-oriented (e.g. *out*), goal-oriented (e.g. *into*), and median-oriented (e.g. *across*).

This paper focuses on the spatial use of satellites encoding median Path, specifically -*guo* in Chinese and *prze*- in Polish, as illustrated in examples (1) and (2). Both examples express a translational motion of a figure (moving entity) relative to a ground (reference entity), and imply crossing its boundaries. In the Chinese example (1) -*guo* appears with the manner verb *kāi* 'drive', the preposition *cóng* 'from, through', and a relational noun =*xià* 'under', while in the Polish example (2), *prze*- occurs with the manner verb *biec* 'run' and the preposition *przez* 'across, through' that governs the accusative case.

In order to uncover the range of functions median satellites serve and the types of spatial relations they encode, we analyze spontaneous motion event constructions with median satellites, drawing from contemporary literary corpora in Standard Chinese and Polish, respectively. We show that while median satellites often indicate motion across an entity, from one side to another, as in (ZH 1) and (POL 2), they are sensitive to contexts in which they occur and can convey a variety of spatial relations in combination with other linguistic devices, such as different prepositions and, in Chinese, different relational nouns. For example, median satellites can occur in the expression of relations such as *over* (ZH 3, POL 4), *under* (ZH 1, POL 7), *in front of* (POL 5), *between* (ZH 6), among others.

In this paper, we examine several parameters that, together with the median satellite, nuance, specify, or even modify the median meaning: (i) the presence or absence of the Ground NP, (ii) the types of spatial relations expressed in cooccurring adnominal devices (dynamic vs. locative prepositions, and, in Chinese, relational nouns) and adverbal devices (deictic directionals in Chinese), if any, (iii) the types of figures involved in motion (animate, inanimate), (iv) the types of grounds relative to which motion occurs (e.g. people, places, objects, paths), and (v) the types of manner of motion conveyed by verbs (e.g. 'run across', 'squeeze through'). By investigating the interaction between these parameters, we provide a systematic analysis of the use of the median satellites in these two languages, and contribute to our understanding of this understudied issue.

Selected references

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Annex

(1)

Wǎng	*tǐyùchǎng*	*qù*	*de*	*gōnggòngqìchē*	*cóng*	*qiáo=xià*	*kāi-guò,*
towards	stadium	go	MOD	bus	M/S	bridge=under	drive-GUO
chē=shang	*jǐ-mǎn-le*	*rén,*	(…)				
bus-top	crowd-full-PFV	people					

'The bus to the stadium drove under the bridge and was packed with people,…' (SHI Tiesheng, *Football*, 1984)

(2)

Do-biegli	*do*	*torów,*	*prze-biegli*	*przez*
to-run. 3PL.M.PST	to	track.GEN.PL.M	prze- run. 3PL.M.PST	through
wiadukt	*na*	*drugą*	*stronę,*	*(…)*
viaduct.ACC.SG.M	on	other.ACC.SG.F	side. ACC.SG.F	

'They ran up to the tracks, ran across the viaduct to the other side (…).' (M. Ławrynowicz, *Diabeł na dzwonnicy*, 1996)

(3)

Liǎng	*yuè*	*qián,*	*wǒ*	*zuò*	*fēijī*	*jiù*
two	month	before	1SG	ride	plane	then
cóng	*zánmen*	*Shuāng-shuǐ-cūn*	*shàngkōng*	*fēi-guò.*		
M/S	1PL-INCL	Twin-water-village	overhead	fly-GUO		

'Two months ago, I flew over our village of Twin Waters in an airplane.' (LU Yao, *Ordinary world*, 1991)

(4)

Tędy,	*nad*	*murem*	*prze-leciał*	*ptak.*
this.way	above	wall.INSTR.SG.M	PRZE-fly. 3PL.M.PST	bird.NOM.SG.M

'This way, over the wall flew a bird' (B*. Wojdowski, Chleb rzucony umarłym, 1971*)

(5)

Okręt	*prze-płynął*	*majestatycznie*	*tuż, tuż*	*przed*	*flotyllą*
ship.NOM.SG.M	PRZE-float.3SG.M.PST	majestically	just, just	in front of	flotilla.GEN.SG.F
i	*szybko*	*znikł.*			
and	quickly	disappear.3SG.M.PST			

'The ship passed [lit. sailed] majestically just in front of the flotilla and quickly disappeared.'
(B. Misiniec, *Gladiatorzy i piracy*, 2009)

(6)

Shuō-wán	*zhè*	*jù,*	*tā*	*biàn*	*cóng*	*zuòwèi-shang*	*zhàn-qi,*	*cèshēn*
say-finish	this	sentence	3SG	then	from	seat-on	rise-up	sideways
cóng	*qián*	*yì*	*pái*	*rén*	*de*	*yāo-bèi*	*hé*	*hòu*
M/S	front	one	row	people	MOD	waist-back	and	back
yì	*pái*	*rén*	*de*	*xīgài*	*zhījiān*	*jǐ-guo-qu.*		
one	row	people	MOD	knee	between	push-GUO-ITV		

'With those words, she rose from her seat and squeezed sideways between the waists and backs of the people in the front row and the knees of the people in the back row.' (YAN Geling, *Flowers of war*, 2011)

(7)

Prze-cisnął się	*pod*	*płotem*	*i*	*usiadł*	*w*	*krzakach* (…)
PRZE-squeeze.1SG.M.PST REFL	under	fence.ACC.SG.M	and	sit.1SG.M.PST	in	bush.LOC.PL.M

'He squeezed under the fence and sat in the bushes (…).' (P. Grych, *Numer zerowy,* 2007)