Two Types of Reciprocals in Mandarin Chinese
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Workshop on Cross-Linguistic Semantics of Reciprocals

Introduction

- Differences between two reciprocals in Mandarin Chinese are investigated: adverbial huxiang and argumental bici.

Proposal: differences between huxiang and bici sentences are due to differences their source of distributivity.

Two Reciprocals in Mandarin Chinese

- Mandarin Chinese has several strategies for expressing huxiang
  a. Tamen huxiang xihuan. 3PL huxiang like 3PL like bici 3PL ‘They like each other.’

Differences between huxiang and bici

Difference #1: Negative sentences. Negative huxiang sentences are weaker than negative bici sentences:

(2)a. Zhangsan and Lisi NEG huxiang kick ¬∀x∀y[x, y ∈ {z, l}; x ≠ y → kick(y)(x)]
   b. Zhangsan and Lisi neg bici - Hollande kick ¬∃x∃y[x, y ∈ {z, l}; x ≠ y ∧ kick(y)(x)]

Difference #2: Scopal Ambiguities. Sentences with bici and a verbal classifier allow for an intermediate reading.

(3) Context: There are three people. Each kicked the other two people once each.
   a. Tamen huxiang tida le - yixia² / liang-xia² / liu-xia², 3PL huxiang kick-PFV one-CL two-CL six-CL
   b. Tamen tida le bici yi-xia² / liang-xia² / liu-xia², 3PL kick-PFV bici one-CL two-CL six-CL

Difference #3: Wide Scope Readings. Under an attitude verb, only bici shows Higginbotham’s (1985) ambiguity.

Heim et al. (1991): Reciprocity is decomposed into two operations, distributivity and differentiation.

Huxiang - performs both distributivity and differentiation.

Bici - only performs differentiation, distributivity is due to the covert distributivity operator D.

Conclusion

- Argued for a dimension in which reciprocal constructions might diverge: the source of distributivity.
- Further research will attempt to see whether the tests above can be applied to other languages and lead to similar results.

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