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#### *Event measures in Chinese*

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Tenny (1994)'s Aspectual Interface Hypothesis assigns the direct object a privileged status: the direct object, but not other phrases, can measure out an event. On the other hand, Van den Wyngaerd (2001), on the basis of Dutch, claims that the resultative predicate is an event measure, providing minimal parts of an event. In this note, I will show that in Chinese the direct object is not necessarily an event measure; it is only so if it is indefinite. In contrast, a sentence containing a definite object does not have an event measure, but must rely on an indefinite adjunct phrase to perform the measuring function.

I assume that a telic sentence contains an event measure, while an atelic sentence does not. Following Tenny (1994), I also assume that an event can only be measured in one way, not multiple ways. It is now generally accepted that the notion of quantized object is relevant for telicity. In particular, objects that are definite or indefinite are quantized and contribute to telicity. However, in Chinese definite NPs behave differently than indefinite NPs with respect to telicity, as shown in (1):

- (1) Ni neng zai shi fenzhong nei gei women shuo (a) sange gushi ma?  
you can at ten minute in to us tell three-cl story Q  
(b) \*naxie gushi  
those story  
'Can you tell us (a) three stories in ten minutes?'  
(b) \*those stories

While (1a) occurs with 'in ten minutes', (1b) doesn't. Since the definite phrase in (1b) is incompatible with 'in ten minutes', it does not contribute to a telic event and is not an event measure.

However, when (1b) is accompanied by a measure phrase, such as (V)-yi-V 'V a little', the result is a telic sentence, as in (2):

- (2) Ni neng zai shi fenzhong nei gei women shuo-yi-shuo naxie gushi ma?  
you can at ten minute in to us tell-one-tell those story Q  
'Can you tell us a little of those stories in ten minutes?'

The presence of *yi-shuo* turns an otherwise atelic predicate into a telic predicate; it is also the event measure of (2). Thus while (1a) shows that an indefinite object is an event measure, (2) shows that when the object is definite, the measuring function is taken up by an indefinite adjunct phrase. In both cases, it is an indefinite phrase that

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serves as the measure.

On the other hand, given that an event can only be measured in one way, it is predicted that (1a) cannot be modified by the V-*yi*-V phrase. This is borne out in (3):

- (3) \*Ni neng zai shi fengzhong nei gei women shuo-yi-shuo sange gushi ma?  
you can at ten minute in to us tell-one-tell three story Q  
\*‘Can you tell us a little of three stories a little in ten minutes?’

Since the object itself is an event measure, it does not take another phrase serving the same function.

Thus the Chinese data show that the measuring function is taken up by an indefinite phrase, which can be an argument or an adjunct. It also shows that quantized objects don’t all behave the same in Chinese. While indefinite objects contribute to telicity, definite objects don’t.

### References

- Tenny, C. (1994) *Aspectual roles and the syntax-semantics interface*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.  
Van den Wyngaerd, G. (2001) “Measuring events.” *Language* 77: 61-90.