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## A Study on English-Chinese Differences and Topological Transfer from the Perspective of Motion Events Construal

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### Abstract

Previous studies have consistently shown systematic differences in how motion events are construed in Chinese and English, particularly in terms of encoding manner, path, and figure–ground relations. However, the underlying causes of these differences and their implications for second language acquisition and instruction have not been fully synthesized. Addressing this gap is crucial, as motion event conceptualization reflects deeper typological and cognitive distinctions that may significantly influence learners’ interlanguage development. The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the roots, representations, and developmental tendencies of motion event construal differences between Chinese and English, and to explore how these differences affect second language learning and teaching. Specifically, the study aims to identify typological patterns and transfer effects observed in learners acquiring English as a second language. Methodologically, this paper employs a qualitative literature review approach, analyzing major theoretical frameworks and relevant empirical studies on motion event typology and second language acquisition. Data from previous experimental and corpus-based studies were carefully examined to identify recurring patterns of encoding and conceptualization. The findings reveal clear disparities between English and Chinese in the encoding of path and manner information, as well as in the conceptualization of figure–ground relations in motion events. Moreover, evidence indicates that contemporary Chinese shows a gradual tendency toward English-like motion event patterns. Importantly, the analysis confirms the presence of typological transfer, demonstrating that learners’ interlanguage increasingly aligns with the typological features of the target language as their L2 proficiency improves. The study further suggests that English–Chinese spatio-temporal conceptual differences may account for these disparities. These findings carry important implications for second language pedagogy, emphasizing the need for typology-informed instruction. Finally, the paper outlines current research limitations and proposes directions for future studies on motion event conceptualization and language learning.

**Keywords:** *English–Chinese differences; motion events construal; spatio-temporal differences; typological transfer*

### A. Introduction

Classifying languages according to their commonalities or differences offers a valuable perspective for linguistic research. Typological research, in particular, has offered valuable methodological insights and empirical findings for investigating cross-linguistic differences between English and Chinese (Comrie, 1989; Croft, 2003). In second language acquisition (SLA) research, such findings are frequently used to explain why Chinese learners’ spoken and written English may sound non-native-like, especially at the levels of syntax, semantics, and

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discourse (Ellis, 2008; Odlin, 1989). Therefore, studies of English–Chinese (E–C) differences constitute a foundational line of inquiry and play a pivotal role in SLA research.

For instance, postposed temporal adverbial clauses represent the dominant word order in English, whereas Chinese shows a strong preference for preposed temporal adverbial clauses (Tai, 1985; Xiao & McEnery, 2004). Empirical evidence suggests that even advanced Chinese learners of English place temporal adverbial clauses before the main clause at a rate as high as 70.37%, and this proportion is inversely related to learners' L2 proficiency (Li, 2016). Such typological differences indicate that L2 learners need not only to acquire formal linguistic knowledge of the target language, but also to reorganize or modify L1 typological features embedded in their conceptual system.

Typological transfer refers to the phenomenon in which differences in typological features between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) lead learners to transfer L1 typological properties into their interlanguage, or conversely, to transfer L2 typological features into their L1 production (Odlin, 1989; Rutherford, 1984). These differences may constitute the root cause of both surface-level linguistic transfer and deeper conceptual transfer, which are central concerns in SLA research (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). By examining cross-linguistic differences in specific typological features, researchers can help L2 learners develop better control over both the formal properties and the underlying conceptual representations of the target language, thereby facilitating positive transfer and constraining negative transfer (Cai, 2021).

Typological differences between English and Chinese in the construal of motion events have attracted increasing scholarly attention. Existing studies can be broadly categorized into three strands. The first investigates similarities and differences in how semantic components such as path, manner, and cause are encoded in motion events (Talmy, 2000; Slobin, 2004). The second strand focuses on cross-linguistic differences in temporal conceptualization, particularly with respect to grammatical aspect (Xiao & McEnery, 2004). The third strand, inspired by Talmy's figure–ground framework and cross-cultural psychology, examines cross-linguistic differences in the encoding of figure–ground information in motion events and explores the cognitive and cultural sources of these differences (Talmy, 1975; Han & Cadierno, 2010).

Focusing on the first and third strands, the present paper reviews and synthesizes relevant literature to provide a comprehensive discussion of English–Chinese differences in motion event construal and to identify evidence of typological transfer. Based on this discussion, the paper aims to offer pedagogical implications for second language teaching and to suggest directions for future research.

## **B. Methods**

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing a literature review approach. This design is appropriate given the study's objective of critically synthesizing theoretical and empirical findings on typological differences in motion event construal between English and Chinese and their implications for second language acquisition. A qualitative literature review enables the identification of recurring conceptual patterns and explanatory frameworks across studies, particularly those addressing the encoding of manner and path, figure–ground relations, and typological transfer in interlanguage development (Grant & Booth, 2009; Talmy, 2000).

The research procedure followed several systematic stages. First, relevant literature on motion event construal, linguistic typology, and second language acquisition—particularly studies comparing English and Chinese—was identified through academic databases. Second,

the selected studies were categorized according to their primary focus, including manner and path encoding, figure-ground representation, and evidence of typological transfer. Third, each study was examined in depth with regard to its theoretical framework, research methodology, and key findings. Finally, findings across studies were synthesized to identify common patterns and developmental tendencies in learners' conceptualization of motion events (Slobin, 2004; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

The data used in this study are secondary data derived from published academic sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and conference proceedings. The reviewed studies encompass experimental research, corpus-based analyses, and theoretical discussions related to motion event conceptualization and cross-linguistic typological differences between English and Chinese. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, theoretical contribution, and accessibility through academic search engines such as Google Scholar, in line with established guidelines for conducting rigorous literature reviews (Booth et al., 2016).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using thematic and comparative analysis. Key findings from the reviewed studies were coded according to central themes, such as strategies for encoding manner and path, patterns of figure-ground representation, and manifestations of typological transfer in learners' interlanguage. Cross-study comparisons were then conducted to investigate how typological differences interact with learners' levels of second language proficiency. The results were interpreted within the frameworks of linguistic typology and second language acquisition theory to explain conceptual restructuring during language learning and to derive pedagogical implications (Odlin, 1989; Ellis, 2008).

### **C. Results and Discussion**

Based on whether the semantic component of the path is encoded in the main verb, Talmy (2000) classifies languages into two broad typological groups: verb-framed (V-languages) and satellite-framed (S-languages). In V-languages, path is characteristically encoded in the main verb, while manner and other semantic components are expressed peripherally, typically in satellite elements. This is illustrated in Example (1) from Spanish, where *salió* serves as the main verb encoding the path "out," and *flotando* appears as a satellite conveying the manner "floating." Conversely, in S-languages, path is expressed by satellites, whereas manner is carried by the main verb. Example (2) demonstrates this pattern in English. The verb "ran" encodes manner, while the satellite "across" encodes path. Within this framework, Talmy originally categorized modern Chinese as an S-language.

This binary classification has been challenged by Slobin and colleagues (Slobin, Hickmann, & Robert, 2006). They argue that in certain languages, path and manner verbs hold comparable syntactic prominence, making it difficult to identify a single main verb. On this basis, Slobin proposed a third typological category: equipollently-framed (E-languages). He classified Chinese as an E-language due to its frequent use of serial verb constructions (SVC), in which V1 and V2 may co-occur or appear independently, complicating the identification of a core verb. This tripartite model has been adopted in subsequent research. For example, Chen & Guo (2009), analyzing motion expressions in Chinese fiction, argued that modern Chinese aligns with the E-language type. In a diachronic study, Shi (2011) found that classical Chinese exhibited clear V-language features, with pure path verbs accounting for 73.75% of the data. In modern Chinese, however, the use of pure path and pure manner verbs declines significantly, while composite "manner + path" verbs rise sharply to 70.39%, suggesting a shift toward S-language patterning. Further evidence comes from Li (2017), who examined 225 clauses from video narratives and

found that path was encoded in the main verb in 47% of cases and in satellites in 44%. These results not only challenge the classification of Chinese as a prototypical S-language but also reveal a pronounced tendency toward V-language framing.

La botella salió flotando. (Shi, 2011)

“the bottle exited floating” (The bottle floated out.)

The man ran across the street.

那个人跑过 街道

Most of the studies reviewed above rely on static corpora and categorical analysis, which inevitably involve a degree of methodological subjectivity. It is noteworthy that the integration of cognitive linguistics has introduced new perspectives and approaches into typological research. In China, for instance, scholars have begun to employ psycholinguistic tools such as ERP, fMRI, and eye-tracking to advance theoretical and empirical studies on English–Chinese differences (Yu & Jin, 2019). Within the domain of motion events, Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008) posit that second language (L2) learners tend to transfer their L1 patterns of motion event conceptualization into the interlanguage, resulting in conceptual transfer. Building on this framework, several studies have employed experimental paradigms (e.g., E-Prime) and eye-tracking techniques to investigate differences in the conceptualization of motion events between English and Chinese speakers. Reaction times and eye-movement metrics can capture speakers’ implicit conceptual representations and processing patterns during comprehension and production. Compared with traditional corpus-based analyses, such methods represent a significant methodological advance, offering more objective evidence for determining the typological profile of Chinese, understanding cross-linguistic differences in motion event construal, and identifying patterns of typological transfer.

Xu (2013), for example, examined the relationship between motion event construal and L2 proficiency, finding that native English speakers exhibited the highest ratio of manner verbs to path verbs (3.125), reflecting their rich repertoire of manner expressions. In contrast, Chinese EFL learners showed a clear preference for path verbs. In both high- and low-proficiency learner groups, the manner-to-path verb ratio remained below 1, though it correlated positively with L2 proficiency. These results can be interpreted in two ways. First, they reflect a fundamental difference in motion encoding: English, as a typical S-language, favors manner verbs, whereas Chinese EFL learners rely more heavily on path verbs, a pattern characteristic of V-languages. Second, they indicate the occurrence of typological transfer in L2 learners’ construal of motion. Higher-proficiency learners used more manner verbs and thus approximated native English patterns more closely than lower-proficiency learners. A notable limitation of this study, however, is the absence of a Chinese monolingual control group, making it difficult to determine whether the observed path verb preference reflects L1 transfer or the typological status of modern Chinese itself.

Liu & Chen (2021) employed an animation description task and a similarity judgment task to compare Chinese monolinguals, English monolinguals, and Chinese EFL learners. In the description task, the Chinese monolingual group used more path verbs (4.42%) and verb-framed constructions (1.36%) than the English group, whereas the English monolinguals showed a stronger preference for manner verbs (2.84%) and satellite-framed constructions (2.84%). These findings indicate clear cross-linguistic differences in motion event conceptualization, with English displaying typical S-language features and Chinese exhibiting prototypical V-language characteristics. Notably, within the Chinese monolingual group, the frequencies of manner verbs and satellite-framed constructions (both 1.67%) slightly exceeded that of verb-framed

constructions (1.36%). This subtle pattern suggests that modern Chinese may be undergoing a shift from a V-language toward an S-language orientation.

Furthermore, the study found that as Chinese EFL learners' proficiency increased, their use of manner verbs and satellite-framed constructions rose significantly, while their use of path verbs and verb-framed constructions declined correspondingly. These results provide clear evidence for typological transfer. With greater L2 exposure and practice, learners appear to gradually restructure their conceptual systems, thereby reducing negative L1 transfer (Jarvis, 2008; Li & Yang, 2013). Reaction time data from the similarity judgment task further support this conclusion. For path-salient images, reaction times were shortest for Chinese monolinguals and low-proficiency learners, whereas high-proficiency learners and English monolinguals showed significantly longer time. For manner-salient images, Chinese monolinguals exhibited the longest reaction times (nearly triple those of English controls), and reaction time decreased with rising L2 proficiency. Together, the production and processing data not only reveal robust English–Chinese differences in motion event construal but also demonstrate a measurable pattern of typological transfer.

Liu & Wen (2023) combined a video description task with eye-tracking to investigate motion event construal among Chinese monolinguals, English monolinguals, and L2 learners at different proficiency levels. Eye-tracking data, which reflect pre-verbal conceptual planning, can reveal differences in conceptualization between monolinguals and learners. Following Jarvis (2016), conceptualization can be divided into three levels: general cognition (conceptual inventories), macroplanning (selection of concepts for expression), and microplanning (organization of conceptual information before articulation). Based on fixation duration and count ratios, English monolinguals allocated significantly more attention to manner than to path, whereas Chinese monolinguals showed the opposite pattern, indicating that English speakers focus more on manner and Chinese speakers on path. In the verbal description task, English monolinguals produced more manner verbs and satellite-framed constructions, while Chinese monolinguals favored path verbs and verb-framed constructions. These results demonstrate robust cross-linguistic differences at both conceptual and linguistic levels, further challenging a straightforward S-language classification for Chinese.

Although Chinese monolinguals used manner verbs and satellite-framed constructions less frequently than English monolinguals and L2 learners, these forms were still more frequent than path verbs and verb-framed constructions within the Chinese group. Therefore, the present analysis supports Shi's (2011) conclusion that modern Chinese exhibits prototypical V-language features while simultaneously showing a discernible shift toward an S-language pattern.

Moreover, Liu & Wen (2023) reported strong correlations between learners' L1 and L2 conceptualization patterns ( $r = 0.81$ ) and between their L1 and L2 linguistic expressions ( $r = 0.68$ ). In other words, learners' L2 conceptualization and production closely resemble their L1 patterns, providing robust evidence for typological transfer. Learners transfer L1 typological features into the L2, leading to non-target-like expressions. As proficiency increases, high-proficiency learners gradually diverge from L1-based patterns and converge toward target-like norms, whereas low-proficiency learners remain closer to Chinese monolingual patterns. This suggests that the conditions and degree of typological transfer are, to some extent, measurable and modifiable.

Based on the reviewed literature, two main conclusions can be drawn. First, English and Chinese differ systematically in their construal of motion events: English is a prototypical satellite-framed language, whereas Chinese exhibits strong verb-framed characteristics while simultaneously displaying a developmental trend toward satellite-framing. Second, typological patterns in motion event construal are subject to cross-linguistic transfer. As L2 proficiency

increases, the influence of L1 typology diminishes, and learners' interlanguage conceptualization and expression become more aligned with target-language patterns.

Cross-cultural psychological research indicates that Eastern Asians and Westerners differ in their perceptual processing of events. This cognitive divergence is reflected not only in the encoding of semantic components such as path, manner, and cause, but also in the linguistic encoding of figure (the moving entity) and ground (the reference object or setting) information (Tajima & Duffield, 2012). Westerners, characterized by an analytic cognitive style, tend to focus attention on salient objects while allocating less to contextual information. In contrast, Eastern Asians, exhibiting a holistic thinking style, attend to both focal objects and their contextual relationships, often categorizing objects based on their surrounding environment (Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004). This cognitive difference influences linguistic conceptualization in two key dimensions. Syntactically, Western languages often follow a head-complement order and favor SVO word order, whereas Eastern Asian languages typically adopt a complement-head order. Semantically, Western languages tend to encode information in a figure-ground sequence, while Eastern Asian languages prefer a ground-figure sequence (Park, Jarvis, & Kim, 2022), as illustrated in examples (3) to (5).

However, modern Chinese presents a unique typological profile. Studies by Tajima & Duffield (2012) and Rhode (2016) demonstrated that while Chinese is geographically and culturally an East Asian language, it does not strictly adhere to the typical complement-head syntactic pattern or the ground-figure semantic encoding pattern. Specifically, compared to English, Chinese encodes more ground information and uses more complement-head structures. Yet, when compared to Japanese and Korean, Chinese encodes more figure information and employs more head-complement structures, exhibiting a mixed pattern (Tajima & Duffield, 2012; Rhode, 2016). Given the limited number of studies examining motion event construal from this cognitive perspective, this section reviews two key comparative studies: one between English and Chinese, and another between English and Korean.

There is a bike near the house.

房子边上有辆自行车。(Literally: "House side has a bike.")

家のそばに、バイクがある。(Literally: "Near the house, there is a bike.")

The white cat jumps to the mouse.

Liu & Wen (2023) also investigated differences in the encoding of ground elements (source, route, and goal). Eye-tracking data revealed that, except for routes, native Chinese speakers exhibited significantly higher fixation counts and durations on sources and goals compared to EFL learners and English monolinguals. As English proficiency increased, learners showed increased attention to routes but decreased attention to sources and goals, aligning more closely with the English monolingual pattern. In verbal descriptions, both learner groups encoded sources and goals more frequently than English monolinguals did in English tasks. Conversely, in Chinese description tasks, Chinese monolinguals encoded these ground elements more frequently than did the learners. These findings lead to two conclusions. First, English and Chinese differ in their encoding of ground information in motion events. Native Chinese speakers encode more detailed ground information, reflecting an East Asian cognitive pattern. Second, with rising English proficiency, learners' attention to and encoding of ground information diminishes, shifting toward an English-like construal pattern. This indicates typological transfer, rooted in the fundamental differences in figure-ground and salience encoding between the two languages. These conclusions help explain the "foreign accent" in

temporal adverbial clause expressions produced by Chinese EFL learners, as noted in the introduction.

Park et al. (2022) compared the encoding of figure-ground information for 15 motion events by Korean monolinguals, English monolinguals, and Korean learners of English. In a sentence like “The white cat jumps to the mouse” (Example 6), the figure is the cat (the moving entity), and the ground includes attributes modifying it (e.g., white). The study found that English monolinguals encoded significantly more figure information (mean = 10.12) than both Korean monolinguals (mean = 5.29) and Korean EFL learners (mean = 6.10). Korean monolinguals encoded more ground information (mean = 0.90) than English monolinguals (mean = 0.44), with Korean EFL learners encoding the most ground information (mean = 1.20). These results support a dual interpretation. First, they confirm that cognitive differences influence motion event construal: English, as a Western language, exhibits a greater focus on figure elements, while Korean, an East Asian language, prioritizes ground information. Second, they demonstrate typological transfer, as Korean EFL learners’ conceptualization patterns for figure and ground shift toward those of English monolinguals.

Based on the reviewed literature, three conclusions can be drawn. First, cultural-cognitive differences significantly influence the construal of figure and ground in motion events. Specifically, English monolinguals focus more on salient objects (figure) and encode correspondingly more figure information, whereas speakers of typical East Asian languages (like Korean and Japanese) encode richer ground information. Second, due to these typological differences in figure-ground encoding, typological transfer occurs in L2 acquisition. As learners gain greater exposure to and proficiency in the target language, their construal patterns shift toward the target language norm, with reduced influence from their L1. Third, Chinese exhibits a mixed pattern in figure-ground information construal, sharing features with both Western languages (e.g., more figure encoding than Korean/Japanese) and typical East Asian languages (e.g., more ground encoding than English). This unique profile underscores the complexity of classifying Chinese within a strict binary cognitive or linguistic typology.

This review has explored English-Chinese linguistic differences from the perspective of motion event construal, with the aim of identifying evidence for typological transfer and deriving insights for language pedagogy. Traditional studies in this domain have predominantly relied on analyses of static corpora. In contrast, data from real-time production tasks, reaction times, and eye-tracking offer a window into the online conceptualization processes of both monolinguals and L2 learners, thereby providing more dynamic and authentic empirical support. Accordingly, this review has synthesized two main strands of research: the first investigating typological patterns in encoding core semantic components such as path and manner, and the second exploring cross-linguistic differences in the encoding of figure-ground information. Based on this synthesis, the following conclusions are drawn.

First, systematic differences exist between English and Chinese in the encoding of semantic components within motion events. English aligns with the profile of a typical satellite-framed (S) language. Chinese, while exhibiting strong verb-framed (V) language characteristics, simultaneously shows a developmental trend toward satellite-framing. Second, the languages also differ in their encoding of figure-ground information. English generally adheres to a head-complement syntactic order and a figure-ground semantic encoding sequence, displaying a greater focus on focal (figure) information. Chinese demonstrates a marked tendency to encode rich ground information; however, it presents a mixed pattern, sharing features with both typical East Asian languages and English, which may indicate a gradual convergence toward English-like typological patterns. Third, concerning both path/manner encoding and figure-ground information, clear evidence of typological transfer is observed in the interlanguage of Chinese

EFL learners. Learners initially transfer L1 typological features into their interlanguage, but as L2 proficiency increases, these features progressively converge with target-language patterns.

Language serves as the vehicle of thought. The observed differences in motion event conceptualization between English and Chinese are ultimately rooted in distinct underlying cognitive patterns. As noted by Cui & Wang (2019), English is characterized by a linear, predominantly temporal quality. It tends to encode the development and change of actions along a temporal sequence, often correlating a single action with a discrete point in time. The progression of an event is thus mapped across multiple temporal nodes, which may motivate the encoding of the same action through varied manners. This temporal orientation is therefore posited as the cognitive impetus behind English's heightened emphasis on encoding manner information. Furthermore, this temporal bias may lead English to prioritize the main entity (figure) before the background (ground) in conceptualization (Li & Wang, 2022), resulting in its preference for encoding figure information. In contrast, Chinese demonstrates a strong spatial quality, structuring events primarily within a spatial purview and representing verbal actions through spatialized schemas. Its three-dimensional spatial nature may render the language less sensitive to the inherent vector direction of verbs themselves (Shi, 2006), often necessitating that path information be encoded first to specify the direction of an event, followed by manner. Moreover, this emphasis on the spatial field effectively explains Chinese's propensity to encode more elaborate ground information compared to English.

Beyond delineating these differences, this review also notes that Chinese motion event construal appears to be developing toward English-like patterns, a perspective partially aligned with Shi (2011). The underlying reason for this trend might involve a gradual shift in cognitive patterns from a predominantly spatial mode toward a more linear, temporal mode of thinking. Given the dynamic nature of both cognition and language evolution, contemporary Chinese simultaneously exhibits characteristics of both V- and S-framing, as well as a capacity for encoding both figure and ground information effectively. Future research employing psycholinguistic methods could directly investigate the cognitive patterns of Chinese monolinguals and bilinguals to test this hypothesis.

This review confirms the existence of typological transfer, which follows a discernible pattern. In the early stages of L2 acquisition, the learner's interlanguage retains pronounced L1 typological features. With increased exposure to the target language, these features gradually realign with L2 norms and diverge from the L1. Building on this, the paper explores the root cause and pathway of such transfer. To varying degrees, languages differ typologically in form, function, and conceptual structure. Language learning involves mastering both the commonalities and differences between languages, and it is these differences that fundamentally drive transfer. Regarding its pathway, typological transfer is mediated by the learner's interlanguage, manifesting primarily at linguistic and conceptual levels (Yang, 2024). If the cross-linguistic differences are largely formal, transfer may result in interlanguage forms that deviate from the target language's norms. If learners have not adequately internalized deeper conceptual differences, transfer may manifest as a conceptual or cognitive misalignment with the target language. This paper further posits that typological transfer constitutes the foundation for both linguistic and conceptual transfer. It is precisely because of inherent typological differences that learner interlanguage can simultaneously exhibit features of both the L1 and L2.

Consequently, in language pedagogy, instructors should cultivate an awareness of typological differences at both the formal and conceptual levels. For instance, in teaching discourse construction, it is crucial to understand that English is subject-prominent and emphasizes logical clarity, while Chinese is topic-prominent and emphasizes semantic coherence. Teachers can then design instruction to enhance students' conceptual understanding

of English discourse through increased input and exposure, thereby guiding the interlanguage to align more closely with the target language's typological features.

Current research in this area is subject to several common limitations that may affect the reliability of conclusions. As noted by Li (2020) and Luo (2008), the criteria for identifying path verbs in Chinese remain somewhat ambiguous. Furthermore, the prevalence of composite verbs and serial verb constructions in Chinese complicates the identification of a single “main verb” carrying motion information, thereby challenging any straightforward typological classification. The suitability of applying cognitive frameworks developed for English directly to the analysis of Chinese also warrants critical examination. Resolving these methodological and theoretical issues is essential for clarifying the viewpoint advanced here, namely, whether Chinese motion event construal is indeed evolving toward English-like patterns and what mechanisms underlie this trend.

In summary, typological differences between languages may be the root cause of typological transfer, which in turn precipitates observable linguistic and conceptual transfer in learner interlanguage. Investigating the mechanisms of interlanguage development necessitates a systematic comparison of the L1, interlanguage, and target language. Only when learners adequately grasp both the commonalities and differences between these systems can their linguistic production become more fluent and target-like. Future research should delve deeper into interlanguage typology and typological transfer to elucidate these patterns and ultimately facilitate second language acquisition.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study has reviewed and synthesized previous research on English–Chinese differences in motion event construal with the aim of identifying typological patterns and examining evidence for typological transfer in second language acquisition. From the perspective of motion events, the review demonstrates that English and Chinese differ systematically in the encoding of core semantic components such as manner, path, and figure–ground relations. English consistently aligns with the profile of a prototypical satellite-framed language, emphasizing manner verbs and figure-oriented encoding, whereas Chinese exhibits strong verb-framed characteristics while simultaneously showing a gradual developmental tendency toward satellite-framing. The findings further indicate that Chinese occupies a unique and hybrid typological position. In both path–manner encoding and figure–ground representation, Chinese displays mixed patterns that share features with typical East Asian languages as well as with English. This complexity challenges rigid binary typological classifications and suggests that modern Chinese motion event construal is dynamic rather than static, potentially reflecting broader cognitive and linguistic shifts.

Crucially, the review provides robust evidence for typological transfer in the interlanguage of Chinese learners of English. At lower proficiency levels, learners’ conceptualization and linguistic expression of motion events strongly reflect L1 typological features. As proficiency increases, however, learners gradually restructure their conceptual systems, reducing L1 influence and converging toward target-language norms. This developmental trajectory confirms that typological transfer operates not only at the linguistic level but also at deeper conceptual and cognitive levels. Pedagogically, these findings underscore the importance of typology-informed instruction in second language teaching. Effective pedagogy should address not only surface-level grammatical differences but also underlying conceptual disparities between languages. By raising learners’ awareness of typological contrasts in motion event construal, instructors can facilitate positive transfer and mitigate persistent non-target-like patterns. Finally, future research should continue to integrate psycholinguistic methods and longitudinal

designs to further elucidate the cognitive mechanisms underlying typological transfer and the evolving typological profile of Chinese.

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