

Autonomy/Dependence Alignment: a Cognitive Analysis of Subject-Predicate Compound Adjectives in Mongolian

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Abstract: Subject-predicate compound adjective in Mongolian language is an important form of word formation, which has certain productivity. Previous studies on subject-predicate compound adjectives in Mongolian have mostly described the connection between two entity concepts in a formalized way, so it is difficult to explain its cognitive motivation in detail. Therefore, this paper probes into cognitive motivation of Mongolian subject-predicate compound adjectives based on autonomy/dependence alignment, and considers its cognitive motivation as autonomy/dependence alignment.

1. Introduction

Mongolian compound adjectives account for a certain proportion in Mongolian vocabulary. Compound adjectives, as the name suggests, are formed by a combination of two notional words (except the general term). There are many configurations in Mongolian compound adjectives, among which Mongolian subject-predicate compound adjectives are a very special type. This kind of compound adjectives is originally derived from phrases, namely subject-predicate phrases, which has less productive than other types. Although subject-predicate compound adjectives in Mongolian are not superior to other types of compound adjectives in terms of number and usage, they play an irreplaceable role in communication.

In recent years, some scholars have paid attention to the linguistic phenomenon of compound adjectives, mainly studying structural features and semantic relations from the perspective of Mongolian information processing. Bao Jinlan [2] mainly analyzes the semantic collocation of Mongolian compound adjectives and nouns, and describes the collocation rules in a formalized way based on the actual needs of Mongolian information processing. Yu Chun [7] selects 160 compound adjectives from the “Mongolian grammatical information dictionary” as the research object. Based on the previous research results of Mongolian compound words, this paper exhaustively analyzed the compound adjectives and explored its semantic rules, thus providing necessary conditions for related studies. Nadamud [4], in his research, analyzed six types of compound words by using the methods of sememe analysis, componential analysis and corpus-based.

With the rise of cognitive science in current academic research, it has become a trend to study compound adjectives from a cognitive perspective. Gegentana [5] and Sarina [6] mainly analyze the metaphorical meaning of Mongolian “N + A” compound adjective from the cognitive level. These metaphorical meanings include the analysis of subject-predicate types, and point out that the semantic relationship between the two concepts is mainly connected and completed through conceptual diagrams.

In Mongolian, although there is no monographic study on subject-predicate compound adjectives, the papers presented above all contain studies on subject-predicate compound adjectives from the semantic and cognitive perspectives. And the studies have only described the connection between

two entity concepts in a formalized way. In virtue of that, this paper will attempt to analyze the Mongolian subject-predicate compound adjectives based on autonomy/dependence alignment, so as to explore the cognitive motivation of it.

2. Autonomy/Dependence Alignment

“Autonomy” and “dependence”, as a pair terms of philosophical categories, are firstly put forward by a famous cognitive linguist, Langacker in his *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* ^[1]. “Autonomy” and “dependence” are two important concepts in Langacker’s grammatical valence study, and the structures in valence relation manifest substantial asymmetry. Autonomous structure is that a semantic or phonological structure that “exists on its own,” not presupposing another structure for its manifestation^[1]. That’s to say, it is a concept that there is no need to appeal to anything outside the concept itself. For example, vowels are clearly autonomous in contrast with consonants; nouns are relatively autonomous, whereas verbs or adjectives are a conceptual dependence. Dependent structure, on the contrary, refers to a semantic or phonological structure that presupposes another for its manifestation. Phonologically, consonants are dependent on vowels. Relations are conceptually dependent, since to conceive of a relation one must conceive (at least schematically) of the related entities^[1]. In cognitive grammar, Langacker^[1] defines the internal relation between autonomous and dependence as autonomy/dependence relationship: One structure, D, is dependent on the other, A, to the extent that A constitutes an elaboration of a salient substructure within D. According to these relationship, Professor Niu Baoyi^[3] established the analytical model of autonomy-dependence alignment. This analytical model, in cognitive grammar, refers to a process which can combine autonomous structure and dependent structure into a relatively autonomous composite structure through the correspondence between the substructures of autonomous structure and dependent structure. It is based on the autonomy/dependence relationship. The semantic expression of this composite structure (represented by “[]”) inherits the profile of one of its component, namely, dependent structure, or regards autonomous structure as an argument in a process. This analytical model can be shown in Fig. 1.

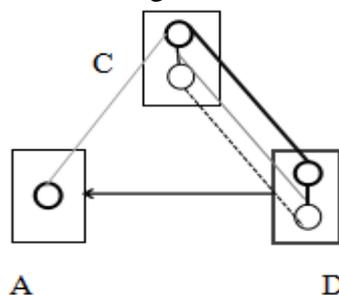


Fig.1 The Analytical Model of Autonomy/Dependence Alignment ^[1]

Taking [a large house] as an example, [house] (represented by A) is autonomous component, which do not need to presuppose another component; while [large] (represented by D), is dependent component, in that this component necessarily presupposes another component for its manifestation. In the alignment of [large] and [house], the dependent component [large] profiles a substructure which is highly schematic, that is, an entity with large properties. The autonomous component [house] profiles a salient substructure, namely structure with large internal space. The substructure of [large] corresponds to the profile within [house] and is elaborated by it. The two components are combined to a composite structure [a large house] (represented by “C”). The semantic expression of [a large house] inherits the semantic profile of [large] and regards [house] as the head. The composite structure can be understood as “a large house”.

3. Classification of Subject-Predicate Compound Adjectives in Mongolian

Subject-predicate compound adjective refers to a lexical unit composed of two lexical components that can represent the function of an adjective. Such a lexical unit is generally

composed of “noun+adjective”, such as *xöl xündü*, *ama udagan*, *gar xogoson* and so on. The semantic relationship of subject-predicate compound adjectives is quite different from that of other types of compound adjectives. From a semantic point of view, in the subject-predicate compound adjectives, nominal morphemes mainly play the role of the subject of thing, and the predicate morphemes mainly play the role of statement in structure. The relationship between the two components of subject-predicate compound adjectives can be seen as the relationship between the statement and being stated. In this compound adjectives, most of nominal morphemes represent body parts, animal body parts and other categories semantically. According to the semantic relationship nominal morphemes and predicate morphemes, such compound adjectives can be subdivided into the following categories:

3.1 Nominal Morphemes [+Body Parts] + Predicate Morphemes

Nominal morphemes mostly represent body parts, and the predicate morphemes combined with these nominal morphemes to form compound adjectives are morphemes that represent measurement. Such as *xöl xündü* (foot heavy), *xöl xönggen* (foot light), *čixi xatagu* (ear hard), *čixi jögelen* (ear soft), *nidü dügüreng* (eye full), *mangna y xaljan* (forehead bald), *ama udagan* (mouth slow), *ama yexetei* (mouth large), *ama bardam* (mouth proud), *ama čalaga y* (mouth imprudent), *ama jadaga y* (mouth flippant), *ama türgen* (mouth quik), *ama čingg_a* (mouth tight), *ama jögelen* (mouth soft), *ama sula* (mouth loose), *gar uran* (hand deft), *gar xogoson* (hand empty), *gar mexüs* (hand lack), *gar sula* (hand loose), *gar čingg_a* (hand tight), *gar jögelen* (hand soft), *gar xatagu* (hand stiff), *gar xündü* (hand heavy), *gar yexetei* (hand large), *gar bogoni* (hand short), *gar salang* (hand careless), *gar muxur* (hand mutilated), *gar tatagu* (hand deficient).

3.2 Nominal Morphemes [+Animal Body Parts] + Predicate Morphemes

Nominal morphemes represent animal body parts and the predicate morphemes combined with these nominal morphemes to form compound adjectives are morphemes that represent color. Such as *sixir_e alag* (calf mottled), *xudarg_a alag* (harness mottled), *toxom alag* (saddle cloths mottled), *yuwambuw alag*(vcoin mottled), *xujuгу alag* (neck mottled), *öyöge čagan* (underbelly white), *sixir_e čagan* (calf white), *sili čagan* (nape white).

3.3 Nominal Morphemes [+Other Types] + Predicate Morphemes

Nominal morphemes have no specific rules. It is mainly the more abstract morphemes related to people or scenery. Such as *sanag_a amur* (thought reasuring), *ama böxe* (life strong), *aldar xündü*(reputation honourable), *üjemji sa y ta y* (scenery fine).

In the above three categories, the number of subject-predicate compound adjectives composed of nominal morphemes representing body parts and predicate morphemes is higher than the other two types. And it can be seen that the combination between different meaning types of nominal morphemes and predicate morphemes can generate different types of semantic relations. This combination is not a forceful combination, but it has a reasonable generation mechanism and cognitive motivation.

4. Cognitive Motivation of Subject-Predicate Compound Adjectives in Mongolian

In terms of the classification of subject-predicate compound adjectives presented above, the combination between two morphemes has its own characteristics. And the meaning of these two combinations is not a simple addition of nominal morphemes and predicate morphemes, but it is a complex process of generating new concepts, that is, its cognitive motivation is autonomy/dependence alignment. According to autonomy/dependence alignment, the semantic generation of subject-predicate compound adjectives in Mongolian is realized through the

correspondence between the substructures within nominal morphemes (autonomy) and predicate morphemes (dependence). The composite structure inherits the semantic profile of predicate morphemes. The following is a detailed analysis of the three types of subject-predicate compound adjectives in Mongolian, in order to explain the cognitive motivation of it.

4.1 Cognitive Motivation of Nominal Morphemes [+Body Parts] + Predicate Morphemes

Nominal morphemes representing parts of body can be integrated with predicates representing measurement to form new lexical units. In this compound adjectives, the nominal morphemes representing body parts are generally strong in word formation.

Taking [ama čing᠑_a] as an example, ama (mouth) manifests a rather high degree of conceptual autonomy, čing᠑_a (tight) is conceptually dependent relative to the autonomous component ama, in that čing᠑_a needs the support of the autonomous component ama for its manifestation. In the alignment of ama and čing᠑_a, the dependent component čing᠑_a profiles a schematic substructure, that is, body parts with tight and tense properties. The autonomous component ama manifests a substructure, namely the part of the body that can speak. The profile of čing᠑_a corresponds to the substructure of čing᠑_a and it gives a detailed explanation of substructure profiled by čing᠑_a. Then the component ama and čing᠑_a are connected as a composite structure [ama čing᠑_a], which inherits the semantic profile of the component čing᠑_a and can be perceived as rigorous in speaking, namely tight-lipped.

In this example, “subject” appears in the form of a human organ (ama). Judging from its substructure, the real meaning of ama is not the organ itself but it refers to the function of ama. Similarly, judging from the substructure highlighted by aldaxu, aldaxu does not retain its original meaning, and there is a certain phenomenon of extended its meaning.

4.2 Cognitive Motivation of Nominal Morphemes [+Animal Body Parts] + Predicate Morphemes

In this compound adjectives, the nominal morphemes representing animal body parts can integrate with the morphemes representing colors.

In compound [sili čagan], the nominal sili (nape) displays conceptual autonomy; while čagan (white) is seen to be conceptually dependent, in that čagan necessarily requires the support of the component sili, in order for a more specific meaning of it to be manifested. In the combination sili and čagan, the nominal sili manifests a substructure, that is, a white, part of an organism (animal); while čagan profiles highly schematic substructure, namely an entity with white properties. The schematic structure within čagan corresponds to the substructure within sili and is elaborated by the profile of sili. Then two component are grouped to form a more complex structure [sili čagan], which inherits the semantic profile of čagan and is expressed as the color of livestock’ nape (sheep), namely white.

In [toxom alag], toxom with the meaning of saddle cloths is considered as an autonomous component; while alag with the meaning of mottled is considered to be conceptually dependent, in that it necessarily need the support of another component toxom for a far more concrete concept to be presented. When toxom is connected with alag, the autonomous component toxom manifests a substructure, that is, something that can be placed on the backs of horses and has many colors. The dependent component alag profiles a schematic substructure, namely entity with white spots and mottled features. The substructure with the component alag corresponds to the semantic profile within the component toxom and is elaborated by the profile of toxom to form a complex structure [toxom alag], which can be understood that there are mottled color like a saddle cloths placed on the back of a horse.

It can be found that the subject-predicate compound adjectives in this example mainly describe the color of livestock and it is realized by corresponding relationship between the substructures

highlighted after both components, *toxom* and *alag*, retains their original meaning.

4.3 Cognitive Motivation of Nominal Morphemes [+ Other Types] + Predicate Morphemes

In the composite structure [*ami böxe*], *ami* with the meaning of life is an autonomous component, which designates entity. *Böxe* with the meaning of strong and powerful is conceptually dependent, compared with the component *ami*, in that its semantic meaning needs to be implemented by the support of the component *ami*, in order for more specific structure to be created. In the alignment of *ami* and *böxe*, the autonomous component *ami* manifests the substructure, namely the ability to maintain life activities or the ability survive and thrive; while the dependent component *böxe* manifests a schematic substructure, that is, entity with strong, firm and tenacious features which corresponds to the semantic profile of *ami*. The schematic substructure within *böxe* is elaborated by the profile of *ami*, given a high degree of description and the two component are combined to yield a more complex structure [*ami böxe*] which inherits the semantic profile of the component *böxe* and is interpreted as having firm and tenacious vitality.

This subject-predicate compound adjectives is generated by the corresponding relationship between the substructures highlighted after the meaning of nominal morpheme (*ami*) extends and the substructure highlighted by the original meaning of predicate morpheme (*böxe*) retains.

5. Conclusion

This paper conducts a cognitive analysis of Mongolian subject-predicate compound adjectives based on autonomy/dependence alignment. Through the analysis of these examples, it shows that Mongolian subject-predicate compound adjectives are generated by the elaboration relationship between substructures within the predicate component and the subject component. Then its overall meaning stems from the internal component. In this process, the cognitive motivation of subject-predicate compound adjectives in Mongolian has the following characteristics.

A. The composite structure is constructed through the corresponding relationship between substructure highlighted after the meaning of nominal morphemes extends and the substructure highlighted by the original meaning of predicate morphemes retains.

B. The composite structure is realized by the corresponding relationship between the substructures highlighted after both components, nominal morphemes and predicate morphemes, retain their original meanings.

C. The composite structure is generated by the corresponding relationship between substructures highlighted after both components, nominal morphemes and predicate morphemes, extend their meanings.

D. The semantic profile of subject-predicate compound adjectives inherits the semantic profile of predicate morphemes (dependence component).

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