

Complement construction of the cognitive predicates “*think/believe*” in English and Chinese

The present study is a cognitive, corpus-based analysis of the mental stance predicates “*think/believe*”, focusing on the complement constructions of “*I think/believe*” and “*wo xiang/wo xiangxin*” (我想/我相信) in English and Chinese. Our basic assumption is the semantic features of the complement clause correlate with the predicates and constituting their usage profiles. Adopting a usage-based theoretical model of language, we address to explore their difference in usage profiles by digging into their contextualized uses, through the application of multivariate methodology. After extracting 500 occurrences for each predicate from COCA and CCL, we give mutual annotation of their complement constructions with the identified syntactic-semantic variables like animacy of the subject, and the epistemic status and negotiability or subjectivity of the clause etc. (cf. Krawczak 2014’s annotation scheme).

Through multiple correspondence analyses and logistic regression, some of the main findings are as follows: Firstly, “*I think*” tend to convey the semantic features of opinion and evaluation, whereas the other three constructions tend to express propositions with no evaluative meaning involved. Secondly, “*I believe*” tend to express public conviction (general fact), but “*wo xiangxin*” is more related to the domain of prediction, a kind of projected reality. Thirdly, “*I think*” and “*I believe*” are juxtaposed in the selection of non-negotiable statements as complement clauses, while “*wo xiangxin*” prefers negotiable propositions. Fourthly, the two Chinese configurations “*wo xiang*” and “*wo xiangxin*” are more subjective than the English “*I think*” and “*I believe*” in general. Their difference in usage tendencies can reflect the grounding status of the four predicates, and some typological differences as well.

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