Waddling, wandering and waving:
Literary Chinese ideophones and the Motion Semantic Grid

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Motion events have been well-studied in Mandarin Chinese, with proposals ranging from satellite-framed classification (Talmy 2000) to equipollently-framed categorization (Slobin 2004) to Macro-Event Hypothesis treatment (Li 2018) to a cognitive-functional approach (Lin 2019). All approaches agree that Chinese has a relatively small set of closed-class path verbs that can combine with a large open class of manner verbs, ranging from generic to specific.

Despite this considerable attention to Chinese motion events, ideophones have hardly played a role in it. This is surprising, as Chinese has a sizeable iconic lexicon of items that depict [manner] or [manner + path]. The Chinese iconic lexicon contains many sound depictions from a colloquial stratum (Thompson 2018). There exists also a stratum of literary ideophones that are used mostly in written language (Van Hoey 2018), including but not limited to prose, poetry, song, and even social media, e.g., *piāoyáo* 飄搖 'floating on the wind', *pánghuáng* 徬徨 'walk back and forth', *zhǎnzhuǎn* 輾轉 'toss and turn'.

In this study, we analyze the semantics of literary motion ideophones, as identified in the Chinese Ideophone Database (Van Hoey & Thompson 2020) (n = 324), through the Motion Semantic Grid proposal by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2019). We augmented the Motion Semantic Grid with variables relevant to Chinese, such as orthographic semantic components (e.g., 氵 'water' in *jiējiē* 湝湝 'rushing tumble of river or stream'). After all, the motion semantic grid was not conceived as completely exhaustive, but adaptable for different languages. In the next step, we conducted a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) (Glynn 2014) to identify the most salient elements that drive different dimensions, and the distances between different items.

We found that (1) there are only a small number of ontological categories that play a role in these motion ideophones, such as HUMAN, WIND, WATER, TREE. (2) The number of manner expressions, in contrast to the prediction, is diverse, e.g. 'waddling', 'wading', and 'waving'. (3) The MCA shows that there are indeed many near-synonyms, e.g., *yúyú* 衙衙 'rushing and racing along' and *kēngkēng* 誙誙 'make a mad dash for'. This study affirms the utility of the Semantic Motion Grid to study (iconic) motion semantics, but stresses that it needs to be adapted to the language-particular needs for optimal usage.

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