FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES
AND CHINESE WORD ORDER

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Wenze Hu, B. A., M. A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1995

Dissertation Committee:

James H-Y. Tai

Marjorie K. M. Chan

Mineharu Nakayama

Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser, Department of
East Asian Languages & Literatures
Copyright by
Wenze Hu
1995
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my adviser, Professor James H-Y Tai for his guidance during the whole course of my study in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the Ohio State University. His writings and teaching have a great influence on my academic thinking, and have shaped my development as a Chinese linguist during the years at the Ohio State. Without his encouragement, insightful advice, and criticism, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible.

I express sincere appreciation to Professor Marjorie K. M. Chan, and Professor Mineharu Nakayama for their serving as members on my dissertation committee, and for their valuable comments on the dissertation drafts.

I am especially grateful to Professor Frank F. S. Hsueh for his constant support and valuable opinions on the first draft of this dissertation. Through his instructions I was able to lay a solid foundation for both phonology and syntax in classical Chinese. Special gratitude is expressed to Professor Yanshuan Lao for showing me some fundamentals in traditional Sinology.

Thanks also go to Professor Robert Sanders for his allowing me to use his linguistic corpus, on which part of this study is based.
I owe special thanks to Dr. Baozhang He. I have benefited enormously from our discussions about the issues in linguistics and the aspects in life. Technical assistance of Guohe Zheng is gratefully acknowledged. My thanks go to Dr. Mark Bender for his editing and proof reading of the final draft of this dissertation.

A word of gratitude must go to my former teacher, Dr. Yuanxi Ma whose teaching at Beijing Foreign Languages Institute paved the way for my later academic pursuit in the graduate study. Sincere thanks also go to Hongbin Zhang for her long time moral support and timeless friendship.

To my Wife Ling Zhao, I offer my heartfelt thanks for her unshakable faith in me, and her being so understanding of my academic endeavors during the entire course of my study. Without her support, the completion of my graduate study is unimaginable.

Finally, let me dedicate this dissertation to the person who awakened my interest in Chinese Linguistics - my father, HU Mingyang.
VITA

April 2, 1956 ........................................... Born, Beijing, China

1982 ...................................................... B.A., Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, Beijing, China

1982-1984 ............................................. Assistant of English, Extension No. 1, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China

1984-1987 ............................................. Assistant of English, Beijing Broadcasting Institute, Beijing, China

1989 ...................................................... M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1989-Present ......................................... Graduate Student, Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: East Asian Languages and Literatures
Studies in Chinese Linguistics
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>communication dynamism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>definiteness effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSP</td>
<td>functional sentence perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obj</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS</td>
<td>principle of temporal sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSC</td>
<td>principle of temporal scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVC</td>
<td>resultative verb compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subj</td>
<td>subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLS</td>
<td>Berkeley Linguistic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAO</td>
<td>Cahiers de Linguistique - Asie Orientale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLS</td>
<td>Chicago Linguistic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCL</td>
<td>Journal of Chinese Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCLTA</td>
<td>Journal of the Chinese Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCLP</td>
<td>Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YYYj</td>
<td>Yuyan Yanjiu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZGYW</td>
<td>Zhongguo Yuwen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT ........................................................................................................ iii

VITA .................................................................................................................................. iv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ............................................................................................... v

## CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Introduction</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nature of the study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theoretical background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A functional tradition</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The study of Chinese word order</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A cognition-based functional viewpoint about word order</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Organization of the study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## II. Word order, word order principles, and sentential starting points | 24

| 1. Introduction | 24 |
| 2. Word order principles, natural order, and sentential starting points | 26 |
| 2.1. Conceptional principles | 26 |
| 2.2. Grammatical principles | 28 |
| 2.3. Functional principles | 29 |
| 2.4. Natural order: an iconic reflection of conceptual structure | 32 |
| 2.5. Spatial relationships | 40 |
| 2.6. Ground vs. figure/background vs. foreground | 47 |
| 2.7. Topic-comment, the conceptual structure of background/foreground and ground/figure, and some syntactic patterns | 50 |
| 2.8. Functional sentence perspectives, the development of communication, and word order | 65 |
| 3. Sentential starting points and functional factors | 82 |
4. Conclusion........................................................................................................... 90

III. Presentative sentences................................................................................... 92

1. Introduction........................................................................................................ 92
2. Previous analyses of presentative sentences................................................ 93
3. Critiques of the previous analyses of presentative sentences...................... 97
4. Iconicity in the syntactic structure of presentative sentences and the development of communication.......................... 115
5. The verbal semantics of presentative sentences........................................... 121
   5.1. Classification of presentative sentences.................................................. 121
   5.2. Achievement vs. state............................................................................ 122
   5.3. Semantic characteristics of the two basic groups of presentative sentences ................................................................................. 123
   5.4. Requirements on verb selection in the two basic groups of presentative sentences............................................................. 125
   5.4.1. Requirements on verb selection in (dis)appearance sentences........... 125
   5.4.2. Requirements on verb selection in the Existential group.................... 129
   5.4.3. Quasi-existential sentences: group of the resultative state................... 130
   5.4.4. Verb selection and a functional viewpoint........................................ 136
6. Conclusion........................................................................................................ 141

IV. The paratactic construction............................................................................ 145

1. Introduction........................................................................................................ 145
2. The notion of parataxis.................................................................................... 146
3. Syntactic, semantic, and functional characteristics of the paratactic construction ................................................................................. 148
4. Critiques on previous analyses of the paratactic construction....................... 152
   4.1. Presentative function vs. presentative sentences.................................. 152
   4.2. Critique on Huang's analysis................................................................. 153
5. The analysis of the paratactic construction.................................................... 155
   5.1. The conceptual bases for the paratactic construction.............................. 155
   5.2. The functional basis for the paratactic construction.............................. 157
   5.3. Pre-nominal modifier vs. Descriptive clause........................................ 158
   5.4. Verb selection in the first part of the paratactic construction................... 166
6. Conclusion........................................................................................................ 170

V. "Pseudo passive" sentences: a type of descriptive sentences in Chinese..... 172

1. Introduction........................................................................................................ 172
2. The so-called "pseudo passive" sentences.................................................... 175
   2.1. The misleading nature of the term "pseudo passive".............................. 175
2.2. The nature of the so-called "pseudo passive" sentences........................................ 182
  2.2.1. The descriptive nature and functional sentences perspective........................ 183
  2.2.2. The conceptualized information structure of "pseudo passive" sentences................. 185
  2.2.3. Three determinative functional factors in the selection of starting points of "pseudo passive" sentences.................................................. 188
  2.2.4. The role of development of communication, and the distribution of CD.. 191
  2.2.5. Global experience, discourse factors, and disambiguation............................... 193
3. Topic-comment and the direction of verbs.................................................. 206
  3.1. Conditions on "pseudo passive" sentences.................................................... 209
  3.2. Revisit the direction of verbs................................................................. 212
  3.3. Summary.................................................................................................. 214
4. Conclusion.................................................................................................. 215

VI. "Inverted" sentences, pragmatics, and the emergent grammar................. 216
1. Introduction............................................................................................... 216
  1.1. Preliminary................................................................................................. 216
  1.2. Inverted sentences.................................................................................. 217
  1.3. Previous studies of inverted sentences................................................... 221
  1.4. Conversational discourse and inverted sentences..................................... 224
2. Case Analyses............................................................................................ 228
  2.1. Data base.................................................................................................. 228
  2.2. Some general observations....................................................................... 229
  2.3. Data analyses........................................................................................... 230
    2.3.1. Attentional focus, thematization, and the implication behind.............. 233
    2.3.2. Thematization and the principle of temporal sequence......................... 240
    2.3.3. Repair................................................................................................ 245
    2.3.4. Afterthought appendage.................................................................... 248
  2.4. Inverted sentences and the concept of emergent grammar....................... 253
3. Conclusion.................................................................................................. 257

VII. Conclusion.............................................................................................. 259
1. Preliminary remarks..................................................................................... 259
2. A summary.................................................................................................... 259
  2.1. Word order principles.............................................................................. 260
  2.2. Word order and the conceptualized world.............................................. 267
  2.3. Word order and communicative function.............................................. 269
  2.4. Word order and pragmatics................................................................. 271
3. Some related issues......................................................................................................... 272
   3.1. The flexibility of conceptual constraints................................................................. 273
   3.2. Information structure and Chinese syntax............................................................... 275
   3.3 Word Order and Processing...................................................................................... 276

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................... 280
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1. Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study is to uncover some basic, underlying, cognition-based functional principles of word order in Mandarin Chinese by investigating certain specific syntactic phenomena. These are: sentential starting points\(^1\), the so-called "pseudo passive" sentences, presentative sentences, paratactic construction, and inverted sentences. This study is on two related aspects, namely, the relationship between word order patterns and their conditioning principles in Chinese, and the interplay among conditioning principles in the shaping process of these patterns.

2. Theoretical Background

There are two fundamentally different approaches to the analysis of linguistic structures, linguistic universals, as well as linguistic variations. One is the formalist approach, which focuses on the formal structures of human language. The other is the

\(^1\) The term "starting point" is borrowed from McWhinney (1977) to refer to the sentence-initial element.
functional approach, which focuses on the functions of linguistic structures in human communication.

This dissertation takes a cognition-based functional approach initially proposed by Tai (1989a). Its theoretical foundation is further elaborated in Biq, Tai, and Thompson (to appear). In the following, I will abstract some of the key points from Biq, Tai, and Thompson's viewpoints. It is a synthesis of three functional resources, namely the cognitive approach by Lakoff (1987) and Langacker (1987), the semiotic approach by Haiman (1985a, b) and the discourse approach by Hopper and Thompson (1980, 1984).

It holds that the fundamental function of language is human communication, and that grammatical structures are derived from the interactions among human's general cognitive categories and processes. These structures are constrained by the human conceptualization of physical reality in conjunction with general cognitive abilities of human beings, such as perceptual categories, memory capacity, and processing strategies. Thus, grammar, as Tai (to appear: 9) puts it, "can be viewed as a complex mapping function from humans' conceptualization of the multiple-dimensional physical world to the one-dimensional linearity of human speech." It is different from the formalist view that grammar is an arbitrary, autonomous, self-contained formal system for humans to interpret and communicate about the world. It maintains that language is a means to human communication, and linguistic structure reflects its role as such a means, "rather than an
instantiation of an abstract set of mental representations” (Biq, Tai, and Thompson, to appear: 1).

Unlike the current formalist approaches, which seek grammar-internal formal explanations for linguistic phenomena, the functional approach seeks the necessary link between language forms and functions, and system-external, functional explanations. As Biq, Tai and Thompson (To appear: 2) put it, “genuine explanations lie in both the structures of the real world, as conceptualized by the language user, and the linearity of human speech.” In other words, such functional explanations are sought in terms of human’s perceptual and cognitive structures, processing strategies, and conversational principles between speakers and hearers.

This cognition-based functional approach recognizes both linguistic universality and disparity. Language universality is established on the basis of common needs of human communication, and the general constraints on linguistic structures by human conceptions about the real world shaped via the interaction between the common biological and neuro-physical structures of the human body and the physical world. Language disparity is associated with different conceptualization of the same reality from different perspectives in different cultures. Despite the fact that human biological make-up, cognitive abilities, and the general features of our physical world are the same, peoples around the world have different socio-cultural traditions, and different experiences in their interactions with the world. Those social variants may lead to different perspectives from
which they approach the same physical reality, and may have significant impact upon their conceptualized world and hence their linguistic structures, though what degree such impact has is still not that clear.

Chomsky's generative grammar, the dominant formalist theory, views that linguistic universals are manifestations of human's innate language-specific faculty, which is modularized and independent of other cognitive systems. This language-specific faculty is characterized by Chomsky in his Universal Grammar. This Universal Grammar consists of inborn sets of principles and parameters. Language complexities, both universals and variations, are the results of different interactions between parameters and principles of that grammar.

The cognition-based functional viewpoint about linguistic universality and disparity lends us a different approach towards linguistic universals in terms of invariants of human biological make-up and common features of the physical world. The spirit of Tai's cognition-based functionalism can be illustrated in the following three areas: space, categorization, and iconicity.

Space is one of the most important cognitive domains underlying human languages. Following Anderson (1971), Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976) and others, Tai (1989a, 1993) treats spatial expressions as more basic conceptually and grammatically, than non-spatial expressions. At the same time, he points out that though languages generally follow certain universal functional principles, differences can be found as a result
of different strategies in conceptualizing spatial relationships. Examples can be given from both Chinese and English.

(1) 书在箱子里头.
    Shu zai xiangzi litou.
    Book exist box inside
    “The book is in the box.”

(2) The book is in the box

In both (1) and (2), the relationship between “the book” and “the box” can be viewed as that between a focal object and a referent object, with the focal object reduced into a geometric point and the referent object construed as a three-dimensional geometric enclosure. However, the Chinese expression differs from the English one in that the Chinese expression uses the verb zai ‘to exist, to be located’ to indicate the existence of an object in a location and then pin down its specific location with litou ‘inside,’ while the English one utilizes the preposition in to indicate the spatial relationship between focal object and reference object. It appears that while Chinese adopts a more transparent, analytical, two-step strategy in conceptualizing the spatial relationships between the focal and reference object, English adopts a one-step strategy by lexicalizing the same spatial relationship in the form of spatial propositions (“in,” “on” “at”, etc.).

Another set of examples can be given from the spatial expressions regarding the Whole-Part relationship. Chinese word order tends to follow the Whole-Before-Part
order as illustrated in the following examples:

(3a) 五个苹果烂了三个.
      Wu ge pingguo lan le san ge.
      Five CL apple rotten PRT three CL
      “Three of the five apples are rotten.”

(3b) 五个苹果三个烂了.
      Wu ge pingguo san ge lan le.
      Five CL apple three CL rotten PRT

(4a) 五个苹果我吃了三个.
      Wu ge pingguo wo chi le san ge.
      Five CL apple I eat PRT three CL
      “I ate three of the five apples.”

(4b) 我把五个苹果吃了三个.
      Wo ba wu ge pingguo chi le san ge.
      Five CL apple three CL eat PRT

(4c) 五个苹果被我吃了三个.
      Wu ge pingguo bei wo chi le san ge.
      Five CL apple bei I eat PRT three CL

Examples (3)-(4) show that in many Chinese syntactic patterns, the Whole-Before-Part relationship always holds as a constant. Violation of this order will result in ungrammaticality.

Another important aspect of human cognition is categorization. Tai adopts a different approach from the traditional one, which classifies a category on the basis of a set of discrete properties serving as necessary and sufficient criterial conditions to define that category. Tai’s approach follows the “prototype theory” which holds that human

---

2 In these examples, all the (b) and (c) sentences have the same meaning as the (a) sentences.
categorization can be achieved through association with the prototype(s). In other words, members of a category associate with each other in terms of "family resemblance." In addition, Tai holds the view that human categorization results from the interaction between the human body and its physical environment in different socio-cultural contexts. Thus, human experience and imagination play a crucial role. One good example can be furnished from the study of Chinese classifier tiao (Tai and Wang 1990). It shows that the semantic content of tiao is cognition-based. It is used by native speakers to classify long-shaped objects but not different types of nouns. Thus, as for melons such as huanggua, ‘cucumber,’ kugua ‘bitter melon,’ and xigua ‘water melon,’ only those with long-shape are classified with tiao. Those melons which are not long-shaped such as xigua ‘water melon’ cannot be classified with tiao. However, because legal articles and news items have been written vertically on the page in traditional Chinese culture, the classifier tiao is metaphorically extended to categorize abstract entities such as fajia ‘legal article’ and xinwen ‘news item.’ Thus, the apparent arbitrariness of the categorization involving the classifier tiao can be understood through human imagination in the Chinese cultural context.

Tai holds the view that the simplest as well as one of the most economical ways for linguistic structures to reflect humans’ conceptualized world is through iconicity. Thus, iconicity plays a crucial role in a cognition-based functional grammar. Tai shows that Chinese syntactic patterns demonstrate a more transparent relationship between the
conceptualized world and linguistic structure. For example, Tai (1985) points out that Chinese word order demonstrate parallel relations with the temporal sequence of events and temporal scope of conceptualized states in the conceptual world.

The Principle of Temporal Sequence orders the linguistic structure in such a way that the order of linguistic elements follow the order of the temporal order of states that they represent. For example:

(5) 他坐车到这儿。
Ta zuò chē dào zhèr.
He ride car arrive here
“He came here by car.”

(6) 他到这儿坐车。
Ta dào zhèr zuò chē.
He arrive here ride car.
“He came here to ride in a car.”

In (5), “riding in a car” precedes “arriving here.” Sentence (6) indicates the reversed situation. With respect to the meaning of each sentence, one cannot change their respective word order.

The Principle of Temporal Scope patterns linguistic elements in such a way that a constituent with smaller temporal range follows one with larger range. For example:

(7a) 他昨天走了。
Ta zuōtiān lái le.
He yesterday come PRT
“He came yesterday.”

(7b) 昨天他走了。
Zuōtiān tā lái le.
Yesterday tā lái le.
"He went yesterday."
(7c) *他走了昨天。
*Ta lai le zuotian.
He come PRT yesterday

As illustrated by (7), Chinese time adverbs and adverbial clauses must precede the verb. Since the temporal range of the action denoted by the verb is within the temporal range denoted by the time adverb, the verb therefore is within the temporal scope of the time adverb and by PTSC is placed after the time adverb (Tai 1985: 61). PTSC is a principle which can be derived from a basic temporal-spatial relationship, the Container-Before-Contained order. This relationship can be exemplified by the following presentative sentence.

(8) 屋里坐着一个人。
Wu li zuo zhe yi ge ren.
Room inside sit PRT one CL person
“There is a person sitting in the room.”

Sentence (8) follows strictly the Container-Before-Contained schema by placing the container, *wu li ‘room inside’ before the contained, yi ge ren ‘a person.’ In the later chapters of this dissertation, I will show that this conceptual schema is one of the most important conceptual principles responsible for the word order of Chinese sentences.

The pervasive iconic patterns as demonstrated in expressions of spatial relationships, categorization as well as patterns of word order shows that Chinese grammar is to a great extent, iconicity-motivated, and conceptual-based in that general
conceptual principles such as temporal sequence and Container-Before-Contained constitute important structural principles in the language.

From a perspective of a researcher and language teacher of Chinese, this cognition-based functional approach facilitates a better position to tackle some unique phenomena demonstrated in the teaching of the Chinese language. For example, given the same physical reality, such as “many books in the library,” the preferred responses from English speaking people and Chinese speaking people in their verbal descriptions are different, though alternative patterns are available in both languages. In English, we have two patterns corresponding to this situation:

(8) There are many books in the library.

(9) The library has many books.

In Chinese, we have these two:

(10) 有很多书在图书馆.
You hengduo shu zai tushuguan li.
Have many Books exist library inside
“There are books in the library.”

(11) 图书馆里有很多书.
Tushuguan li you hengduo shu.
Library inside have many book
“The library has many books.”

In English, the preferred pattern is (8), while in Chinese, that is (11). But why is this the case? How should we explain this phenomena to our students of Chinese with regard to the different preference? It will be clear in the later parts of this dissertation that the
preference of (11) over (10) is due to the fact that Whole-Before-Part is one of the most preferred general strategies in Chinese word order.

Since both languages allow both patterns, the difference seems not to be a matter of absoluteness, but a matter of the preferred perspective to look at the same situation. From a pedagogical perspective, the cognition-based functional approach will better our position in dealing with problems as such in the teaching of the target language in its own terms. As it will be shown in this study, the illustrated Chinese preference is due to the impact of some predominant conceptual structure in Chinese, and can be accounted for by the cognition-based functional approach, which provides us with a different angle to approach universals across languages as well as features unique to individual languages. A linguistic study with this approach will contribute an explanatory means to the ever demanding requirements in the teaching of the Chinese language to help both teachers and students better teach and grasp the target language in terms of the conceptual system of Chinese language.

It is from this pedagogical perspective that I would focus on the word order phenomena which are unique to Chinese, but which can be explained in terms of universal functional principles.
3. A Functional Tradition

The above functional viewpoint reflects the continuation of the functional heritage that can first be traced back to the central tenet of the Prague School tradition, and then to the further development of the functional movement in the field of general linguistics in the past decades. This viewpoint roots itself in the central spirit of Prague School approach, which views language as consisting of two important aspects, the structural (systematic) and the functional aspects, as highlighted in the "Thèses" (Daneš 1987). That is, on the one hand, language is systematically structured in terms of rules, and on the other hand, the structure of language is only the means to the communicative ends. This viewpoint about language is shared and reiterated by Sgall. Sgall (1987) regards language as a functioning system adapted to its communicative role.

As for linguistic universals, Mathesius (1936) considers them thinkable only against the background of the common needs of communication and expression. Such common needs, as Daneš (1987: 10) points out, "should most probably be sought for in the underlying cognitive (gnoseological) content units and structures, as well as in some anthropological invariants and social communicative conditions." Nevertheless, recognizing the unavoidable impact of socio-cultural diversities on human cognitive contents and structures, Daneš further argues, "To be sure, the universality of the mentioned facts is not absolutely universal, culture-independent; in certain cases they are different." Therefore, the probe of linguistic disparities is not only justified, but also
necessary in its contribution to the understanding of human languages. Thus, this functional tradition does not merely look at language in terms of its general communicative purpose, but views it as a system necessarily associated with general human cognition in terms of both universality and diversity.

In the field of Chinese linguistics, there is also a strong functional tradition as documented in Biq, Tai, and Thompson (to appear). The tremendous contributions and efforts of the past half century in the functional tradition have laid a solid foundation for the analysis of Chinese grammar. They have provided systematic and valuable descriptions, leading to an overall understanding of the grammatical structure of the Chinese language. At the same time, they have laid a solid theoretical ground for a functional approach to the study of Chinese grammar in its own terms.

Within this long tradition, two new functional approaches to Chinese grammar have recently been developed. They are the cognition-based functional approach and the discourse-oriented functional approach. These approaches as a whole can be viewed as a strong reaction to the structualist-formalist orientation in Chinese linguistics following the Saussure-Bloomfield-Chomsky tradition in the field of general linguistics. Despite different variations within this formalist trend, it is characteristic of the trend as a whole to maintain that grammar is an arbitrary, autonomous, and self-contained formal system of rules.

However, more and more researchers in general linguistics such as Givon (1979, 1984), Haiman (1980, 1983, 1985a, b), Hopper & Thompson (1984), Hopper (1987,
1991), Langacker (1987), Lakoff (1987), and in Chinese linguistics, such as Tai (1985, 1989a, 1993) have come to realize that language system is closely associated with human cognition; it is regulated by conventionalized conceptual structure obtained via the interaction between the human race and the physical world; and it is bound to its fundamental communicative function. The grammatical system of language is an ever-emerging process motivated by the needs of human communication. Hence the purpose of linguistic study is to investigate the relationship between language system and human conceptual structure of the real world in terms of the fundamental communicative function of language.

It is in the spirit of this functional viewpoint of language that Tai (1989a) brings forth his theory of a cognition-based functional grammar of Chinese. Tai (1989a: 187) states that such an approach “allows the grammar of Chinese to be analyzed independent of grammatical categorization based on European languages, so that an understanding of the structural principles of Chinese in terms of some basic human cognitive abilities in conjunction with general principles of communication can be achieved.”

The significance of Tai’s effort can be interpreted as two-fold. One is its challenge to the current formalist trend in Chinese linguistics, and the other is its “wake-up call” effect for the return to the original cognition-based functional spirit in Prague School functionalism within the functional movement itself.
Many practitioners in the field of functional linguistics have shifted from the cognition-based functional orientation. This shift is reflected in two aspects. The first is the sole focus on the "function of language units" within the system itself at the expense of the relationship between communicative function and language system, which is at the core of Prague School functionalism. The second one is the disassociation of language system from human cognition. The first one leads to a simplistic emphasis on the study of system-internal functions of structural units within a language system, without touching upon the important shaping force exerted by the link between that system and its fundamental function of communication demanded by the human society. The second one leads to an overall neglect of the regulating impact of human cognitive structure on the formation of language system. The lack of explanatory value resulting from such a shift can be easily detected in works from the late seventies to the present time by Chinese functional structuralists, especially those by Lu (1993) and Zhu (1980, 1982, 1985) despite their highly appreciated descriptive value to the understanding of the grammatical structure of Chinese.

Fortunately, many researchers in the functional movement in Chinese linguistics realize that a mere description of functions of system-internal units does not provide satisfactory answers to the question why the Chinese grammatical system is what it is. It cannot offer adequate analyses of many linguistic phenomena stemming from the unique socio-cultural environment, and those phenomena associated with a broad range of extra-
Despite different perspectives and the specific approaches these studies take, they share a common goal. That is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the language system of Chinese in terms of the relationship between linguistic forms and their communicative functions within Chinese socio-cultural environment. It is from this cognition-based functional ground that the current study will launch its investigation of the listed subjects to fill in the current gap in the study of Chinese word order, which is an important part of the Chinese grammatical system.

4. The Study of Chinese Word Order

Due to the lack of inflectional morphology, word order plays an extremely important role in Chinese grammar with its marking function in the relational structure of Chinese. For a long time, great efforts have been spent on uncovering the governing principles of word order in Mandarin Chinese. Early in the 1950's, Chinese grammarians started a heated debate about the grammatical meanings of "subject" and "object" with respect to the order of Chinese syntactic patterns (Lü 1956). In the United States, word order of Chinese has also been extensively discussed in terms of either Greenberg's typological universals (Tai 1973, Li and Thompson 1974 a, b, S-F Huang 1978, Light 1979, Cheung 1979, Mei 1980, Chu 1984, Sun and Givon 1985), or in terms of phrase structure principles of Universal Grammar and their parameterization in Chinese (Huang 1982, 1987; Li 1990).
The discussion in the fifties has not come up with any conclusions, due to the exclusive focus upon system-internal functions, and the general confusion about the relationship between grammatical functions and semantic functions. That is, they either equate syntactic functions, subject and object with semantic functions agent and patient, or totally disregard the mapping relationship between the two.\(^3\) The latter researches in the seventies and in the past two decades share two common features. The first one is, instead of finding out the essence of Chinese word order in relation to its functions and its underlying principles within and without the system, these studies are aimed at proofs for certain hypothetical linguistic universals for their respective theoretical frameworks. The second one is the generally shared assumption that language is an autonomous self-contained system. This theoretical basis has been specially strengthened by the introduction of the Generative Transformational Grammar, and later the Government and Binding Theory into the field of Chinese linguistics. On such a theoretical ground, the scope of study is confined to the language-internal system itself. The motivating factors for the formation of Chinese word order patterns are seldom touched upon, though very often these factors are crucial in the analysis of Chinese word order. Thus, due to the lack of functional and psychological evidence to support the descriptive adequacy of the results other than the hypotheses the researches postulate, very often what such studies can offer is only stipulation.

\(^3\)Readers are referred to Lü (1956) for detailed discussion.
5. A Cognition-Based Functional Viewpoint about Word Order

Functionalists like Mathesius (1942; 1975) and Firbas (1992) hold that word order is a system governed by the mutual relations of word order principles, including grammatical principles, functional sentence perspective (FSP) principle, emphasis and sentence rhythm principles. Explained by Firbas (1992: 118), grammatical principles include both the principle of grammatical function and the principle of coherence of members. The FSP principle arranges sentence elements in a Theme-Transition-Rheme sequence in terms of information flow. The principle of emphasis orders the words in a way that strikes the recipients as more or less out of the ordinary. That is, it is a pragmatically motivated principle from the producer's perspective. The principle of sentence rhythm determines the stress patterns in spoken language. However, they basically view different linguistic levels, namely grammatical, functional and prosodic levels as unrelated, self-contained, autonomous domains and at the same time they fully recognize the importance of the impact of their interplay on the determination of word order to fulfill specific communicative purposes. Referring to Jelinek (1913-14), Firbas also recognizes the iconic relations between word order and the natural order of the phenomena in nature, although he has not pointed this out as explicitly, and as in a broad sense, as Langacker (1987) and Tai (1989) that language system itself is a symbolization
of the conceptualized real world. However, Firbas (1992: 139) does bring forth an important view in dealing with word order phenomena in general:

... language does not invariably follow the orders of the extra-linguistic reality. It is not a slave to this reality. Owing to an interplay of means, controlled by the immediate communicative concern and purpose of the speaker, language is capable of approaching the extra-linguistic reality from different angles and viewing it in different perspectives.

In the current study, I will follow the view shared by Langacker and Tai that language is a symbolization of the conventionalized conceptual world. At the same time I accept Firbas' insight that language is not a direct reflection of the real word, but corresponds at an abstract level to "the language user's experience of the extra-linguistic reality" (Firbas, 1992: 139) and conditioned by the language user's communicative purpose. In light of the above viewpoints, I hold that various word order phenomena are due to the result of competition and co-operation among conceptional principles, grammatical principles and functional principles. The principle of sentence rhythm also plays an important role in word order. It may interplay with other principles, such as conceptional principles in the determination of word order patterns. One example can be given from Wang's (1989) observation. Wang (1989: 188) points out the order in "to put on socks and shoes" is iconic, in the sense that the syntactic order corresponds to the temporal order, i.e., socks before the shoes. But the phrase "to put on shoes and stockings" is not. In this latter

---

4 The relationship between the language system and the external world is established via a mediating link of our conception about the real world, which is obtained by our long time interaction with such a world.
case, the iconic order has lost its competition against the phonological preference for monosyllables to precede disyllables in English, as in bread and butter, gas and electric, etc. This is a good example to illustrate possible sources of apparent arbitrariness which arise from the competition between two equally motivated principles. On the other hand, however, as observed by Jakobson (1971: 350), “temporal order of speech events tends to mirror the order of narrated events in time or in rank.” Thus, a sequence such as “the President and the Dean” is more usual than the reversed order, since the word order here reflects the ranking of official status. In this case, even though the preference in English is to put a monosyllables before disyllables, the order of “the President and the Dean” is more natural. So far, however, what role the principle of rhythm plays in the determination of word order in Chinese is not clear. Besides, without an extensive investigation of data elicited from natural speech, it will be inappropriate for me to offer any comment on this aspect of the language in this dissertation.

I hold that language is a symbolization of conventionalized conceptions about the real world. On the one hand, there is an iconic relationship between the linguistic reality and the extra-linguistic reality reflected in the organization of the grammatical structure of language, and on the other hand, such a relationship should not be viewed as a direct one-to-one correspondence between the two, but as a relationship established via the conventionalized conceptions about the extra-linguistic reality formed in different social-cultural contexts. The latter viewpoint implies that first, language cannot be a totally
autonomous, arbitrary, symbolic system as current mainstream linguistic theory suggests. Second, it differs from Jackendoff's (1987) view that different levels of language organization, including syntactic, and semantic/conceptual levels are autonomous and independent, and only linked via sets of arbitrary correspondence rules. My opinion is that grammatical structure reflects the conceptual structure at an abstract level and is regulated by the conceptual structure, rather than an autonomous independent system. Third, it also implies that instead of being universal in every respect, the conceptual structure is to certain extent socio-culturally unique.

As pointed out earlier, however, at the surface, there does not need to be a one-to-one correspondence between the conceptual structure and the grammatical structure of a language. That is because, once crystallized, the grammatical structure develops along its own lines, and frequently, adjustments have to be made to meet various requirements of different communicative goals.

In the following chapters, I will examine step by step how word order is determined by the interplay of principles at different levels.

6. Organization of the Study

The contents of the subsequent chapters are outlined below. In Chapter II, the starting point of Chinese sentences is analyzed in relation to the general governing conceptual principles and functional principles in the formation of Chinese syntactic
patterns. The relationship between natural order and salient order in Chinese will also be addressed.

Chapter III and Chapter IV offer detailed analyses of two closely related syntactic patterns of “presentative sentences,” and the “paratactic construction.” Their basic communicative functions, the conceptual motivations, as well as the interplay of different conditioning principles are discussed. In addition, the semantic situations presented by the concerned syntactic patterns are also addressed.

Chapter V provides a close examination of the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences in terms of the relationship between their word order and the functional sentence perspective involved in their information structure.

In Chapter VI, “inverted sentences” in Beijing conversational discourse are analyzed in relation to the regulating impact of pragmatic factors and the concept of emergent grammar. Chapter VII presents conclusions of the study.
CHAPTER II

WORD ORDER, WORD ORDER PRINCIPLES,
AND SENTENTIAL STARTING POINTS

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss some general relationships among word order, word order principles, and the selection of sentential starting points in Chinese. With respect to word order, three sets of principles are identified, namely conceptual principles, grammatical principles and functional principles. These principles work at three different levels, the conceptual level, the grammatical level, and the pragmatic level. These principles interplay with each other in the determination of Chinese word order and the selection of sentential starting points. The first set, conceptual principles, include the Principle of Temporal Sequence, the Principle of Temporal Scope, the Principle of Whole-Before-Part, the Principle of Container-Contained, the Principle of Ground-Figure, the Principle of Background-Foreground, and the Principle of Trajector-Landmark. These conceptual principles organize patterns of Chinese word order along the line of temporal-spatial structures of the conventionalized conceptual world. The second set consists of only one general grammatical principle of Chinese, namely that of Modifier-Before-Head. The third and last set of principles are functional principles. They include the Principle of
Communicative Dynamism, the Principle of Functional Sentence Perspective, the Principle of Perspective Taking, the Principle of Focus, and the Principle of Cohesion and Relevance. These functional principles organize linguistic elements in such a way that the development of sentential communication is towards the intended communicative goal in accordance with the requirements of the immediate contextual environment. In section 2, I will discuss each set of principles in return with respect to Chinese word order.

One important phenomenon closely associated with word order that deserves our attention is the sentential starting point. This is because the starting point of a sentence is the very first element in the construction of the whole sentence, and it is the initial point at which the very first piece of message of the entire information flow carried by a sentence is encoded. To the speaker/writer, the choice of starting point of a sentence is conditioned by the conventionalized conception about the real world in relation to corresponding linguistic expressions in a given social-cultural context. It is also regulated by the communicative purpose involved, namely what information he/she is going to convey in the specific contexts, including both linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts. To the hearer/reader, the starting point of a sentence constitutes the initial basis for him/her to process the whole mass of information not only of that single sentence but also of what may follow in the entire discourse in a given context. From the standpoint of a linguist dealing with problems of word order, without a comprehensive understanding of the nature of starting point, it would be hard to obtain a complete picture of word order
phenomena in a given language. Therefore, the discussion of sentential starting point will count for a major section in this chapter.

2. Word Order Principles, Natural Order, and Sentential Starting Points

2.1 Conceptional Principles

We human beings live in an environment we term "the physical world." We behave in and interact with such a world. However, such behavior and interactions are not directly associated with the physical world, as one might believe, but through a mediating link that Koffka (1935) refers to as the "Behavioral Environment." Very simply, behavioral environment is what the environment looks like; or appears to us. The physical world, Koffka's "Geographical Environment," on the other hand, serves as the "stimulus-providing" environment, or in my understanding, the interpretive basis for the behavioral environment. The two environments, however, are usually not identical. In other words, the behavioral environment depends upon people's conception of the physical reality. Our behavior occurs in the behavioral environment and is regulated by it. This being the case, people's conception of the world has a great influence on their behavior, including, of course, their linguistic behavior. Due to different socio-cultural experiences, different peoples throughout the world may have differing conceptions of the physical reality, and those conceptual differences in turn contribute
to the unique characteristics of their linguistic behaviors,\textsuperscript{1} which are reflected in the structures of human languages.

After a careful examination of the relationship between the conceptual world and grammatical structure, Tai (1993) has singled out several important iconic motivations in Chinese grammar. One of them is order motivation, which is stated as, "The order of linguistic expression corresponds to their order in the conceptual world." Two important principles pertaining to order motivation are the Principle of Temporal Sequence (PTS) and the Principle of Temporal Scope (PTSC) (Tai 1985), which lay bare the parallel relationship between word order and the temporal-spatial arrangement in Chinese speakers’ conceptualization of the world. The two principles are stated as follows (Tai 1985:50, 60):

1. Principle of Temporal Sequence (PTS)

   The relative word order between syntactic units is determined by the temporal order of the states which they represent in the conceptual world.

2. Principle of Temporal Scope (PTSC)

   If the conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit X falls within the temporal scope of the conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit Y, then the order YX.

Closely related to the Principle of Temporal Scope is the more general principle of Whole-Before-Part, which can be understood in terms of Ground-Figure and Background-

\textsuperscript{1}The mention of the uniqueness of different socio-cultural groups does not preclude some cognitive universals which can be found among different cultures. But those universals are not the focus of this study.
Foreground arrangement in the information flow carried by the syntactic structure. Both PTSC and the Background-Foreground schema should be viewed as abstractions based on the basic spatial relational Container-Contained conception. An independent conceptual principle of Trajectory-Landmark accounts for the spatial relationship from a different perspective, which locates or anchors an entity (trajectory) in a landmark (background). These principles will be detailed in sections 2.5 and 2.6. It is worth pointing out that these principles do not dictate an actual one-to-one correspondence between the real world and the arrangement of syntactic sequences in Mandarin Chinese, rather, they establish the conditions for the interpretative arrangement of the flow of communicative information carried by the syntactic carriers in terms of temporal-spatial relationship in the conceptual world.

2.2. Grammatical Principles

As pointed out in Chapter I, we hold that the grammatical system of a language to a great extent reflects our conceptual structure. However, once conventionalized, it has its own principles of organization. Those principles manifest themselves mainly through syntactic rules. In Mandarin Chinese, the general pattern for such organization is: the subject before the predicate, the verb before its object, and the modifier before the modified. In other words, this pattern of organization can be summarized as a general principle of Modifier-Before-Head.
2.3. **Functional Principles**

Functional principles play a significant role in the determination of word order in Mandarin Chinese. Five important ones will be discussed below. The first one is the Principle of Communicative Dynamism. As for communicative dynamism (CD), Firbas (1992: 7) notes,

> It is an inherent quality of communication and manifests itself in constant development towards the attainment of a communicative goal; in other words, towards the fulfillment of a communicative purpose. Participating in this development, a linguistic element assumes some position in it and in accordance with this position displays a degree of communicative dynamism.

The degree of CD is measured according to the contribution that a linguistic element makes to the further development of communication. Thus, an element that contributes most to the completion of communication has the highest degree of CD.

Second, there is the Principle of Functional Sentence Perspective, which arranges sentential elements in accordance with a gradual rise in communicative dynamism.

Third, we have the Principle of Perspective Taking which should be understood in terms of MacWhinney's (1977: 150) Perspective Hypothesis:

> ...the speaker-listener actively involves himself with a sentence by 'getting inside it.' Speakers tend to choose the perspective which is most compatible with the perspective which they assume in their own motoric, causal, social, and positional interactions with the world. This means that, given a choice between two starting points, speakers and listeners prefer the starting point closest to the one they assume or wish to assume in their own interactions with the world.

---

2The term **communicative dynamism** is discussed in great detail in Firbas (1992: 6-11).
Fourth, there is the Principle of Focus. Focus should be understood, as Tai (1989a: 210) points out, as involving "the packaging (Chafe 1976) of information based on the attitude of the speaker."

The fifth one consists of the Principle of Coherence and Relevance. Note that the terms of "coherence" and "relevance" should not be understood purely in terms of formal syntactic or textural structure. Generally speaking, coherence is established on the basis of assumption of relevance (Levinson 1983). The assumption of coherence on the part of the addressees includes reader/listener, writer/speaker's communicative intention, and the knowledge of the socio-cultural environment shared by the writer/speaker and the reader/listener. Relevance should be understood in terms of contextual effect.  

3 Sperber and Wilson (1986:122) offer the following definition of relevance:

---

3In Sperber and Wilson's (1986: 109) words,

The intuitive idea behind the notion of a contextual effect is the following. To modify and improve a context is to have some effect on that context - but not just any modification will do. As we have seen, the addition of new information which merely duplicates old information does not count as an improvement, nor does the addition of new information which is entirely unrelated to old information. The sort of effect we are interested in is a result of interaction between new and old information.

To understand Sperber and Wilson's point better, let us consider the following situation. Suppose we have two participants involved in a conversation. One of them noticed that a wallet dropped from the other's pocket. In Chinese, he would say "Qianbao diao le (ni)!

Literally, the sentence means, "Wallet dropped, (you)" in which "you" is optional since that is a piece of known information. The first part of the sentence has a large contextual effect in that in relation to the old information "you" it adds a piece of completely new information to the context.
Relevance

An assumption is relevant in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context.

However, relevance is not an absolute notion but a matter of degree, and its determination depends upon the evaluation of the processing effort involved in achieving contextual effects. In order to assess relevance, Sperber and Wilson (1986: 125) have tailored the above definition into the following by adopting an extent-conditions format:

Relevance

Extent condition 1: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large.
Extent condition 2: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small.

They point out that this definition implies the necessary and sufficient condition of the previous definition, which therefore need not be stated independently.

As for relevance, one thing deserves our attention, that is, relevance in "Ostensive-inferential Communication." According to Sperber and Wilson (1986: 156-157), such a communication "automatically communicates a presumption of relevance." The presumption of relevance in ostensive-inferential communication is very important. Later in Chapter VI, we will see that many inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse are the very results of ostensive-inferential communication by the speaker to keep contextual coherence and relevance.

---

4 A kind of communication to call on someone's attention.
The three sets of principles listed above are by no means exhaustive, but I consider them as the most relevant and important ones in the determination of word order and the selection of sentential starting points. The following list serves as a summary of all the principles I have identified so far:

Conceptual Principles: PTS, PTSC, Whole-Before-Part, Container-Contained, Ground-Figure, Background-Foreground

Grammatical Principle: Modifier-Before-Head


2.4 Natural Order: An Iconic Reflection of Conceptual Structure

Following Jellinek, Firbas and Tai's insights about the iconic relationship between word order and the phenomenal order in the real world, I would argue that the natural order in a language is the iconic reflection of the conception in a society about the order of phenomena in the real world. Tai (1989a: 208) argues, "while the natural word order is perception based, the salience order carries a speaker's interests, involvement, focus, etc."

This reminds us of an important point that there is a necessary link between natural order and human perception of the order of phenomena in nature. Such a link is found at the conceptual level. This viewpoint on the one hand implies that the impact of human perceptions on word order is generally indirect, since the image of the natural world is
reshaped by conceptions which are very much constrained by the cumulative experience obtained in different social and natural contexts. On the other hand, however, it also implies that word order is not independent of our perception, since conceptions are derived from perceptions via human contacts with the natural world, and sometimes, perception in an immediate context may exert a direct impact on the structure of word order. As pointed out by Lin (1983), such perceptual impact on the Chinese language has long been observed. For example, in Chun Qiu (Spring and Autumn Annals, 770-476 B.C.) is the following historical record:

春王正月甲申朔陨石于宋五
Chun wang zheng yue jia shen shuo yun shi yu Song wu, Spring king first moon Wu Shen first: day fall stone to Song five
"On the first day of the first month in the Spring of the year of the King, there are five stones falling from the sky to Song."

是月六鵲退飞过宋都
Shi yue, liu yi tui fei guo Song du. That month six yi backward fly across Song capital.
"In that month, there are six water birds (called Yi) flying backwards across the capital of Song."

With respect to the above record, the Gongyang commentary explains:

5Gongyang is generally believed to be written in early Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24).

6The original text runs as follows:

曷为先言陨而后言石？陨石，记闻。闻其间陨然，视之则石，察之则五。

......曷为先言六而后言鵲？六鵲退飞，记见也，视之则六，察之则鵲，徐而察之，则退飞.
Why does it say falling from the sky first and mention the stone later? "Stones falling from the sky" is the record of hear-say. One hears some "tian" like sound. After one looks at them, one knows that they are stones and after examining them one finds them to be five in number.

Why does it first mention 'six' but 'yi' second? That six yis flew backwards is the record of what is seen. When you look at them, there are six of them. After you examine them, you then find them to be the birds of yi. Slowly examining them, you find out that they are flying backwards.

The above commentary shows that a long time ago, the Chinese realized that the order of natural phenomena they perceived had a direct impact on the organization of word order in their language.

As for this relationship between perception and natural order of linguistic expressions, examples can be furnished from both English and Chinese. Consider (3) from Hemingway's The Killers, and Fillmore's example in (4) as cited by Brown and Yule (1983). A Chinese example from Chen (1982) is given in (5).

(3) The door of Henry's lunchroom opened and two men came in.

(4) The light went on. She was standing by the door.

(5) 干吗去呀, 拿着个脸盆.
    Gan ma qu ya, na zhe ge lianpenr.
    Do what go PRT hold PRT CL washbowl
    "What are you going to do, holding a washbowl?"

Both (3) and (4) are natural since the linearization of expressions are exactly in line with the order of events perceived by the viewer inside the room in question. Example (4) is more interesting in that if one considers the actual sequence of events, it would not be
difficult to find a reversed order. For unless the person "She" gets inside the room first, she cannot turn on the light. However, from the viewer’s standpoint, she cannot be seen until the light is on. Therefore, despite the common knowledge of the itinerary sequence, the order of linguistic expressions is constrained by the perception in the relevant context. In the same vein, (5) is natural since its order reflects the perception of a sequence of an on-going event, although a general conceptual image of such an event would be "Na-zhe ge lianpeng shang nar qu" (‘Holding a washbowl to go where,’ to put it literally). Let us come back to the main point of this section that natural order reflects the conceptual images of the order of the natural world. To understand this better, let us first consider the following "Compound Sentences":

(6) 下雨了, 我们今天不出去了。
Xia yu le, women jintian bu chuqu le.
Down rain PRT we today not out:go PRT
"It's raining, (so) we are not going out today."

(7) 我们今天不出去了, 下雨了。
Women jintian bu chuqu le, xia yu le.
We today not go:out PRT down rain PRT
"We are not going out today, it is raining."

(8) 我们今天不出去了, 因为下雨了。
Women jintian bu chuqu le, yinwei xia yu le.
We today not go:out PRT because down rain PRT
"We are not going out today, because it is raining."

---

7 As Chen (1984) describes, the first part of (5) is produced in a context where he saw a boy running towards the speaker, and then the second part is added when the speaker noticed that there was a washbowl in the boy's hand.

8 The term, “compound sentences” is borrowed from Chao (1968).
(9)  他每天努力学习，考上了大学。
    Ta mei tian nuli xueci, kao shang-le daxue.
    He everyday hard study enrolled-PRT college
    "He studied hard everyday and was enrolled in the college."

(10) *考上了大学, 他每天努力学习。  
    *Kao shang le daxue, ta mei tian nuli xuexi.
    Enrolled PRT college, he everyday hard study

(11) 他每天努力学习，终于考上了大学。
    Ta mei tian nuli xuexi, zhongyu kao shang le daxue.
    He everyday hard study finally enrolled PRT college
    "He studied hard everyday, and was finally enrolled in the college."

(12) *终于考上了大学, 他每天努力学习。
    *Zhongyu kao shang le daxue, ta mei tian nuli xuexi.
    Finally enrolled PRT college, he everyday hard study

When native speakers are asked about the degree of naturalness of these examples, the answer is almost always the same. That is, they are comfortable with (6) but not with (7) in comparatively neutral contexts. Similarly, they are comfortable with (9) but judge (10) as unacceptable. Such responses can be readily explained. Examples (6) and (9) demonstrate a natural order following the conceptual principle of PTS: (6) places the reason before the consequence, and (9) orders the action before the achieved goal (or result). The syntactic organizations in these examples reflect the conceptualized order of

---

9 Due to the difference between Chinese and English, it is almost impossible to offer a precise translation reflecting the original structure of the Chinese example. Therefore, readers are referred to the word for word translation in the second line for structural hints. In addition, with most of the unacceptable sentences, translations of their meanings based on possible interpretations of these sentences may be misleading since many of them are nonsensical in Chinese. Therefore following common practice in the field, I will not offer translations for unacceptable examples.
the development of events symbolized by these sentences. Both (7) and (8) are not natural because their order conflicts with the conceptual order. However, they can be quite acceptable given appropriate contexts. For example (7) is perfectly fine as a response to the question in (13).

(13) 我们今天不是要出去吗？
Women jintian bu shi yao chuqu ma?
We today not be want out:go PRT
"Weren’t we going to go out today?"

The reversed order in (7), putting the expected message about the selected action at the beginning of the sentence, not only focuses on the relevant information, but also makes it salient. In this case, the conceptual requirement to position the reason for action first gives way to the functional requirement for focus and relevance of the entire information structure. Therefore the reason, *xia yu le* ‘It is raining’ is placed afterwards. The order in (7) is functionally motivated to carry out a special communicative task. At the same time, it carries extra information in terms of focus and relevance than its unreversed order. The result is that the word order in (7) produces a salient and marked effect. The comparison between (6) and (7) helps us better understand Firas’s (1992:118) point that "the unusual order fulfills an additional communicative purpose not served by the usual order, and is in this sense marked." In written Chinese, this markedness is made more obvious in (8) by requiring the overt marking of *yinwei* ‘because,’ between the action taken and the reason given.
The case of (9) contrasting (10) is more interesting. On the surface, (9) seems the same as (6). However, it does not allow a reversed order even if a similar context is provided, as in (14):

(14) 他考上大学了吗？
Ta kaoshang daxue le ma?
He pass:exam college PRT PRT
"Did he pass the college entrance exam?"

Sentence (9) in fact differs from (6) in that it presents a sequence of relationship between a causal action and its result, instead of that between a justification for a certain action and that action. This difference can be made explicit if we ask questions about the second part of (6) and (9). For (6) the question word would be "wei shenme" 'why,' as in (15):

(15) 你们今天为什么不出去了？
Nimen jintian wei shenme bu chuqu le?
You today why not out:go PRT
"Why are you not going out today?"

But "wei shenme" cannot be used for the question about (9). The appropriate question word would be "zenme" or "zengyang" 'how,' as in (16):

(16) 他怎么考上大学的？
Ta zeme kaoshang daxue de?
He how pass:exam college PRT
"How did he pass the college entrance exam?"

Sentence (16) is a question about the kind of action taken which leads to passing the exam. This kind of relationship between a causal action and result is even clearer, when we insert the adverb zhongyu 'finally' in the sentence, as we have in (11). However, we
still need to explain why even if when it is marked by zhongyu, (9) does not allow an inverted order as (6) does. Actually, the explanation is already implied in the comparison between (6) and (9). Unlike (6), which provides a justification for taking a certain action presented in a format of reason followed by consequence, (9) offers a description of an established fact in a format of cause followed by result. It seems that in Chinese, the order of cause before result is much more rigid than other relations. In turn, the word order in the sentence is strictly constrained by such conceptualized order. This constraint can be stated as follows:

(17) If a conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit X is the cause of a conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit Y, then XY.

This analysis is supported by many examples:

(18) **经过激烈争论，他让步了。**
    Jingguo jilie de zhenglun, ta rangbu le.
    Through fierce PRT debate he give:in PRT
    "After a heated debate, he gave in."

(19) *他让步了，经过激烈争议。
    *Ta rangbu le, jingguo jilie de zhenglun.
    He give:in PRT through fierce PRT debate

(20) **他杀了人，结果进了监狱。**
    Ta sha le ren, jieguo jin le jianyu.
    He kill PRT person as:a result enter PRT prison
    "He killed somebody, and as a result he was imprisoned."

(21) *结果进了监狱，他杀了人。
    *Jieguo jin le jianyu, ta sha le ren.
    As:a result enter PRT prison he kill PRT person
This conceptual constraint is in line with Tai's PTS. The constraint is so rigid that no functional principles can override it. That explains why sentences like (10) and (12) cannot be grammatical in any conversational context. Note that this constraint applies across the board in Chinese grammar, as reflected in the ordering of constituents in resultative verb compounds (RVC) and other Verb-Complement Constructions (Chao 1968).

Next, we come to some general patterns of natural order in Chinese with respect to the conceptual structure of background/foreground and ground/figure. But in order to have a better understanding of the abstract relationships of background/foreground and ground/figure, it is necessary for me to start first from some perception-based iconic relationships exhibited in Chinese existential expressions, the Container-Contained and the Whole-Before-Part relationships. It is from those relationships that the principles of Ground-Figure and Background-Foreground are abstracted. At the same time, their conceptual counter-part, the schema of Trajectory-Landmark will also be discussed.

2.5 Spatial Relationships

One of the most important cognitive concepts about the real world, as Tai (1989a, 1993) observes, is that pertaining to the order and distance among objects in space. In this respect, one important principle underlying spatial expressions in Chinese is that of Whole-Before-Part. This principle manifests the conceptualized ordering of objects in space and time.
The following examples by Tai (1989:14) serve a vivid illustration of the sharp contrast between Chinese and English in terms of whole-part relation:

(22) 台湾台北罗斯福路三段九十九号
Taiwan, Taipei, Luosifulu San Duan, Jiushijiu Hao
Taiwan, Taipei, Roosevelt Road, Section 3, No.99

(23) 2334, North High Street, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

Judging from the serialization of (22), it is not hard to find that the relationship among the geographical areas presented from left to right is that of Whole-Part/Whole-Part/Whole-Part. It is a reflection of the relation of the containing and the contained. From the left starting point, each geographical area on the left contains the smaller areas on the right. This containing and contained relation is in line with the more general conceptualized relation in the Chinese cognition about the physical world, namely the relation of ground and figure, which is to be discussed in detail in 2.6.

The conceptions of Whole-Before-Part and Container-Contained are responsible for some basic patterns of word order in Chinese existential expressions. The most transparent example is the structure of "presentative sentences." Consider the following:

\[\text{(a) } \text{五个苹果烂了三个,} \]
\[\text{Wu ge pingguo lan le san ge.} \]
\[\text{Five CL apple \_ rotten PRT three CL} \]
\[\text{"Of five apples, there are three rotten ones."} \]

\[\text{Note that Whole-before-Part and Container-Contained relationships are not exactly the same. To illustrate this point, one example is given for each of them as below:} \]

\[\text{(a) \_} \text{五个苹果烂了三个,} \]
\[\text{Wu ge pingguo lan le san ge.} \]
\[\text{Five CL apple \_ rotten PRT three CL} \]
\[\text{"Of five apples, there are three rotten ones."} \]
(24) 屋里来了一个客人。
[Wu li [lai is [yi ge ren.]]]
Room inside come PRT one CL person
Container Contained
"There comes a person into the room."

(25) 桌上放了一本书。
[Zhuo shang [fang le [yi ben shu.]]]
Desk top put PRT one CL book
Container Contained
"There is a book on the desk."

In both (24) and (25), the sentence-initial elements, *wu li* (inside the room) and *zhuo shang* (desk top) symbolize the physical spatial frame in the real world containing certain entities, and *yi ge ren* 'a person' and *yi ben shu* 'a book' symbolize the entities contained. Of course these two sentences can also be viewed as reflecting a whole and part relationship. It is pointed out by Tai (1989a, 1993) that in the linearization of spatial expressions, Chinese tend to order the Whole/Container before the Part/Contained.

However, there is an independent principle of Trajector-Landmark corresponding to a different perspective of the spatial relationship. The Trajector-Landmark relationship represents a different alignment from that presented by Whole/Container-Part/Contained with the trajector being a focal point to be located in a space in relation to a reference

(b) 桌上有一本书。
Zhuo shang you yi ben shu.
Table top have one CL book
"There is a book on the table."

However, the two cognitive schemata have some overlaps, though the exact picture of such overlap is still not clear at the present moment.
point, landmark. This principle of Trajectory-Landmark orders the linguistic element symbolizing the focal point before the element representing the landmark. Examples are offered as follows:

(26) 他在图书馆。
Ta zai tushu guan.
He exist book house
"He is in the library."

(27) 茶杯在桌子上。
Cha bei zai zhuоzi shang
Tea cup exist table top
"The tea cup is on the table."

In both (26) and (27) the verb zai 'to exist' functions to anchor some phenomena in a space. Tai (1989a) argues that zai should be interpreted as meaning "to exist" rather than "to be located." My understanding is not in conflict with Tai's interpretation in that existence has to be realized in relation to a certain spatial frame. When we say:

(28) 小王在。
Xiao Wang zai.
Xiao Wang exist
"Xiao Wang is (here) or (somewhere)."

We usually mean that Xiao Wang exists in the space we share, unless it is previously specified otherwise. Therefore with the zai construction, even if the location is not realized linguistically, conceptually the space in which the identified phenomenon is anchored is still there. In such a situation, that space by default refers to the space where the conceptualized ego identified by the speaker situates. Thus, in (28), Xiao Wang is conceptually viewed as in the same space as the speaker. Whether that space is overtly
expressed depends on where the conceptualized ego is situated. If the conceptualized ego is within that spatial frame, rather than suppressed linguistically, that frame can hardly be described since it cannot be focused due to the diffused nature of background itself, which will be discussed in 2.6.

Returning to the locating function, we find that this property of zai sentences becomes much more obvious when we consider the following:

(29) 人人在中国有饭吃。
Renren zai Zhongguo you fan chi.
Everyone exist China have meal eat
"Everybody in China has food."

(30) 人人在北京可以吃烤鸭。
Renren zai Beijing keyi chi kao ya.
Everyone exist Beijing can eat roast duck
"Everybody in Beijing can eat roast duck."

There is a strong sense of ego moving\textsuperscript{11} in that these two sentences indicate that once one moves into the boundary of China, or Beijing, he will have food, or can eat the roasted duck, no matter who he is. The speaker of these two sentences identifies himself with renren ‘everyone’ and moves renren into the space of Zhongguo or Beijing. Therefore (30) can be paraphrased as "once you get to Beijing, you will have the opportunity to eat

\textsuperscript{11} The moving ego metaphor was used by Clark (1973) to deal with temporal expressions. He suggests that time can be viewed as a highway consisting of a succession of discrete events. In the moving ego metaphor, we are moving along the highway, with the future ahead of us and the past behind us. Here the moving ego metaphor is used differently. In the moving ego metaphor in the current study, the speaker identifies himself with the element to be located and moves in or out of a space.
the roasted duck." In contrast with (29) and (30) we have the following examples which lack such sense of moving ego:

(31) 在中国人人有饭吃。
    Zai Zhongguo renren you fan chi
    Exist China everyone have meal eat
    "Everybody has food to eat in China."

(32) 在北京人人可以吃烤鸭。
    Zai Beijing renren keyi chi kaoya.
    Exist Beijing everyone can eat Roasted Duck
    "Everyone can eat roasted duck in Beijing."

In these two sentences, zai Zhongguo ‘in China’ and zai Beijing function as a spatial scope containing the renren. Thus, these two sentences symbolize the Container-Contained relationship as seen in (24) and (25) rather than the Trajector-Landmark relationship in (26) and (27). Note that there is a kind of zai sentences which do not allow the sentence-initial zai form, for example:

(33a) 小王在图书馆看书。
    Xiao Wang zai tushuguan kan shu.
    Xiao Wang exist library read book
    "Xiao Wang is reading a book in the library."

(33b) *在图书馆小王看书。
    *Zai tushuguan Xiao Wang kan shu.
    In library Xiao Wang read book

(34a) 小王在桌上画画。
    Xiao Wang zai zhuo shang hua hua.
    Xiao Wang at desk top draw picture
    "Xiao Wang is drawing a picture at the desk."
It is characteristic of such sentences as these in (33) and (34) to present activities rather than stative descriptions as in the previous examples. There are two features worth noting. One is that in the sentences in (33) and (34), the *zai* expression, instead of locating the entity preceding it in a space, contains a state of affairs described by the verb. Thus, (33a) entails that *Xiao Wang* is in the library, at the same time entails that the action of reading occurs in the library. However, this is not necessarily so with (34a). Whether *Xiao Wang* is at the desk, or on the desk depends upon actual pragmatic situations at the moment of speaking. But with both (33a) and (34a), one thing is clear, namely that both sentences entail that the relevant actions occur in the spatial frames indicated by the respective *zai* expressions. Since the *zai* expressions in (33) and (34) function to frame given activities rather than actors, it seems natural for them to precede the verbs, and be as close to the verbs as possible. Thus, the *zai* expressions in (33) and (34) follow the actors. The placement of the *zai* expressions in these two sentences is in line with Haiman's (1983: 738) distance motivation, which is stated as, "the linguistic distance between expressions corresponds to the conceptual distance between them." In addition, in sentences (33) and (34), there is a strong sense of agentivity. Thus, the agent property of the subject is very salient. Due to this saliency of agent, and the function of
perspective taking in the choice of starting point of a sentence, which I will further discuss later, the actor rather than the zai expression takes precedence in these sentences.

The principles of Whole-Before-Part, Container-Contained and Trajectory-Landmark are considered to be primary\textsuperscript{12} iconic principles, because these principles demonstrate a relatively direct linking or mapping relationship between our conception and the physical reality. That is, these principles represent transparent reflections of the real world in comparison with the more abstract principle I am going to discuss next. The other primary conceptual principle is PTS, which I mentioned in section 2.1. They together count for the basic iconic principles of temporal-spatial conceptions.

Corresponding to the primary principles of Whole-Before-Part, and Container-Contained, there are two more abstract principles responsible for many syntactic patterns in Chinese. They are the principles of Ground-Figure and Background-Foreground. I will discuss these two principles and their relationship in detail in the following section.

2.6 Ground vs. Figure/Background vs. Foreground

Suppose that we are looking at a blackboard on which a picture is drawn with white chalk. What strikes our eyes is the picture, while the blackboard is hardly noticed. However, without the backdrop of the dark blackboard, the outstanding features of the

\textsuperscript{12} We use the term “Primary” to refer to those iconic principles which are based on human perception of the physical world.
picture would be impossible to discern. The background and the picture form an entire whole and the picture is only a part of it. In this case, we call the background provided by the blackboard "ground," and the picture "figure." Here between the blackboard and the picture are several relations.

First, the blackboard provides the space in which the picture appears. Thus, the blackboard serves as a framework containing a figure which is our picture.

Second, our perception of the characteristics of the picture will depend largely upon such a framework. This point is explained by Koffka (1935:184-185) with Koflermann's (1930) illustration:

(35a)

\[ \text{square} \]

(35b)

\[ \text{diamond} \]

In (35a) the smaller figure is a square while in (35b) it is a diamond. This is simply because "the sides of the smaller figure are parallel to the sides of the frame" in (35a), whereas "the diagonal is" in (35b). This, however, is not an absolute case with (35a) which is ambiguous to most of us. The reason is that the shape of the smaller figure is at the same time conditioned by a larger frame, namely the piece of paper, to whose sides the
diagonal of the small figure is parallel. That is, the nature of the figure is associated with, and characterized by its frame or frames. As Koffka (1935: 184) points out, "The figure depends for its characteristics upon the ground on which it appears. The ground serves as a framework in which the figure is suspended and thereby determines the figure."

Third, as pointed out at the beginning of this section, when we look at the blackboard, what catches our attention is the picture, rather than the background. That is because the picture is highly articulated in comparison with the background, which is fused together and shapeless. From the viewers' perspective, the figure, namely the picture, is focused, while the ground, the rest of the blackboard is diffused. As we have a clear idea of the characteristics of ground and figure, it is easier for us to understand what we mean by background and foreground.

In terms of information structure,\(^{13}\) we can regard ground as providing the background information, and figure providing the foreground information. Here I would like to emphasize that notions such as Background versus Foreground are relative. Background is identified with respect to foreground, and in the same vein, foreground is

\(^{13}\)Note that the term, "information structure" is used differently from that defined by Chafe (1976) and from what Lambrecht (1994) tries to pin down, though it in certain aspect is similar to Chafe's. Chafe views information structure as how the content is transmitted. However, he associates information structure with the speaker's assessment of how the addressee is able to process what he is saying against the background of a particular context. Lambrecht views information structure as a component of sentence grammar. In this study, I treat information structure as an independent conventionalized schema. It may involve how information is transmitted, and how it is processed by both the speaker and the hearer.
recognized in relation to the background. There is no such a thing as absolute Background-Foreground relationship. What is discussed above also holds for ground/figure.

Although the above described situation may not be identical to what we have in language in every detail, the basic conceptualized relations between ground/background and figure/foreground do not change. As I view it, the conceptualized Background-Foreground relation is a general conceptional schema reflected at the level of information structure in Chinese sentences, and combined with other cognitive-functional principles, it has an impact on the grammaticalization of Chinese syntactic structure.

2.7. Topic-Comment, the Conceptual Structure of Background/Foreground and Ground/Figure, and Some Syntactic Patterns

In the study of Chinese grammar, despite different approaches, many Chinese linguists agree upon one thing -- an obvious "Topic-Comment" relationship in Chinese sentences. While this relationship exists in some other languages as well, it seems more apparent in Chinese. Also for Chinese linguists, it is easier to understand this Topic-Comment relationship, when faced with the difficult task of determining grammatical functions whether in terms of inflectional morphology, or in terms of grammatical relations.¹⁴ That is why many Chinese linguists, in their characterizations of major

¹⁴ See detailed discussion in Chao (1968).
grammatical functions in Chinese, agree in analyzing the structural relationship in Chinese sentences in terms of topic and comment. The following are some examples. Qichun Zhang (1956) argues that, in Chinese, the subject is the topic of a sentence, while the predicate is the comment on that topic. Chao (1968) argues that the grammatical meanings of subject and predicate should be understood as those of topic and comment. Zhu (1982) points out that as for subject, it is the topic that the speaker is most interested in, and as for predicate, it is the comment on that topic. Li and Thompson (1976) characterize Chinese as "Topic-Prominent" language in contrast with those "Subject-Prominent" languages, such as most Indo-European languages. They argue that in a TP language like Chinese, its basic sentence structure favors a description in which the grammatical relation Topic-Comment plays a major role. Although opinions about the exact nature of the notions, "Topic" and "Comment," are not the same, they all share the same basic insight. That is, there is a prominent and important relational factor other than conventionally held morpho-syntactic principles having a regulatory impact on the syntactic organization of Chinese. But the question here is what exactly it is. The traditional notion of "Topic-Comment" is itself unclear. First there seems to be no clear definitions about topic and comment. Only a description of the behavior of topic is offered by Li and Thompson, and summarized by Tai (1992) as follows:

First, topic is discourse-dependent, serving as the center of attention of the sentence, and it must be definite.
Second, topic is not an argument of the verb. There is no selectional relationship between topic and the predicate in the sentence.

Third, topic does not play a prominent role in grammatical processes like reflexivization, passivization, etc.

But the above description should not be equated to what topic is, and unfortunately nothing is mentioned about comment. The common notional characterization of topic and comment largely remains the same as Hockett's (1958) original viewpoint, which Lyons (1968: 335) summarizes as follows:

We will call the person or thing about which something is said the *topic*, and the statement made about this person or thing the *comment*.

Interpreting Hockett's viewpoint, Lyons (1968) states that "the speaker announces a topic and then says something about it." Hence a topic is what a sentence is about, and the comment is what is said about that topic. However, this description of "topic" and "comment" does not accommodate the Chinese case very well. First let us consider some topics in Chinese data. The following typical Chinese Topic-Comment structure is offered by Li and Thompson (1976:358):

(36) 那些树木树身大。
    Those tree tree-trunk big
    Topic Comment
    "Those trees, the trunks are big."

Chafe (1976) argues that an example like this does not fit in with the characterization that a topic is what a sentence is about. According to Chafe, in (36) bigness is predicated not
on "those trees" but rather, on their trunks. Based on examples like (36), Chafe distinguishes the Chinese style topic from the English one. He argues that the Chinese style topic "sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds," while the English style topic, based on his observation, is simply a focus of contrast, which is the one fitting in with the traditional notional definition of topic. Thus, "real topics" (in topic-prominent languages) are not so much "what the sentence is about" as the "frame within which the sentence holds" (Chafe, 1976: 51).

Consider the following examples from Chao (1968: 102):

(37) 那回大火,幸亏消防队到早.
    Nei hui da huo, xingkui xiaofang dui dao de zao.
    That time big fire fortunately fire-brigade arrive PRT early
    Topic Comment
    "The fire that time, fortunately the fire department arrived early."

(38) 八月十五家家儿吃月饼.
    Ba yue shiwu jiajiar chi yuebing.
    Eight moon fifteen every:family eat mooncake
    Topic Comment
    "The fifteenth of the eighth moon, every family eats mooncakes."

Although Chafe's characterization catches native speakers' intuition about topic-comment relationship in Chinese sentences, it only serves as a notional interpretation of the existing notions of Topic and Comment in the analysis of Chinese syntactic phenomena. Sharing Chafe's insight on the Chinese style topic and the intuitive feelings among Chinese linguists about the prominent status of Topic-Comment relationship in Chinese, I feel that such a relationship as Topic-Comment is only a reflection of the conceptual structure of the
Background-Foreground schema. The so-called "Topic" sets up a conceptual frame packaging the background information necessary for the presentation of the forthcoming foreground information. In such a schema, foreground is regulated by background in scope and characterization. To illustrate, consider the following provided by Fang (1992:149):

(39) 雪花飘到脸上, 凉森森的,
Xuehua piao dao lian shang, liang sensen de,
Snow-flake drift to face up cool
"The snow flakes drifted onto the face, they are cool,

又轻又软，特别舒服,
you qing you ruan, tebie shufu
soft and light, very comfortable
light and soft, (I) felt very comfortable."

In (39) the highlighted part would traditionally be analyzed as the topic of the sentence. In this sentence the state of affair depicted by this part is "the snow flakes drifting onto the face." However, not a single piece of foreground information carried by each of the three components of the rest of the sentence, liang sensen de ‘cool,’ you qing you ruan ‘light and soft,’ or tebie shufu ‘very comfortable’ can be said to be about that state of affair, since the snow flakes' drifting onto the face cannot be "cool, light and soft, or comfortable," but rather the snow flakes are "cold, light and soft," and the face or the speaker is "comfortable." From this example we see that the highlighted part actually delimits a specified conceptual scope for the foreground information. But note that it is not the discourse status of different information itself that determines this kind of
relationship symbolized by Chinese syntactic structure, but the conventionalized conceptual schema of Background-Foreground that plays the determinative role. In other words, the information status at discourse level such as many would try to pin down, "given" or "new," etc. is not relevant to the makeup of the schema itself. The makeup of the schema is established at the conceptual level following the principles of Whole-Before-Part and Container-Contained. Thus, the so called "Topic-Comment" relationship in Chinese sentences should be viewed as a reflection of an abstract extension of the spatial structure established on the basis of independent conceptual principles. More examples can be found in sentences containing the so-called "Zhoubian Xing Zhuyu" ‘Global Subject’ known to Chinese linguists (Zhu 1982:97):

(40) 谁都知道。
    Shui dou zhidao
Everyone all know
"Everyone knows (this)."

(41) 样样都会。
    Yangyang dou hui.
Everything all able
"(He) is able (to do) everything."

Other examples include:

(42) 十个鸡蛋五个坏了。
    [Shi ge jidan [wu ge [huai le]]]
Ten CL egg five CL rot PRT
Background Foreground
    Background Foreground
"Of the ten eggs, there are five rotten ones"
(43) 十个鸡蛋坏了五个。
[Shi ge jidan [huai le [wu ge]].
Ten CL egg rot PRT five CL
Background Foreground
Ground Figure
“Of the ten eggs, there are five rotten ones.”

In both (42) and (43) *shi ge jidan* ‘ten eggs’ set up the scopes for their predicates. The description in both sentences, “five rotten ones” serves as foreground information against the background “ten eggs.” The only difference between the two is that in (42), the current status of the “ten eggs” is described in relation to the description of those “five eggs,” whereas in (43) there is a clear Whole-Part relationship in terms of Ground-Figure schema. That is, the ten eggs contain five rotten ones.

Let us come back to the *zai* sentences discussed in section 2.5. One puzzling question is that since the *zai* sentences like (26)-(27) are structured according to the Principle of Trajector-Landmark, why do we feel that a "Topic-Comment" relationship (in traditional term) is still there? One plausible answer to this question is that after the structuring of syntactic constituents based upon the perception-based iconic principles, such as PTS, Whole-Before-Part, and Container-Contained, or Trajector-Landmark, there is a re-adjustment at the level of the information structure of these sentences along with the principle of Background-Foreground. If the established structure matches the Background-Foreground schema, it stays unchanged, otherwise it is reinterpreted according to the information structure. This being the case, the *zai sentences* like (26)-
(30) are reinterpreted at the level of information structure. Thus, the *ta* in (26), for example, is conceived as providing the Background information in the information structure, and *zaí tushuguan* is conceived as providing the foreground information. And this is especially true from the reader/listener's perspective.

Next, I will examine the general relationships between the Background-Foreground schema and some basic patterns of syntactic functions generalized by Chinese linguists (Zhu 1982, 1985; Lu 1980). The general pattern of syntactic functions is described as the following: the subject is placed before the predicate verb, the verb is placed before its object, the modifier before its modified. Consider the following:

(44) 我从小就爱看武侠小说.
     [Wo [cong xiao [jìu [ài kan [wuxia xiaoshuo]]]]]
     "I like to read kungfu novels since I was very young."

Syntactically, in (44) *wo* 'I' is the subject and the rest of the sentence is the predicate in which *cong xiao* 'from young age' and *jìu* 'already' function as adverbials modifying the verb phrase, *ài* 'to like' and *kan* 'to read' are the verbs, and *wuxia xiaoshuo* 'kungfu novel' is the object of the verb *kan* with *wuxia* being a nominal modifier. At the conceptual level, *wo* sets up the largest background frame within the sentence, while the entire predicate presents the foreground in terms of the topic and comment relationship. In the predicate, *cong xiao* and *jìu* establish the temporal frame for the depicted state of *ài*
kan wuxia xiaoshuo, in which ai kan lays out the ground for the specified figure wuxia xiaoshuo to occur.

In Chinese, modifiers in a noun phrase not only precedes the head but they also themselves follow a strictly linear order vis-à-vis each other. As for the order of modifiers in noun phrases, Zhu (1982:151) makes two generalizations. One is that as a general rule, modifiers with de precede those without de. However, measure words or classifiers may precede modifiers with de, while possessive modifiers must be placed before other modifiers even if those possessive modifiers may not be suffixed with de. Consider:

(45a) 年轻的美国老师
Nianqing de meiguó laoshi
Young PRT America teacher
“(A) young American teacher”

(45b) *年轻的美国的老师
*Nianqing meiguó de laoshi
Young America PRT teacher

(46a) 美国的年轻老师
Meiguó de niánpǐng laoshi
America PRT young teacher
“An American young teacher”

(46b) *美国年轻的老师
*Meiguó niánpǐng de laoshi
America young PRT teacher

The other generalization is that in cases where several modifiers occur without de, the order is:

Possessive Modifier > Measure/Classifier > Adjectival Modifier > Nominal Modifier
Examples can be given as follows:

(47a) 我们那位老革命干部
Women nei wei lao geming ganbu
We that CL old revolutionary cadre
“That old revolutionary cadre of ours”

(47b) *那位我们革命老干部
* Na wei women geming lao ganbu
That CL we revolutionary old cadre

Liu, Pan and Gu (1983) observe that in cases in which the modifying phrase consists of both a restrictive modifier\(^\text{15}\) and a descriptive modifier, the order is that the former must precede the latter. For example:

(48a) 工业组最老的编辑
Gongye zu zui lao de bianji
Industrial group most old PRT editor
Restrictive descriptive
Industrial group’s oldest editor

(48b) *最老的工业组编辑
*Zui lao de gongye zu bianji
Oldest PRT industrial group editor
Descriptive restrictive

Zhu’s first point can be explained in terms of Haiman’s (1983: 783) Distance Motivation.

In Chinese, modifiers with *de* and those without *de* have different relationships with the

\(^{15}\) As for the distinction between restrictive and descriptive modifiers, Liu, Pan, and Gu (1983:278-281) point out that while restrictive modifiers set up a scope in terms of quantity, time, location, possessor, domain for the head, descriptive modifiers talk about the state, characteristics, and the quality of the head. Chao (1968:688-689) has a similar observation about their distinction. My own view is that while there is a container-contained relationship between restrictive modifiers and the modified, there is no such relationship between descriptive modifiers and the modified.
head nouns with respect of closeness. Those without *de* and their head noun form single units to present special categories. Compare (49) with (50), and (51) with (52):

(49) 北京的大学
Beijing de daxue
Beijing PRT university
"Universities in Beijing"

(50) 北京大学
Beijing Daxue
Beijing University
"Beijing University" (Proper name for a particular university)

(51) 烧的鹅
Shao de e
Roast PRT goose
"A goose that is cooked by roasting"

(52) 烧鹅
Shao e
Roast goose
"Roasted goose" (A term for a given dish)

Given the above, it is not difficult for us to see why word order within Chinese noun phrases places modifiers with *de* before those without *de*. This order is a reflection of the distance motivation, since it is natural to place those with closer relationship closer than those with less close relationship.

With regard to the distance motivation, there is one thing worth pointing out. In their discussion of Adjective Ordering Restrictions, Sproat and Shih (1991) point out the cognitive basis for the patterning of adjective modifiers in terms of the notion of “absoluteness.” Adjectives referring to absolute properties such as *color* or *shape* are
closer to the head than adjectives specifying relative properties such as size or quality. In other words, adjectives describing inherent properties of the head are placed closer to the head. Consider:

(53a) 小红盘子
Xiao hong panzi
Small red plate
“Small red plate”

(53b) *红小盘子
*Hong xiao panzi
Red small plate

(54a) 小圆盘子
Xiao yuan panzi
Small round plate
“Small round plate”

(54b) *圆小盘子
*Yuan xiao panzi
Round small plate

We see that this ordering phenomenon is exactly in line with the distance motivation in that inherently properties of the described entities are placed closer to the head noun than non-inherent properties.

Of particular interest to me is Zhu’s ordering of modifiers without de, which is repeated below for readers’ convenience:

Possessive Modifier > Measure/Classifier > Adjectival Modifier > Nominal Modifier

Let us go back to example (47). Sentence (47) neatly follows PTSC in terms of Ground-Figure and Background-Foreground schemata. The possessive modifier women ‘our’ sets
up the largest conceptual scope which serves as a containing frame with respect to the contained figure *geming ganbu* ‘revolutionary cadre,’ in which *geming* has a close-knit relationship with *ganbu*, and the two form a single unit. Following the largest frame, the Measure/Classifier modifier functions to narrow down the scope along the dimension of quantification/characterization of the presented figure. And finally, a description is given within the narrowed frame. This analysis is further supported by Liu, Pan, and Gu’s observation. The phenomenon that the restrictive modifier must precede the descriptive one is dictated by the conceptual order of the Frame before the Framed. The basic function of the restrictive modifier as we have in (47) is to establish a characterizing frame in which the described entity stands out. Chao (1968), Liu, Pan, and Gu (1983) feel that the restrictive modifier specifies a given domain in contrast with other possible ones in the mind of the writer/speaker. Thus, in the case of (48) *gongye zu* ‘industrial group’ may be contrasted with, for example, *nongye zu* ‘agricultural group,’ *shangye zu* ‘commercial group,’ etc. However, this characterization about the restrictive modifier is dubious, since the same contrast can be applied to descriptive modifiers. Thus, we may have *zuilao de* ‘the oldest’ in contrast with *zui nianqing de* ‘the youngest,’ *zui xinjin de* ‘the newest,’ etc. To me, the most important feature of the restrictive modifier seen from (47) and (48) is that, in these sentences, both restrictive modifiers, *women* ‘our’ and *gongye zu* ‘industrial group’ have a possessive relationship with the heads, *geming ganbu* ‘revolutionary cadre,’ and *bianji* ‘editor.’ That is, the *geming ganbu* belongs to *women*, and the *bianji* belongs
to *gongye zu*. Basically, this Possessor-Possessed relationship is a reflection of the Container-Contained relationship. This relationship does not exist between descriptive modifiers and their heads. In (47) the *geming ganbu* is not part of the *lao* ‘old,’ and in (48) the *bianji* cannot be said as part of the *zui lao de* ‘the oldest.’ Unlike the restrictive modifier, the descriptive modifier functions to describe a categorized entity. As a result, it is placed within the scope of the established category. Thus, as illustrated above, the placement of the restrictive modifier before the descriptive modifier follows exactly the Background-Foreground schema.

Huang (1982) argues that a major word order property of Chinese is that it uses the head-initial rule only for the lowest level expansion but requires the head-final rule for all higher levels, and that noun phrases never involve the head-initial rule. As for the word order in noun phrases, in addition to the observation that "noun phrases have all their peripheral elements occurring before the head" (1982: 62), Huang further points out that in general, "there is no internal structure within a noun phrase other than the minimal structure that specifies the head to follow all of its modifiers." In other words, there is no special ordering constraints on the order of modifies of the head within a noun phrase. Based on this analysis, we would not have such an ordering phenomenon as seen in (47) and (48), but a randomly ordered sequence of modifiers within noun phrases in Chinese. This is obviously not true judging from the above evidence, and is counter-intuitive. Even
more significantly, Huang's analysis has missed the generalization about one important constraint on Chinese word order.

In defending generative grammar, Newmeyer (1992: 756-796) argues that such word order problems can be easily solved in terms of the relational structure of "c-command by incorporating certain grammaticalized discourse-strategies, for example in the Chinese case, PTS." Here, two important points need to be raised. First, PTS like PTSC is not a discourse-motivated principle, but rather one of the governing conceptual principles of Chinese word order as I have already argued. Second, unlike c-command which states an abstract structural relation, the scope relationship established on the basis of conceptual principles is conditioned by the relational structure of the conceptualized world. Therefore there is a fundamental difference between c-command and conceptual principles such as PTS and PTSC.

From the above analyses, we are now able to come up with one generalization about Chinese word order in terms of the Ground-Figure and Background-Foreground schemata. That is, the starting point of a natural Chinese sentence constitutes the largest conceptual frame in the frame-framed relationship symbolized by that sentence. However, this order may yield to other orders if demanded by specific functions in communication.
2.8 Functional Sentence Perspectives, the Development of Communication, and

Word Order

I have discussed previously the relationship between some general conceptual principles and syntactic patterns in Chinese. In this section, I will concentrate on the impact of functional factors on Chinese word order and the selection of the starting point of a sentence.

Firbas (1992: 8) identifies two kinds of sentence orientations (perspectives), namely the presentative orientation and the qualitative orientation. In the case of the former, "the communicative purpose of a sentence/clause is to present one particular phenomenon," or in other words, "it is towards the phenomenon that the development of the communication is oriented (perspected)." As for the latter, a sentence/clause "describes a quality to a phenomenon, the development of the communication being oriented towards this quality, or towards its specification if it is presented as an amplifying piece of information."16

Looking at the Chinese data from this point of view, I find that Chinese sentences produced in natural order are constructed neatly in line with the development of communication in terms of the presentative and the qualitative perspectives. Consider some examples:

(55) 屋里(飞进)了一只蝴蝶。
Wú lǐ (fēi jìn-lái-le) yī zhī húdié.
Room inside fly in:come-PRT one CL butterfly
"There is a butterfly flying into the room."

16According to Firbas (1992:5), "quality is to be understood here in a wide sense, covering an action or state, permanent or transitory, concrete or abstract."
(56) 墙上挂着一幅美丽的图画。
Qiang shang (gua-zhe) yi fu meili de tuhua.
Wall top hang-PRT one CL beautiful PRT picture
"There is a beautiful picture hanging on the wall."

(57) 大床(睡)大人, 小床(睡)小孩儿,
Da chuang (shui) da ren, xiao chuang (shui) xiao hair.
Large bed sleep grown up person small bed sleep young child
"The grown-up's sleep in larger beds and the young kids sleep in small beds."

(58) 五个人 (吃)一碗肉。
Wu ge ren (chi) yi wan rou.
Five CL person eat one bowl meat
"Five persons share one bowl of meat."

(59) 一碗肉吃五个人。
Yi wan rou chi wu ge ren.
One bowl meat eat five CL person
"One bowl of meat is for five persons to share."

(60) 一碗肉五个人吃。
Yi wan rou wu ge ren chi.
One bowl meat five CL person eat.
"One bowl of meat is for five persons to share."

(61) 那小子忒能折腾。
Nei xiaozi tui neng zheteng.
That kid very capable trouble making
"That kid is too capable of trouble making."

(62) 王老师教了三十年书。
Wang laoshi jiao-le san shi nian shu.
Wang teacher teach-PRT three ten year book
"Teacher Wang has taught for thirty years."

All these are examples of sentences with natural order based on my argument in the previous sections. However, they are sentences built with different functional sentence perspectives.
Examples (55)-(58) are sentences with the presentative perspective in that the communicative function of these sentences is to present certain phenomena into a space. In Chinese, typical sentences with the presentative perspective are presentative sentences like (55)-(56). It is characteristics of these sentences to be structured on the basis of the Container-Contained schema, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter III. Note that although (57) and (58) are not proto-typical presentative sentences, like (55) and (56), they have a presentative function. Specifically, in (57) there are container-contained relationships between da chuang ‘big bed’ and da ren ‘grown-up,’ and xiao chuang ‘small bed’ and xiao hair ‘small kid.’ Sentence (58) demonstrates a possessive relationship between wu ge ren ‘five persons’ and yi wan rou ‘one bowl of meat,’ which can be viewed as a kind of Container-Contained relationship. Thus, these sentences all function to introduce certain phenomena into some containing space. In their respective cases, these phenomena are: yi zhi hudie ‘a butterfly,’ yi fu meili de tuhua ‘a beautiful picture,’ da ren and xiao hair ‘grown-up’s and young kids,’ and yi wan rou ‘a bowl of meat.’ In these sentences, the communication develop towards the presentations of these phenomena. With such a presentative orientation, all these sentences have their information focus on the very linguistic units symbolizing the presented phenomena. The information carried by the verbs themselves is secondary and is only for the specification of the mode of presentation of these phenomena. Therefore, the information carried by these verbs serves as part of the background information for the presented phenomena. This analysis
is supported by the fact that all these sentences will fulfill their presentative goals without the
verbal information. Consider the following examples.

(63)  屋里一只蝴蝶。
Wù lǐ yī zhī huǒdié.
Room inside one CL butterfly
"There (is) a butterfly in the room."

(64)  墙上一幅美丽的图画。
Qiáng shàng yī fú měi lì de túhuà.
Wall top one CL beautiful PRT picture
"There (is) a beautiful picture on the wall."

(65)  大床大人, 小床小孩儿。
Dà chuāng dà rén, xiǎo chuāng xiǎo háir.
Large bed grown up person small bed young child
"The grown-up's (are) in larger beds and the kids (are) in small beds."

(66)  五个人一碗肉。
Wǔ gè rén yī wān ròu.
Five CL person one bowl meat
"Five persons (have) one bowl of meat."

The absence of verbs does not jeopardize the delivery of the key communicative intents, nor
the grammaticality of these sentences.

Examples (59)-(62) are illustrations of qualitative perspectives. Let us first concentrate
on (61) and (62), but deal with (59) and (60) later. The communicative orientation of
sentences (61) and (62) is aimed at the qualities these sentences depict. The focus is on the
cumulative information of the specified qualities of the described phenomena that the entire
predicate carries. Unlike sentences with the presentative orientation, the absence of any element
in the predicate in sentences with the qualitative orientation will impair the fulfillment of
communicative goal intended by the speaker/writer on the one hand, and may affect the acceptability of the sentences on the other. For example, consider what happens if we change (61) into (67) and (68), and if change (62) into (69) and (70):

(67) ??那小子忒能
??Nei xiaozí tui neng.
That little guy too able

(68) *那小子折腾
*Néi xiaozí zhēteng.
That little guy trouble making

(69) *王老师教了
*Wáng lǎoshī jiào le.
Wang teacher teach PRT

(70) *王老师三十年书
*Wáng lǎoshī sān shí nián shū.
Wang teacher three ten year book

Both (67) and (69) are marginal though (69) seems better than (67). As for the latter, most of the native speakers I asked feel that it is incomplete and only under some very special circumstance will be interpreted as, "That child is a very able child," but that interpretation is already not the originally intended message of (61). This is also the situation of (69), which has changed the message of (62), and thus failed to fulfill the intended communicative goal. With the verb missing, (68) and (70) are unacceptable in terms of the fulfillment of communicative purposes, and in terms of grammaticality.
The case of (59) is complex. It may be arguable that (59) presents a presentative orientation rather than a qualitative orientation. However, unlike (55)-(58), when (59) with the verb *chi* deleted is subject to native speakers' judgment, the responses are split.

(59') ??一碗肉五个人
??Yi wan rou wu ge ren.
One bowl meat five CL person
"One bowl of meat (is) for five persons."

People with some linguistic training feel that although a sentence like (59') is marginal, it is acceptable if a proper context is provided, and they cited as similar examples, cases such as (71).

(71) 一床三个人.
Yi chuang san ge ren.
One bed three CL person
"One bed (has) three persons"

People without any linguistic training give a very definite answer that (59') is totally unacceptable. Nonetheless they share one intuition with people who have some linguistic training, that is, (71) is better than (59'). Intuitively, I have the same impression as those without linguistic training do about (59'). This intuitive impression can be explained if we take a closer look at (59). First, unlike (71) which conceptually has a containing and contained relationship between *yi chuang* 'one bed' and *san ge ren* 'three persons,' such relationship does not hold in (59). It is beyond our global experience to have such conceptualized reality as "*one bowl of meat contains five people." Second, due to the lack of the conceptual basis upon which (55)-(58) and (71) are built, (59) has a totally different function. That is, instead of
presenting some phenomena, it specifies the qualitative characteristics of a given phenomenon, in this case, in terms of its quantitative limitation. Since sentences with the qualitative orientation have their focus on the accumulative information provided by the predicate, it is natural that native speakers consider (59') unacceptable. Then why do some people have a different opinion? The answer can be found in their analogy with (71). In that case, they have changed the qualitative orientation into the presentative orientation. Therefore to them (59') is all right. But even so, they still feel that (59') is marginal compared with sentences with real presentative orientation like (71), since there still exists a conflict between the conventionalized conception and the imposed one by analogy. We now come to (60). Without the verb chi 'eat,' the result turns out the same as (59'). If we take out wu ge ren 'five persons' from (60), the sentence will be nonsensical.

When Firbas talks about the two different functional sentence perspectives, he makes no sub-classifications within the major sentence groups. Instead, he contrasts sentences with the presentative perspective with those with the qualitative perspectives. Faced with the Chinese data, I feel it necessary to sub-classify the latter group. That is, its members should be further classified into two groups, namely sentences with the descriptive perspective and those with the active perspective. Next, I will discuss the characteristics of these two groups of sentences. Let us first start with descriptive sentences. Consider the following examples in which the descriptive portion is highlighted:
(72) 秋天的夜晚是那么迷人。
Qiu tian de yewan shi name mi ren.
Autumn day PRT evening be so enchanting
"The autumn evening is so enchanting."

(73) 地里的麦子一眼望不到边。
Di li de maizi yi yan wang bu dao bian.
Field inside PRT wheat one eye watch not to border
"(It is such a vast) field of wheat that one's eye-sight cannot reach its border."

(74) 这孩子怕见生人。
Zhei hazi pa jian sheng ren.
That child fear see stranger.
"That child is afraid of strangers."

(75) 小姑娘长得活泼可爱。
Xiao guniang zhang de huopo keai.
Little girl grow PRT lively lovely
"The little girl is a lively and lovely girl."

(76) 天气真热。
Tianqi zhen re.
Weather really hot
"(Today's) weather is really hot."

(77) 衣服洗了。
Yifu xi le.
Clothes wash PRT
"The clothes (are) washed."

(78) 菜买了。
Cai mai le.
Food buy PRT
"Food (is) bought."

(79) 钱花完了。
Qian huawan le
Money spend:finish PRT
"The money is spent."
The above sentences clearly demonstrate a functional perspective towards the descriptions of the qualities of some presented phenomena. In these sentences, to borrow Norman's (1988:167) words, "the subject of a sentence may stand in a number of different logical relationships to the predicate." As for this group of sentences, it seems to me that the logical relationship of agent-action is not a factor at all in the ordering of syntactic patterns. It is clear that there is no agency involved in (72)-(76). But how about (77)-(79)? As for these sentences, one clear evidence for the lack of agency is that one cannot insert any adverbials indicating volitionality into them, as shown in (77’) to (79’):

(77’) *衣服故意洗了.
     *Yifu guyi xi le.
     Clothes intentionally wash PRT

(78’) *菜故意买了.
     *Cai guyi mai le.
     Food intentionally buy PRT

(79’) *钱故意花完了.
     *Qian guyi hua wan le
     Money intentionally spend:finish PRT

However, in the following sentences, one encounters a different situation.

(80) 王老师在教室上课呢.
     Wang laoshi zai jiaoshi shang ke ne
     Wang teacher at classroom teach class PRT
     "Teacher Wang is teaching in the classroom."

(81) 我们沿着公路快步向前走去.
     Women yan-zhe gonglu kuai bu xiang qian zou qu.
     We along-PRT highway fast step towards front walk go.
     "Along the highway we walked ahead quickly."
(82) 她轻声哼起一首儿时的歌谣。
*Ta qing sheng heng qi yi shou er shi de geyao.*
She soft voice hum start one CL child time PRT folk: song
"In a soft voice, she started humming a folk song remembered from
crldhood."

(83) 她死死地抓住自己的钱包。
*Ta sisi de zhuazhu ziji de qianbao.*
"She took a fast hold of her own purse."

It is characteristic of sentences (80)-(83) to have functional perspectives oriented to
specifications of the kind of **activities** presented by the highlighted elements. All of these
sentences denote some on-going dynamic situations\(^{17}\) in terms of semantic situation types
(Dowty 1979, 1986). Unlike the group with the descriptive orientation, in this group of
sentences, the agent-action relationship is very clear. Later we will see that this relationship has
a determinative role in the organization of the word order of activity sentences and their choice
of starting point.

Chao (1968) observes that in Chinese, the direction of action in an action verb in the
predicate need not always go outward from the subject to object. He also points out that for
Chinese verbs, the direction of action is not clear. Chao's observation is correct with sentences
with the presentative and the descriptive perspectives. However, it may not be true of those
with the active perspective. Let us look at some of Chao's (1968: 72) examples:

\(^{17}\)Note that when I talk about semantic situations, I am not talking about the inherent
aspectual properties a verb possesses, but rather the situation types that predicates/sentences
denote.
(84a) 一条板凳坐四个人。
Yī tiào bǎndèng zuò sì ěr rèn.
One CL. bench sit four CL. persons
"One bench is for four persons."

(84b) 一条板凳四个人。
Yī tiào bǎndèng sì ěr rèn.
One CL. bench four CL. persons
"One bench is for four persons."

(85) 这鱼不能吃了。
Zhē yú bù néng chī le.
This fish not able eat PRT.
a. "This fish cannot eat (something)."
b. "This fish is no longer suitable to be eaten."

(86) 他老闹病。
Tā lǎo nào bìng.
He always disturb sickness
"He is always sick."

Example (84a) is a sentence with the presentative orientation. In this sentence, the relationship between yi tiào bǎndèng 'a bench' and sì ěr rèn 'four persons' can be viewed as that of container and contained. Thus, sì ěr rèn are figures presented into the space of a bench. Its syntactic pattern as argued earlier is determined by the conceptual schema of the Container-Contained and the development of communication in accordance with the presentative perspective. Thus, it behaves the same as other presentative sentences. That is, the deletion of its main verb does not affect its grammaticality as shown in (84b). Thus as for (84a), there is really no point to talk about the direction of action, since what we have here is a stative situation. Example (85) is a descriptive sentence in that its functional sentence perspective
develops towards a description of the quality of the phenomenon in discussion, namely, *zhe yu* ‘that fish.’ Its syntactic pattern is based on the Background-Foreground schema and its development of communication is towards the qualitative description. The sentence as a whole denotes a resultative state rather than an activity. Such being the case, one would not expect to find the direction of activity in this sentence. However, in a particular context, the reader/hearer can still feel the direction of activity inherent in the individual verb involved. That may explain the ambiguity of the sentence. However, it is worth pointing out that even if the dual readings exist in (85), the second interpretation is rare under normal circumstances. Let us now consider (86). Like (85) the sentence demonstrates a descriptive perspective. From a verbal semantic viewpoint, the sentence is stative in that it denotes a habitual situation. But some may disagree with that point, since the verb *nao* in this sentence usually has an implication of activity, as in the following:

(87) 革命
nao  geming
disturb revolution
"participating in the revolutionary activities"

(88) 革事
nao  shi
disturb matter
"make trouble"

However, it should be pointed out that what is under discussion is the semantic situation presented by sentences rather than the aspecual properties of individual verbs. Although the inherent aspecual properties of verbs themselves are important, the semantic situations
denoted by sentences are determined by many factors such as what kind of adverbials and objects of the verbs are involved (He '92). In the case of (86), it is the use of the adverb lao "always" that causes a "category switch" of the nao sentence. Now that (86) denotes a habitual state instead of activity, there will be no direction of activity. Thus, the sentence is the same as (85). It is structured on the basis of the Background-Foreground schema and has a descriptive orientation.

However, as for sentences with the active perspective, the direction of the predicate seems always clear, namely that is from subject to object, as in (80)-(83). To further illustrate this point, let us change (85) into (89):

(89) 鱼在吃。
    Yu zai chi.
    Fish PRT chi
    "The fish is eating (something)."

Once this change is made, we have an activity sentence. In this sentence, the direction of action of the predicate is very clear. It is from the yu 'fish' to the omitted object. There is no ambiguity in this case. One however might argue, "well, (89) seems all right, but what about sentences that one often encounters, such as (90)"

(90) 他在闹肚子。
    Ta zai nao duzi.
    He PRT disturb stomach.
    "He is suffering from diarrhea."

In (90) it seems that it is the illness that disturbs ta 'him' rather than the other way round. However, I would argue that this is an incorrect analysis based upon misinterpretation of the
original sentence. First, in (90), there is no real illness specified. Therefore, there is no relation between ta and an illness in the sentence. Second, the sentence cannot be understood as "the stomach disturbing ta," which would be nonsensical to a Chinese speaker. What we have here is, "ta is in the state of nao duzi 'stomach disturbance.'" Like (85) and (86), (90) is a descriptive sentence. Many have noticed that the important feature of agency or the lack thereof differentiates activity sentences from descriptive sentences, the latter usually denoting stative situations. He (1992) observes that imperatives can be used as a diagnostic test with various verbs to differentiate stative verbs from dynamic verbs, agentive from non-agentive verbs and volitional from non-volitional verbs. I believe that such a test can also be applied to sentences to determine sentences of different situation types, since the verb types in different sentences are after all governed by situation types. It has been noted that only activity sentences have the positive imperatives due to the presence of agency and volitionality. Stative sentences do not have positive imperatives since no agency and volitionality involved in this type of sentences. Let us apply this test to both (89) and (90), the results are very clear.

(91) 吃!
Chi!
Eat
"Eat!"

(92) *闹肚子
*Nao duzi.
Disturb stomach
Thus, we may conclude that (89) and (90) constitute two different sentence types representing two different situations. In my categorization, (89) belongs to the type with active orientation, while (90) belongs to the type with descriptive orientation. As for (89), as I previously pointed out in the case of other descriptive sentences, the direction of action is irrelevant.

So far, I have demonstrated the differences between sentences with the descriptive orientation and those with the active orientation in terms of their functional sentence perspectives, agentivity as well as their situation types. Due to differences in their development of communication and differences in agentivity, these two groups of sentences should not be treated in the same way. One will see in later chapters that these two types of sentences follow different principles in the ordering of syntactic patterns. Therefore my classification of sentences based upon functional sentence perspectives, and the presence and absence of agency is presented as follows:

1. Sentences with Presentative Orientation

2. Sentences with Qualitative Orientation: a. Sentences with Descriptive Orientation
   b. Sentences with Active Orientation

Let us come back to our two major groups of sentences, namely sentences with the presentative orientation and sentences with the qualitative orientation. In both cases, it is my observation that the development of communication corresponds to the linear order of syntactic structures established on the basis of conceptual principles. With respect to communicative dynamism (CD) Firbas (1992:6) makes the following observation:
The element towards which a sentence or subclause is oriented conveys the information that completes the development of the communication taking place within the sentence of subclause. It contributes most to this development and is therefore the most dynamic element within the sentence or the subclause.

He (1992: 8) further notes:

The degrees of CD are `relative' in that the degree of CD carried by an element within a sentence is always determined in relation to the contributions that the other elements within the sentence make to the further development of the communication.

The above observations have shed light on the relationship between the distribution of CD and word order in natural sentences in Chinese. Although it is true that the gradual rise of CD does not necessarily correspond perfectly with the linear order of a sentence or clause, there is a tendency to place within a sentence the element to which the communication is oriented in the sentence-final position. This general trend of the distribution of CD is consistent with the principle of information center in Chinese (Tai 1989a). In light of Firbas' observation and the previous examples, one sees that this trend is very obvious in Chinese in cases of sentences with both the presentative orientation and the qualitative orientation. In sentences with the presentative orientation, it is the element representing the presented phenomenon that concludes the communicative purpose. In sentences with the qualitative orientation, it is the element carrying the qualitative information that completes the communicative goal. Thus, these elements in both sentence types have the highest CD. Our empirical experience tells us that in Chinese, all these elements in sentences with both orientations tend to occupy the sentence-final position. In section 2.7, I concluded that at the conceptual level, the starting
point of natural sentences in Chinese constitutes the largest conceptual frame. This tells us that from a different angle the starting point in such sentences is the most stabilized information base for the entire information structure. As pointed out earlier, the conceptual structure of Background and Foreground is responsible for many syntactic patterns of Chinese sentences. Such a structure plays an important role in the informational organization within a sentence. At the level of information structure, background information serves as a basis for the foreground information. In linguistic communication, just as in the physical world, background is less articulated and less outstanding in comparison with foreground. Without background information, however, foreground information is baseless. It is the information of foreground that adds to, or highlights, part of the information in the entire information flow. Foreground serves to complete the communicative task. In this sense, I would argue that background information is lower in CD, while foreground information has a higher degree of CD. However, note that there is no absolute rating of CD for one piece of information, since in the cumulative information providing process, each piece of previous foreground information is fused into background until the intended communication is completed. As the status of background and foreground is relative, the rating of CD in the information flow is also relative. But one thing is certain, and that is that background information always has lower CD than foreground information. Based on this analysis, I conclude that the starting point of a sentence with a natural order consists of a linguistic unit carrying the information with the lowest CD in the scale of development of communication represented by that sentence. Based upon this
conclusion and the above presented empirical evidence, I would argue that in Chinese sentences with natural order, there is a neat correspondence between the distribution of CD and the linear arrangement of word order. Thus, this word order arrangement of Chinese sentences not only fits in with the principle of CD, but also has a conceptual basis.

3. **Sentential Starting Points and Functional Factors**

   So far, I have discussed the natural order of Chinese sentences in relation to functional sentence perspectives in terms of communicative purpose and major conceptual principles. Now it is time to focus on the central topic of this part of the study, namely the starting point of Chinese sentences and its functional factors.

   Before we start, it would be helpful to elaborate first on some of the functional characteristics of the starting point. As for these characteristics, MacWhinney (1977) identifies four functions of the starting point, namely, (a) the **attentional focus**, (b) the **perspective**, (c) the **agent**, and (d) the **given**.

   First, it should be noted that the attentional focus should not be confused with the information focus, which I mentioned previously. The former refers to the point attracting the listener/reader's attention, while the latter refers to the point where the intended message lies. Though under certain circumstances these two points may overlap, they are not the same. Consider for example, (93) versus (94):
Sentence (93) is a presentative sentence resulting in different views from people as to where the "focus" (or emphasis) lies. That is, some people feel that the focus is on xuexiao (school), while others feel that the focus is on xin laoshi 'new teacher.' The different intuitions are triggered by the vague term "focus" (or "emphasis"), which says nothing about what kind of focus is involved. There would be no confusion about "focus" if we distinguish **attentional focus** from **informational focus**. Those who feel that xuexiao is the focus are right since that is the initial point that catches the listener's attention, but those who favor the focal status for xin laoshi are also right because that is where the major information is delivered. However,

---

The problem is raised by Yang (1992) with the following pair:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. 会议室进了一个.</th>
<th>b. 一个人进了会议室</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huiyi: shi jin-le yi ge ren.</td>
<td>Yi ge ren jin-le huiyi shi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room enter-PRT one CL person</td>
<td>One CL person enter-PRT meeting room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is one person coming into the meeting room.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;(I/he) myself/himself enters the meeting room.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason I replaced the example is that (a) and (b) do not have the same meaning. That is, while the yi ge ren (one person) in (a) means really a person (or some person), the yi ge ren in (b) means "by oneself." In order to avoid this problem, I replaced the original pair with the current one. Thus, I limit the difference between the two examples to the minimum.
these are two different foci. *Xuexiao* in (93) is the attentional focus, whereas *xin laoshi* is the information focus. In (94), however, the attentional focus is on *xin laoshi*, whereas the information focus is on *daoy-le xuexiao* ‘come to the school.’ Basically, attentional focus says that this is the point that needs attention, and this is the point on which further information will build up. Information focus, on the other hand, says that here is that piece of information in relation to the starting point. In real communicative activities, the choice of attentional focus involves the speaker’s attitude. Due to the speaker’s *manipulation of information structure* (Hu 1989), the attentional focus and the information focus may overlap. This will be exemplified by (98). In such cases, the overlap of the attentional focus and the information focus may achieve an emphatic effect given the right context. Of course, the actual picture is more complex, and I will not go into detail here in this section. Here, it should be noted that the notion of information focus is different from that of “information center” (Tai 1989a). As pointed out, information focus refers to the point where the intended message lies. In presentative sentences, it is the presented phenomenon that carries that piece of information and is therefore the information focus. In active sentences, the information focus is on the accumulative information provided by the predicate. Thus, the notion of information focus is brought forth on the basis of the development of communication in terms of functional sentence perspectives. Different from “information focus,” “information center” is pragmatically structured, and different from “attentional focus,” it is independent of a speaker’s
attitude. Tai (1989a: 210) observes that “in both Chinese and English, the information center of ‘He runs fast.’ falls on ‘fast,’ and not the verb run.” He points out:

This is because the statement ‘He runs fast.’ presupposes ‘He runs.’, and ‘fast’ is the asserted part of the statement. When we ask the question ‘Does he run fast?’ we are not questioning whether he runs or not, but rather whether his running is fast or not.

Thus, in a Chinese sentence like the following, kuai ‘fast’ instead of pao ‘to run’ is the information center:

(95) 他跑得快。
Ta pao de kuai.
He run PRT fast
“He runs fast.”

On the basis of his observation of sentences like (95) Tai has proposed the Principle of Information Center (PIC), which he states as follows:

PIC: The asserted part of a sentence is ordered after the presupposed part.

Second, closely associated with attentional focus, there is a notion known as “contrastive focus.” Although it can be realized by prosodic means, such as stresses, and differences in pitch, it is very often associated with the starting point of a sentence. A typical example of contrastive focus can be given as follows:

(96) 张三我喜欢，李四我不喜欢。
Zhang San wo xihuan, Li Si wo bu xihuan.
Zhang San I like Li Si I not like
“I like Zhang San, but I do not like Li Si.”
Basically, the contrast is realized by selecting one (some) candidate(s) against the other (other) possible candidate(s) assumed by the speaker in the addressee’s mind. Thus, contrastive focus can be viewed as a kind of attentional focus in a sense that it calls upon the addressee’s attention to the selected candidate(s) announced by the speaker against other possible ones.

Third, one should not confuse the term "given" with that of "background." The former is a discourse notion referring to that piece of information the addressee assumes in the mind of the addressee at the moment of speaking, while "background" is part of the sentence information structure abstractly established on the basis of our spatial conception about the real world. For detailed discussion of "background" please go back to my previous discussions. According to MacWhinney, the first function of a starting point, the attentional focus is invariant, while the other three, the perspective, the agent, and the given are not. That is, a starting point must fulfill the first function, but it may at the same time fulfill one, some or none of the other three. Consider the Chinese examples below:

(97) 他一向开美国车.
Tā yìxiāng kāi měiguó chē.
He always drive American car  
“He always drives an American car.”

(98) 一向开美国车他。
Yìxiāng kāi měiguó chē tā.
always drive American car he  
“He always drives an American car.”

(99) 美国车他一向开.
Měiguó chē tā yìxiāng kāi.
American car he always drive  
“He always drives an American car.”
Here the starting point in (97) serves all four functions. It is the attentional focus of the sentence, the agent, the perspective (the standpoint with which the speaker identifies himself), and the given. In (98) *yixiang kai meiguo che* ‘always drive American car,’ although it is the attentional focus, it however does not serve the functions of the perspective, the agent and the given. One thing needs our attention and that is in (98), *yixiang kai meiguo che* serves for both attentional and informational focus. It is not only the initial point of attention, but also where the burden of information carried by the sentence is located. Thus, the starting point is more striking to the addressee. In spoken discourse, speakers very often actively manipulate the starting point to overlap the two focuses in order to deliver certain intended messages. As for how this happens, I will discuss it elsewhere in chapter VI. In (99), *Meiguo che* ‘American car’ is the attentional focus and the perspective, but it is not the agent and the given.

In Chinese, the distributional tendency of the three functional variants, namely the agent, the perspective, and the given is not the same among sentences with different functional sentence perspectives. It should be pointed out that in sentences with active perspectives, the agent always precedes the action, and there is a strong tendency to choose the agent to be the starting point of a sentence. Such ordering in active sentences can be explained in two respects. The first one is functional. As pointed out earlier, communication in active sentences develops towards the specification of action. According to the criteria of CD rating, the element carrying such information has the highest CD, since that is the very piece of
information that completes the communication. Based on Firbas' observation, there is a tendency among many languages to place the element to which the communication is oriented at the final position of the sentence. Therefore it seems only natural for Chinese sentences to place the element carrying the information of action after the agent. But this analysis does not explain why the agent tends to be chosen as the starting point in active sentences. This question can be answered in terms of the conceptual basis upon which active sentences are built. For any action to occur, there must be an initiator of the action, namely, the agent. We view any active sentence as providing a piece of information describing a sequentially developed event in which certain action occurs. Thus, just like watching an on-going movie, we see an actor appear on the screen, and then perform a certain action. Thus, it seems that the syntactic pattern of Chinese active sentences neatly follows the conceptual principle of temporal sequence as a reflection of the order of the phenomenal world, though in an abstract manner. In such sentences, the important elements are the ones symbolizing the actor and the ones denoting the action in comparison with others. Since the actor is the initiator of the entire event in which the activity occurs, the speaker/writer tends to place it at the beginning of a sentence. Besides, in the case of active sentences, speakers tend to identify the sentence-initial element with active, human, animate status. This may be another factor contributing to the selection of agent as the starting point in such sentences. At this point, one question may be raised. That is, assuming it is true that the syntactic pattern of active sentences is structured on the basis of PTS, then why do many still feel that there exists a topic-comment relationship in
these sentences? I feel that this phenomenon may be due to the impact of the pervasiveness of non-active sentences in Chinese. Actually, in Chinese real active sentences are the minority in comparison with other types of sentences. Chao's (1968:70) feeling that in Chinese sentences "the proportion of applicability of the actor-action meanings... is very low" may well be the result of the lack of active sentences. The majority of sentences in Chinese are descriptive and presentative sentences. These sentences are built on the basis of the Background-Foreground and Ground-Figure schemata. Consequently, native speakers may re-interpret the conceptual structure of the active sentences along the line of Background-Foreground by analogy. This may explain the intuitive feeling of 'Topic-Comment relationship in the active sentences.

Like other Chinese sentence types, active sentences have a strong tendency to choose the given as the starting point. This feature can easily be explained in terms of the Background-Foreground schema of information structure in Chinese sentences, although as I previously argued, the given is not the same as background. In comparison with new information, the given information is the better choice for background rather than the other way around. Thus, in active sentences, the starting point usually serves all four functions: the attentional focus, the perspective, the agent and the given. But this is not case with descriptive sentences and presentative sentences. Looking back at examples (55)-(60) and (72)-(79), we find that the starting point of these sentences serves all functions except that of agent, since there are no actions involved in these sentences at all. Thus, the function of agent and the lack thereof can be viewed as one of the important characteristics differentiating sentences with the
active perspective from those with other perspectives. In presentative sentences and
descriptive sentences, in comparatively neutral contexts, the starting point tends to be the
perspective and the given and the attentional focus. However, the above observed tendencies
for all types of sentences are only valid for those with natural orders. In real communicative
environments, especially in daily spoken contexts, except for the attentional focus, what
function the starting point may serve depends upon the speaker’s immediate communicative
intents in the specific contexts.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the relationship between natural word order in
Chinese and their governing conceptual principles, and the relationship between natural word
order and functional sentence perspectives. It has been demonstrated that the ordering of
syntactic patterns, including the selection of starting point in different Chinese sentences is to a
great degree governed by basic communicative functions of different sentences, and is largely a
reflection of our cognition of the real world. This study so far has shown that the linking
relationship between language and the order of the phenomenal world is not directly but
indirectly established via native speakers’ conventionalized conceptual principles. I have also
demonstrated that although those conceptual principles serve as the basis for the general word
order of Chinese natural sentences, they may be overridden now and then by immediate
communicative intents in various communicative contexts. It should be pointed out here that
the degree of freedom for variation of word order is not without constraint. Although I do not have any definitive answers as to what the limit is, I have observed that it seems no pragmatic factors can override the constraint set up by some primary conceptual principles, such as the order of the resultatives. From the examples examined and the analyses offered, one can see that no single factor, conceptual, functional, or pragmatic, may be the determinative one in the organization of word order and the selection of starting point as demonstrated in the case of (97)-(99). In an actual communicative environment, the ultimate syntactic order and the choice of the starting point of a sentence is determined by the interplay of all these factors. Some may play a more important role than others in certain contexts, but it is all of them together that decide the final output. In this chapter I have mainly concentrated on word order and the starting point of sentences with natural order. In the following chapters, I will concentrate on some special word order phenomena in Chinese, and give a detailed account of each individual case.
CHAPTER III

PRESENTATIVE SENTENCES

1. Introduction

Presentative sentences in Mandarin Chinese are conventionally referred to by Chinese linguists as those sentences built upon the following structure:

\[(1) \quad ...(NP_{loc})...V...NP...\]

1 2 3

In this structure, position 1 is optionally occupied by a locative noun phrase depending on the type of presentative sentences, position 2 is filled by an intransitive or transitive verb again depending on the type of sentences involved, and position 3 is occupied by a NP representing an entity presented. The basic communicative function of presentative sentences is to present the appearance as well as the disappearance, or the existence of an entity represented by the NP in position 3. Examples of presentative sentences are given as follows:

\[(2) \quad 隔壁店里来了一帮客.\]
Gebi dian li lai le yi bang ke.
Neighbor store inside come PRT one group guest
“A group of guests came to the hotel next door.”
台上坐着主席团。
Tai shang zuo zhe zhuxi tuan.
Platform up sit PRT chairman group
There sits the presidium on the platform.

Presentative sentences have a very special word order with the locative noun phrase at the sentence-initial position and the noun phrase symbolizing the presented entity following the verb. In this chapter, I will first offer a critical review of some major previous studies of Chinese presentative sentences. Second, I will demonstrate that the syntactic structure of presentative sentences is iconically motivated by conceptual principles with respect to temporal-spatial relationship, and is strictly in line with the development of communication in terms of functional perspectives. Third, I will argue that presentative sentences should be classified into three groups based upon different semantic situations they present, and that these situational differences are determined by the basic communicative functions of presentative sentences.

2. Previous Analyses of Presentative Sentences

Presentative sentences have been extensively discussed in Chinese linguistics for a long time because of their unique syntactic and semantic characteristics.

Early in the fifties, the word order of presentative sentences was singled out as one of the focuses in a debate concerning grammatical meanings of subject and object in Mandarin Chinese. There are two opposite analyses of the word order of presentative sentences.
Holding the view that in Chinese, due to the lack of inflectional morphology, syntactic functions like "subject," "object," etc., can only be determined on the basis of their semantic functions such as "agent," "patient," etc., Jinxi Li (1924), Li Wang (1956), Shuxiang Lü (1942), came up with a V-S analysis regarding sentences like (2) and (3). According to this analysis, both yi bang ke 'a group of guests' and zhuxi tuan 'presidium' are subjects in the respective sentences, while gebi dian li 'in the neighboring hotel' and tai shang 'on the platform' are adverbials. The second view is shared by Gongwan Xing (1956), Zhonghua Xu (1956) and others. They observe that there is no one-to-one correspondence between grammatical functions and semantic functions, and that therefore grammatical functions of syntactic constituents must be identified by formal syntactic criteria and by that criteria only. They point out that in Chinese one of these criteria is word order. Xu argues (1956: 40), "The noun phrase before the verb is the subject and the one after the verb is the object no matter whether it represents agent or patient." Xing (1956: 43) points out,

Generally, the subject of a sentence is the noun or noun phrase at the sentence-initial position. ... The subject must be a noun or noun phrase and occupies the sentence-initial position because it represents the topic of a sentence. The object is the noun or noun phrase in the predicate of a sentence. ... The word order is, the object follows the verb.

Based on the second view, (2) and (3) are analyzed as having the structure of S-V-O with gebi dian li and tai shang being the subjects, and yi bang ke and zhuxi tuan being the objects respectively. This analysis is later summarized and systematized in Zhu's Yufa Jiangyi (1982).
Y. R. Chao (1968: 323, 673-674) treats presentative sentences as containing "inverted subjects," viewing the grammatical objects in these sentences as logical subjects.¹

Zhu (1982) points out that presentative sentences can basically be divided into two types. The classification is based upon differences in the information communicated by the two types of sentences. The existential type corresponding to (3), describes the existence of an entity, while the (dis)appearance type, illustrated by example (2), signals the appearance or disappearance of an entity. At the same time, Zhu also notes that in presentative sentences, position 3 is usually occupied by an indefinite NP.

Li (1986a) and Nie (1989) have offered detailed descriptions of many syntactic and semantic features of presentative sentences. First, not all the verbs can occur in presentative sentences, though they have not given any systematic account for this phenomenon. Second, syntactically, while position 1 in the (dis)appearance type is optionally occupied, it must be filled in the existential type. Third, they have hinted that the two types of presentative sentences represent two different event types. That is, the existential type represents a stative situation, whereas the (dis)appearance type signifies a change of state. Fourth, according to Li's data, in certain circumstances, the NP in position 3 in presentative sentences can be definite.

¹The logical subject of a sentence is recognized, according to Chao, on the basis of agency, or in other words, the direction of the action of the verb involved. Thus, in Lai-le san zhi da gou (There came three big dogs) san zhi da gou (three big dogs) is the logical subject although it is the grammatical object of the sentence.
Recently, presentative sentences have been accounted for in terms of ergative hypothesis by Huang (1987), Cheng (1989), Li (1990), and Zhou (1990). The analyses are based on the ergative hypothesis introduced by Burzio (1981, 1986) by incorporating Perlmutter's unaccusative hypothesis (1978) into the GB framework. The basic idea is that a subclass of intransitive verbs are ergative in that they do not have external argument at the D-structure. Based on this hypothesis, Huang (1987) argues in the framework of GB theory that these verbs are of ergative nature in that they do not have D-Structure Subject. He claims that the unique syntactic and semantic features demonstrated by presentative sentences are determined by the thematic structure of this specific type of verbs. The verbs occurring in presentative sentences are further termed Existential Verbs (Huang, 1987), which "are assumed to select, as a lexical property, only complements but no subjects." Verbs of other categories cannot occur in presentative sentences. For example, ku 'cry,' a pure intransitive verb which does not subcategorize for an object is not qualified as an existential verb. Thus,

(4)  *哭了一个
*Ku le yi ge ren.
Cry PRT one CL person

Sentences of the (dis)appearance type are dealt with by Huang as the same with the you 'to have' sentences with you being sub-categorized as an exceptional ergative verb which may or may not have D-structure Subject. Sentences of this type always obtain Definiteness Effect.  

\[2\text{Definiteness Effect: manifestation of the requirement that the NP in position 3 of an existential sentence must be "indefinite."}\]
(thereafter DE) in that the NP in position 3 must be **indefinite**. Sentences of the existential type is analyzed as having locational verbs which sub-categorize locative phrases. Thus, these sentences must have position 1 filled with locative phrases. Besides, no DE is found in sentences of this type.

3. **Critiques of the Previous Analyses of Presentative Sentences**

Despite these previous efforts, I feel that many attempted answers so far regarding presentative sentences are still not satisfactory, and in some cases, even inadequate.

The analyses by Chinese linguists in the 50s either equate grammatical functions with semantic functions, or ignore the link between the two completely. They have either confused the levels of syntax and semantics, or have regarded syntax as a self-contained autonomous domain, irrespective of the interplay between syntax and the governing factors from other levels, such as semantics and pragmatics. With the latter approach, presentative sentences are analyzed as no different from ordinary S-V-O sentences. As a result, (2) and (3) are treated the same as the following syntactically:

(5) 花猫逮住了一只耗子。
Hua mao daizhu le yi zhi haozi.⁴
the variegated cat catch PRT one CL mouse
"The tabby cat caught a mouse."

---
⁴Dexi Zhu, 1982, _Yufa Jiangyi_ (Lectures on Grammar), (Beijing: Commercial Press), 95.
This analysis is not only counter-intuitive, but also has rendered the discussion of word order meaningless. It completely dissociates word order with the syntactic, semantic and communicative characteristics unique to presentative sentences, and therefore lacks explanatory value.

The GB approach starts with the argument structure of ergative verbs which are claimed to be involved in presentative sentences, and attempts to come up with an unified account not only of their syntactic features, but also the related semantic characteristics. However, none of the analyses so far have offered a warranted identification of ergative verbs (or unaccusative verbs in Huang’s term) in Chinese, apart from the abstract notion of argument structure of ergative verbs. The only evidence implied to support the application of ergative hypothesis or unaccusative hypothesis to the analysis of Chinese is, first, in Chinese, there exists a contrast between the syntactic behaviors of unaccusative verbs and unergative verbs, as illustrated by Huang (1991):

(6a) 门开了。  
men kai le.  
door open PRT
“The door opened.”

(6b) 王五开了门。  
Wang Wu kai le men.  
Wang Wu pen PRT door  
“Wang Wu opened the door.”

---

4Huang’s original gloss is PERF standing for perfective marker. In order to be consistent with the glosses of this dissertation, I have change it to PRT (particle).
(7a) 王五吃了。
Wang Wu chi le.
Wang Wu eat PRT
“Wang Wu ate.”

(7b) 王五吃了饭。
Wang Wu chi le fan.
Wang Wu eat PRT meal
“Wang Wu ate (his meal).”

The verb kai ‘to open’ is an unaccusative verb since it has a patient-like subject, whereas chi ‘to eat’ is an unergative verb, since it has a agent-like a subject. Basically, Li’s (1990) identification of ergative verbs is in the same sense, which is implied by her reference to Burzio’s (1986) Italian examples even though she has not provided any Chinese examples.

(8a) La marina americana ha affondato la nave.
“The American Navy sank the ship.”

(8b) La nave è affondata.
“The ship sank”

In light of the same theoretical spirit, Cheng (1989) claims that the verbs in the following sentences are of ergative nature in the same sense that those verbs have patient-like subjects.

(9) 饭吃了。
Fan chi le.
Meal eat PRT
“The meal was eaten.”

(10) 衣服洗了。
Yifu xi le.
Clothes wash PRT
“The clothes were washed.”
(11)  写了。
Xie le
Letter write PRT
"The letter was written."

The second argument is that only certain verbs may occur in presentative sentences and those verbs seem to have the same syntactic behavior as the ergative verbs described in Italian, English, etc. According to Li (1990), the evidence that these verbs are ergative is that they in contrast to intransitive verbs, take a single argument that may occur either in object position or in subject position as in the following:

(12a)  来了客人。
Lai le keren.
Come PRT guest
There came (some) guests.

In other words, whether certain verbs may occur in presentative sentences is a crucial determinative factor in the identification of ergative verbs (Zhou 1990). On a careful examination, one finds that there are many questions unanswered regarding the arguments offered by GB analysts.

According to Perlmutter's original proposal, unaccusative verbs (ergative verbs) are a subclass of intransitive verbs. Therefore before any discussion of ergative verbs in Chinese, it is

---

5The examples are taken from Li (1990 136). In the case of (12b), a more natural sentence should be Lai le yi ge keren 'We have a guest' or lai keren le '(We) have some guests.'
necessary to clarify the status of transitivity of verbs in Chinese in general. Regarding the
distinction between transitive verbs and intransitive verbs, Chao (1968: 663) points out:

We shall set up the large division of transitive and intransitive verbs, not so
much according as they do or do not have objects, as by the kind of objects they
have. Intransitive verbs take only cognate objects, ... and objects which could be
reversed as "inverted subjects"... Transitive verbs, on the other hand, can take any
object, even when it does not make sense...6

Zhu (1982: 58) shares the same view:

The difference between transitive and intransitive verbs is that they take
different kinds of objects. Intransitive verbs take only quasi-objects ‘Zhu Binyu,’
transitive verbs can take real objects besides quasi-objects.7

Based upon the classification by Chao and Zhu, I have collected the following verbs in both
categories:

---

6The cognate objects referred to by Chao include what is known as post-verbal
frequency, duration, and measure expressions as in the following:

A. 看一次
   Kan yi ci
   look one time

B. 等一会儿
   Deng yi hur
   wait a while

C. 长了一点
   chang le yi dian
   long Prt a little

7Quasi-object, same as cognate object. As for details, please refer to Zhu (1982
116).
It is clear that we have very different criteria in the classification of transitive and intransitive verbs in Chinese from those in English in the first place, though I am not sure about the case in Italian. So far, no GB analysts have offered any independent, systematic and generalized
classification in terms of transitivity for Chinese verbs apart from transplanting a classification
based on the morpho-syntactically different Indo-European data, not to mention a systematic
study of each class of Chinese verbs.

It is a long recognized fact that most of Chinese transitive verbs can occur in patterns
demonstrated in (9)-(11). Examples are given for some transitive verb listed in (13):

(14a) 小李摆了桌子。
    Xiao Li bai le zhuozi.
    Xiao Li arrange PRT table
    "Xiao Li arranged the table."

(14b) 桌子摆了。
    Zhuozi bai le.
    Table arrange PRT
    "The table (was) arranged."

(15a) 小李吃了药。
    Xiao Li chi le yao.
    Xiao Li eat PRT medicine
    "Xiao Li took the medicine."

(15b) 药吃了。
    Yao chi le.
    The medicine eat PRT.
    "The medicine (was) taken."

(16a) 鲁志深打了镇关西。
    Lu Zhishen da le Zhen Guanxi.
    Lu Zhishen beat PRT Zhen Guanxi.
    "Lu Zhishen beat Zhen Guanxi."

(16b) 镇关西打了。
    Zhen Guanxi da le.
    Zhen Guanxi beat PRT
    "Zhen Guanxi (was) beaten."
(17a) 小王点了火.
Xiao Wang dian le huo
Xiao Wang light PRT fire
Xiao Wang lit the fire.

(17b) 火点了.
Huo dian le.
Light light PRT
“The light (was) lit.”

(18a) 我丢了钱包.
Wo diu le qianbao.
I lose PRT wallet
“I lost the wallet.”

(18b) 钱包丢了.
Qianbao diu le.
Wallet lose PRT
“The wallet (was) lost.”

(19a) 小王在菜里放了一些盐.
Xiao Wang zai cai li fang le yixie yan.
Xiao Wang in dish inside put PRT some salt.
“Xiao Wang put some salt in the dishes.”

(19b) 盐放了.
Yan fang le.
Salt put PRT
“The salt (was) put (in the dishes).”

(20a) 我们盖了一幢房子.
Women gai le yi zhuang fangzi.
We build PRT one CL house.
“We built a house.”

(20b) 房子盖了.
Fangzi gai le.
House build PRT
“The house (was built).”
(21a) 我们录了音。
Women lu le yin.
We record PRT voice
“We made the recording.”

(21b) 音录了。
Yin lu le.
Voice record PRT
“The recording (was) made.”

(22a) 他留了个地址。
Ta liu le ge dizhi.
He leave PRT CL address
“He left his address.”

(22b) 地址留了。
Dizhi liu le.
Address leave PRT
“(I) left the address (to someone).”

(23a) 小李给地上喷了水。
Xiao Li gei di shang pen le shui.
Xiao Li to ground top spread PRT water
“Xiao Li spread some water on the floor.”

(23b) 水喷了。
Shui pen le.
Water spread PRT
“The water (was) spread.”

(24a) 主任批了三份文件。
Zhuren pi le san fen wenjian.
Chairman comment PRT three CL document
“The chairman commented on three documents.”

(24b) 那三份文件批了。
Nei san fen wenjian pi le.
That three CL document comment PRT
“The three documents (were) commented on.”
(25a) 武松杀了西门庆。
Wu Song shā le Xi Menqīng.
"Wu Song killed Xi Menqīng."

(25b) 西门庆杀了。
Xi Menqīng shā le.
"Xi Menqīng (was) killed."

(26a) 王老四挖了地道。
Wáng Lǎo Sì wā le dì dào
"Wang Lao Si dug an underground tunnel."

(26b) 地道挖了。
Dì dào wā le.
"The underground tunnel (was) dug."

(27a) 姐姐洗了衣服。
Jiéjie xǐ le yīfu.
"(My) elder sister washed the clothes."

(27b) 衣服洗了。
Yīfu xǐ le.
"The clothes were washed."

(28a) 我写了信。
Wǒ xiě le xìn.
"I wrote the letter."

(28b) 信写了。
Xìn xiě le.
"The letter was written."
Such as the facts are, it of course could still be argued that corresponding to each of those transitive verbs, there is an ergative form when those transitive verbs are used intransitively as Cheng (1989) has suggested. Judging from Cheng's analysis, it is not clear whether there is a category switch from the transitive to the ergative (or the unaccusative), when a Chinese transitive verb is used intransitively, or all verbs originally classified as transitive are actually polysems, or even homophones. No researchers from the GB school in Chinese linguistics have ever provided any answers to the above question. So far, there is no independent and substantial evidence ever provided to distinguish those verbs in the (b) sentences from those in the (a) sentences apart from the mere claim that those verbs in the (b)'s are ergative verbs.
Even if assuming that each of the above transitive verbs does have an ergative counter-part, one still has to answer the following questions.

The first one is associated with both the phenomena in (9)-(11) and presentative sentences. One notices that in (9)-(11) the patients (or in GB's term, the themes) are placed sentence initially. According to Cheng's analysis, this is because with ergative verbs, the internal argument has to move to the position of the external argument in order to get case. This analysis is in line with Burzio's (1986) generalization, "A verb (with an object) Case-marks its object if and only if it theta-marks its subject." In other words, since an ergative verb does not have D-structure subject, in order for the object to get case, the object must move to the subject position. Regardless of the factual adequacy of such a theory, people who hold such a view have to answer why in presentative sentences, which are identified by many GB practitioners as the typical ergative forms in Chinese, the objects do not move. One may solve this problem by following Zhou's (1990) argument that these verbs in presentative sentences such as the so-called "weather verbs," verbs of experience have their logical subject subcategorized in the complement, i.e. the object position in D-structure. These verbs are associated with the kind of ergative constructions which are subject to DE. In other words, these verbs are capable of assigning inherent case to their indefinite objects to allow them not to move. But if an object is definite, then it has to move to the subject position as in the case of the following:
(31) 张明来了。
Zhang Ming lai le.
Zhang Ming come PRT
"Zhang Ming has come."

However, one still has to answer the question raised by Tai (1989b: 4) "why ergative verbs assign inherent cases in Chinese and not in other languages, and why only to indefinite verbs."

In fact, contrary to Zhou's claim, in presentative sentences, with the verbs referred to by Zhou, sometimes, even if the so-called objects are definite, they do not have to move as demonstrated in the following example:

(32) 前面玉米地里突然钻出了何氏父子。
Qianmian yumi di li turan zuanchu le He shi fuzi.
Front corn field inside suddenly squeeze out PRT He name father:son
"Suddenly, the father and son of the He's family appeared from the corn fields."

Obviously, Zhou's analysis does not provide any solution to this problem.

The second question also concerns the syntactic pattern illustrated by (9)-(11). It has been observed by many Chinese linguists (Liu, Gu, and Pan 1983; Li 1986b; LaPolla 1988) that in this pattern, the subject position must be occupied by a NP representing an inanimate entity, unless special contexts are provided. The problem is that if this syntactic pattern were determined by the thematic structure of the verbs involved as claimed by some GB practitioners, there should be no reason for it to forbid a presentation of animateness by the sole NP in this pattern. There is no specification in the framework of ergative hypothesis, or GB for ergative verbs not to take animate objects.
The third question is associated with presentative sentences. Let us assume for the time being that each transitive verb in (a) sentences in (14)-(30) does have an ergative counterpart in (b) sentences. Then the question is that if all the verbs in the (b) patterns share the same argument structure as proposed in the GB analyses, why only some of them can occur in presentative sentences as in (33)-(44), while others cannot as illustrated from (45) through (48)?

(33) 桌上摆了一把茶壶.
Zhuo shang bai le yi ba chahu.
Table up put PRT one CL tea:pot
“A tea pot is on the table.”

(34) 这儿点了一盏灯.
Zhe er dian le yi zhan deng.
Here light PRT one CL lamp
“Here lights a lamp”

(35) 家里丢了一只猫.
Jia li diu le yi zhi mao.
House inside lose PRT one CL cat
“The household lost a cat.”

(36) 桌上放了一本书.
Zhuo shang fang le yi ben shu.
Desk up put PRT one CL book
“There is a book placed on the desk.”

(37) 村里盖了一座楼.
Cun li gai le yi zuo lou.
Village inside build PRT one CL building
“There is a building built in the village.”

(38) 磁带里录了周旋的歌儿.
Cidai li lu le Zhou Xuan de ger.
Tape inside record PRT Zhou Xuan GEN song
“There are songs by Zhou Xuan recorded on the tape.”
(39) 外边留了两个人。
Wai bian liu le liang ge ren.
Out side leave PRT two CL person
“There remain two persons outside.”

(40) 树上喷了些农药。
Shu shang pen le xie nong yao.
Tree up spread PRT some agriculture drug
“There is some pesticide spread on the tree.”

(41) 这儿杀了一个
Zhe sha le yi ge ren.
Here kill PRT one CL person
“A man was killed here”

(42) 墙上挖了一个洞。
Qiang shang wa le yi ge dong.
Wall up dig PRT one CL hole
“There is a hole in the wall.”

(43) 河边种了一行垂柳。
He bian zhong le yi hang chui liu.
River side plant PRT one CL weeping willow
“A line of weeping willows were planted there along the river.”

(44) 这儿撞了一个人。
Zhe zhuang le yi ge ren.
Here hit PRT one CL person
“A person was hit here.”

(45) *这里吃了一只鸡。
Zhe li chi le yi zhi ji.
Here inside eat PRT one CL chicken

(46) *这儿打了一个
Zhe da le yi ge ren.
Here hit PRT one CL person
One of course may solve this problem by referring to the subcategorizations of individual verbs. However, that solution like all other GB analyses about ergativity in Chinese will only be an ad hoc system-internal stipulation, but not an explanation.

One widely mentioned feature of presentative sentences is the definiteness effect. In this respect, Huang (1987) observes that the NP at position 3 in members of the (dis)appearance group must be indefinite, but that NP in the existential type may or may not be indefinite. Huang argues that the definiteness or the indefiniteness of that NP is determined by the thematic structure of the verbs involved. The indefiniteness found with the NP at position 3 in some types of presentative sentences is explained in terms of the definiteness effect. Huang generalizes that "the DE is found in unbalanced θ-chains." A normal chain resulted by movement of an argument, pointed out by Huang, has a form of (NP, EC) where NP is a lexical phrase and EC is an empty category, while an unbalanced chain is one of the form (EC, NP). Thus, according to Huang, since "most existential sentences involve verbs that do not

---

8For the definition of θ-chain, please refer to Huang's article and Chomsky (1981).

9The term is adopted by Huang to refer to all types of sentences built on presentative construction.
select D-Structure subjects; an unbalanced chain is formed. Therefore, DE is found in those sentences. This is exemplified by Huang with examples from the (dis)appearance type:

(49) 飞了一只蜜蜂.
   EC; fei le yi zhi mifeng.
   fly Part one CL bee
   “A bee has flown away.”

(50) *飞了那只蜜蜂
   EC; fei le nei zhi mifeng.
   fly Part that CL bee.
   “That bee has flown away.”

He further points out that with members of this type, even if the subject position is filled lexically, DE still obtains.

A problem with this analysis can be summarized as follows. Firstly, without convincing evidence and systematic procedure to identify ergative verbs in Chinese and to establish their relation with presentative sentences, this analysis of the semantic aspect of DE in presentative sentences becomes a baseless speculation. Secondly, even if the ergative analysis were well established, the relationship between the specific thematic structure of the verbs involved and DE would be a mere correlation but not a explanation of the necessary link between the two. Furthermore, empirical evidence does not support the claim that DE is a must. For when specific conditions are provided, the NPs in question can be definite. Consider the following examples:10

10Example (52) and example (53) are taken from Nie (1989).
Faced with the problem posed by sentences like (51)-(53), Li (1990) acknowledges that a pure syntactic approach is not sufficient to solve this problem, and adopts Holmback's (1983) interpretive approach to explain DE from a functional perspective, arguing the acceptability of the occurrence of the indefinite NPs and the lack thereof may be a matter of compatibility between the functions of presentative sentences and the semantics of the NP expressions.

Finally, the GB approach has failed to explain the different aspectual situations clearly demonstrated in different types of presentative sentences as mentioned by Nie (1989). The semantic situational presentation is surely one of the most important features which differentiates one type of presentative sentences from another, and it is closely associated with the fundamental communicative functions of presentative sentences of different kinds. Any comprehensive and adequate analysis of presentative sentences should not exclude an account of it.
The above problems with the GB approach have cast a serious doubt on the validity of the application of ergative hypothesis to the analysis of presentative sentences in Chinese. In order to have a better and comprehensive analysis of presentative sentences in Chinese, I adopt a totally different approach, that is, an approach from a cognition-based functional perspective in conjunction with a verbal semantic analysis based on Vendler (1967)-Dowty's (1979, 1986) theory. A detailed analysis of presentative sentences will be offered in the following sections.

4. Iconicity in the Syntactic Structure of Presentative Sentences and the Development of Communication

In Chapter II, I offered a description of the conceptual basis for Chinese spatial expressions. It is the Whole-Before-Part principle and the Container-Contained relation that set up the basis for the formation of the syntactic structure of presentative sentences. In other words, rather than an arbitrarily formed construction, the syntactic structure of presentative sentences in Chinese is a symbolization of the conceptualized situation of presentation or existence of entities in space. For readers' convenience, the illustration of the syntactic structure of presentative sentences is repeated here as follows:

\[(54a) \ (\text{NP}_{\text{loc}}) \ldots V \ldots \text{NP} \ldots\]

\[1 \ 2 \ 3\]

Let us leave aside the V for the moment, what we have is the following:

\[(54b) \ (\text{NP}_{\text{loc}}) \ldots \text{NP} \ldots\]
Iconic with the Whole-Before-Part conception and the Container-Contained relation, the NPlc representing the symbolized conceptual space serves as a frame containing a figure, and is so ordered before the figure. From another perspective, the NP represents the conceptualized figure introduced into the frame and is therefore ordered after the spatial frame symbolized by NPlc. When this conceptual structure of spatial relation of (55) is realized at the syntactic level, we have a basic ordering format of (54b).

(55) [Conceptualized frame [Conceptualized figure]]

The verbs in presentative sentences function either to specify certain actions giving rise to the (dis)appearance of given entities, or the mode of existence depending on the type of presentative sentences. To make this point clear, consider the following:

(56) 屋里走了一个人。
Wu lǐ zǒu le yī ge rén.
Room inside left PRT one CL person
“A person left the room.”

(57) 屋里跑了一个人。
Wu lǐ pào le yī ge rén.
Room inside escape PRT one CL person
“A person escaped from the room.”

(58) 屋里滑了一个人。
Wu lǐ huá le yī ge rén.
Room inside slip PRT one CL person
“A person slipped out of the room.”

(59) 台上坐着一个人。
Tá shàng zuò zhè yī ge rén.
Platform up sit PRT one CL person
“There is a person sitting on the platform.”
(60) 台上站着一个人。
Tai shang zhang zhe yi ge ren.
Platform up stand PRT one CL person
“There is a person standing on the platform.”

(61) 台上躺着一个人。
Tai shang tang zhe yi ge ren.
Platform up lie PRT one CL person
“There is a person lying on the platform.”

Despite the fact that all sentences from (56) to (58) describe situations of disappearance, they invoke different images of disappearance. Similar case is also found with sentences (59)-(61), which specify different modes of existence. The difference between the two groups is that in (56)-(58) the verbs not only tell us how disappearance takes place, but also carry a sense of change of state, while in (59)-(61), the verbs focus on the information of the mode of existence, since the image of existence is already expressed by the structure of (54b). This can be proven by scenic descriptions commonly found in Chinese narratives like the following:

(62) 屋子中间一张大桌子, 上面一把大茶壶
Wuzi zhongjian yi zhang da zhuozi, shangmian yi ba da chahu
House middle one CL big table up:side one CL big tea-pot
“In the middle of the room, there (is) a big table, and on the table

茶壶周围四个茶碗。
chahuzhouwei si ge chawan.
tea-pot surroundings four CL tea-cup
there (is) a big tea-pot, and surrounding it (are) four tea-cups.”

There are no verbs at all in this piece of description. However, the existence of zhuozi ‘table,’ chahu ‘tea-pot,’ and chawan ‘tea-cup’ in the specified space is already expressed by the iconic structure of Container-Contained relation in space. Some may argue that the verbs in (62) are
deleted due to some reason, but it is really hard for one to tell in such a case what verbs are
deleted. For example, are these verbs the commonly expected *you* 'to have,' or *shi* 'to be' or
some others? The fact is that, in such a case, we need neither of them to invoke the image of
existence, and usually we do not find *you* or *shi*, but verbs describe the mode of existence like
*bai* 'to dispose,' *fang* 'to put,' *gua* 'to hang,' *tie* 'to stick to,' to name a few. From this
evidence we see that the conceptualized existence of certain entities in a given space is
sufficiently symbolized and iconically expressed by format (54b.) alone.

Some may have noticed that under some circumstances, the NP_{loc} in certain
presentative sentence is optional. Does this mean that there is no spatial frame conceived in the
speaker's mind at the moment of speaking, or is the frame not so important as I have claimed to
be in spatial expressions and so it is optional? The answer is that this is absolutely not the case.
The conceptualized spatial frame is always there no matter whether it is overtly expressed.
Remember that as I pointed out in Chapter II, ground as compared with figure is diffused. This
is even more obvious when a speaker describes a situation in which an entity moves into or out
of a conceptualized space where the conceptualized ego himself is situated. Supposing you are
asked to describe the spatial environment you yourself are in, you will find it difficult to give a
generalized answer, and usually your description only covers portions of your environment
rather than the over-all space. But things become much easier when one moves the conceptual
ego out of that specified spatial environment, and makes that environment a focus. This
accounts for the difference between (63) and (64).
(63) 屋里来了一个人。
Wu li lai le yi ge ren.
Room inside come PRT one CL person
“A person has come into the room.”

(64) 来了一个人。
Lai le yi ge ren.
Come PRT one CL person
“A person has come.”

Native speakers have a feeling that (63) is usually used by the speaker to speak to the addressee when they are not in the wuzi ‘room’ into which the described person comes, or in a narrative describing a situation in the past. On the contrary, (64) is often used when both the speaker and the addressee are in the same room into which the person comes. In the first case, the placement of the conceptualized ego is the same as the physical ego whose geographical position is outside the described space. Thus, the described space, wu li ‘inside the room’ becomes a focal point on the one hand, and a spatial frame on the other hand in relation to the presented figure yi ge ren ‘a person.’ However, in this case, the conceptualized ego, the described spatial frame, and the presented figure are still contained in a larger ground frame, namely the space where all these entities are situated, even if it is not mentioned. The speaker does not mention this larger frame not because it is the information shared or the known as some may suggest, but because the information of that frame is diffused and is impossible to be described. In the second case, we have a similar situation as we have in the case of the larger frame. Since the speaker, the addressee and the presented figure are all in the same spatial frame, the frame itself is diffused. Now only the presented figure is the focus. Therefore it is
the presented figure that is expressed linguistically but not the diffused spatial frame. Some people may argue that the above analysis is dubious, since in many cases if not most cases, speakers do mention the spaces such as wu li ‘inside the room,’ jia li ‘inside the home,’ zhe li ‘here’ where the speakers, the addressees and the presented figures are. The answer to such doubt is very simple. As pointed out earlier, syntactic structure is the symbolization of the conceptualized reality rather than a factual description with one-to-one correspondence to the physical world. The presence or the absence of an overt expression of spatial frame depends upon the conceptual placement of the ego by the speaker instead of the physical location of the ego. That is, it depends upon whether the speaker views that space as diffused ground surrounding him or a focused frame containing the presented figure. In other words, even if the physical ego may share the same space as the addressee and the presented figure, the speaker is free to move the conceptual ego out of that space and to make it a focus.

The syntactic structure of presentative sentences not only agrees with the conceptual schema of the Container-Contained spatial relationship, but also fully complies with the development of communication in terms of functional sentence perspective of presentation. As illustrated in Chapter II, in sentences with the presentative perspective, the development of communication is towards the presented phenomena, whose presentation fulfills the goal of communication. Therefore, the information carried by the linguistic elements symbolizing those presented phenomena has the highest degree of CD and it serves as the information focus in these sentences. Thus, in the process of real communication along the axis of the
development of real time, elements carrying such information are naturally placed at the sentence-final positions in presentative sentences. As for elements symbolizing the conceptual frames, since they bear the background information which has the lowest degree of CD in the entire informational development in presentative sentences, and they are the informational base on which the informational accumulation starts, they are placed sentence-initially.

Thus, the word order formation of presentative sentences is far from being arbitrary and autonomous, but is motivated and conditioned by conceptual and functional principles.

5. The Verbal Semantics of Presentative Sentences

5.1 Classification of Presentative Sentences

The situational differences presented by presentative sentences have long been observed by Chinese linguists. Zhu (1982) classifies presentative sentences into two groups, namely (dis)appearance and existential groups. Li (1986a), Nie (1989) and He (1992) more clearly point out that the two groups denote different semantic situations, change-of-state and state. Tai (1989b) also observes that presentative sentences seem to be governed by certain semantic situations. In this study, I accept the viewpoint that presentative sentences should be classified into two basic situational groups, namely, that of (dis)appearance which denotes a change of state (achievement), and that of existence which presents state. Furthermore a sub-classification of quasi-existential sentences within
the existential group will be introduced. Finally, I will argue that the situational differences are determined by the basic communicative functions of presentative sentences.

5.2 Achievement vs. State

Before discussing the situational classification of presentative sentences, it is necessary to clarify the two semantic notions mentioned in section 5.1, namely Achievement and State. In their influential studies in the field of verbal semantics, Vendler (1967) and Dowty (1979, 1986) have proposed a classification of four event types, namely states, activities, accomplishments and achievements based upon the notion of situational time, which refers to the internal temporal structure of a situation. Since it is not the focus of this dissertation to engage a full scaled theoretical discussion of Vendler and Dowty's classification, I will not go into any detail, but touch upon only those aspects relevant to the current topic. The semantic characteristics of the two event types of state and achievement in terms of time span can be stated as follows:

A. State: static situation viewed at a given point of time.

B. Achievement: change of state with no interval.

Such being the semantic characteristics of the two event types, the question that follows is: how are they expressed by different groups of presentative sentences in Chinese? In the following, I will first offer a description of the general semantic characteristics of
presentative sentences of the two basic groups, and then focus on the verbal requirements by both groups.

5.3 Semantic Characteristics of the Two Basic Groups of Presentative Sentences

As mentioned above, presentative sentences are classified into two basic groups, those of (dis)appearance and those of existence. Examples of both groups are given as follows:

(65) 家里来了一位客人.
    Jia li lai le yi wei keren.
    House inside come-PRT one CL guest
    "A guest has come to (my) home."

(66) 小李家跑了一只鸽子.
    Xiao Li jia pao le yi zhi gezi.
    Xiao Li home run-PRT one CL pigeon
    "Xiao Li's home has lost a pigeon."

(67) 屋里飞着一只蜜蜂.
    Wuzi li fei zhe yi zhi meifeng.
    Room inside fly PRT one CL bee
    "A bee is flying in the house."

(68) 屋子里正中放着一张大桌子.
    Wuzi zheng zhong fang zhe yi zhang da zhuozi.
    Room right middle put PRT one CL big table
    "There is a big table placed in the middle of the room."

Sentences (65) and (66) represent a situation of change-of-state i.e. (dis)appearance, whereas (67) and (68) are those of on-going state, i.e., existence. The first group denotes

---

11Most examples given in this article are from Li (1986a), and Nie (1989).
a change of state at the location symbolized by \( \text{NP}_{\text{loc}} \) at position 1 through the assertion of the appearance or disappearance of the entity represented by the NP at location 3.

In contrast, the second group focuses on the stative situation of the location presented by the locative NP via the description of certain mode of existence of the presented entity. What characterizes the former group is that all its members signify change. It differs from the group of existence in that it denotes a punctual situation, which involves a change of state, while the group of state describes an on-going situation. With (dis)appearance sentences, we have a retrospective aspect in a sense that they establish a relationship between a state and an earlier situation. But with sentences of the existential group like (67) and (68), no such relationship obtains. Thus, appearance sentences present a contrast between non-existence of an entity and the appearance of it, while disappearance sentences establish a contrast between the existence of an entity and the disappearance of that entity. Such contrast however can not be found with sentences in the existence group. In the next section we are going to discuss how these two situations are presented and what the requirements are on the selection of verbs in terms of verbal semantics.
5.4 Requirements on Verb Selection in the Two Basic Groups of Presentative Sentences

5.4.1 Requirements on Verb Selection in (Dis)appearance Sentences

Conditioned by the semantic situation presented by (dis)appearance sentences, only certain types of verbs may appear in this group of presentative sentences. Appearance sentences, as observed by Tai (1989b), may contain the verbs, lai ‘to come’ and chu ‘to appear’ and any verbs compounding with them. Here I would add one more, xian ‘to appear’ and verbs compounding with it. These are all achievement verbs denoting appearance into a space. Illustrations are given as follows:

(69) 林子里飞出些美丽的鸟.
Linzi li feichu xie meili de niao.
Woods inside fly:out some beautiful PRT bird
"Some beautiful birds flew out of the woods."

(70) 门里走出一位老汉.
Men li zouchu yi wei lao han.
Door inside walk:out one CL old man
"An old man walked out of the door."

(71) 半路杀出个程咬金.
Banlu shachu ge Cheng Yaojin.
Halfway fight:out CL Cheng Yaojin
"En route, there came out fighting Cheng Yaojin."

(72) 院里钻出一条大狗.
Yuan li zuanchu yi tiao da gou.
Courtyard inside squeeze:out one CL big dog
"A big dog headed out of the courtyard."
(73) 前面刮来一阵凉风。
Qianmian guolai yi zhen liang feng.
Front blow:come one CL cool wind
"There blew a gust of wind from the front."

(74) 哪飞来一只八哥？
Na feilai yi zhi bage.
Where fly:come one CL myna
"From where came flying a myna."

(75) 窗外传来一阵笑声。
Chuang wai chuanlai yi zhen xiaosheng.
Window outside spread:come one burst laughter
"There came a burst of laughter from outside the window."

(76) 门外走来一男一女。
Men wai zoulai yi nan yi nu.
Door outside walk:come one male one female
"A man and a woman came walking from outside the door."

(77) 前方出现了一片平原。
Qianfang chuxian le yi pian ping yuan.
Front come:appear PRT one field flat plain
"There appeared a stretch of plain in the front."

(78) 眼前呈现一片欢乐。
Yanqian chengxian yi pian huanle.
Eye:front emerge one CL joy.
"A scene of joy appeared before my eye."

In these verb compounds, the first elements such fei 'to fly,' zou 'to walk,' sha 'to fight' zuan 'to squeeze,' gua 'to blow, chuan 'to spread' etc. are all action verbs. It is their compounding with lai, chu, and xin that has changed the situation type of the sentences involved, and thus has made them compatible with the verbal semantic requirement of the
Appearance sentences. However, this set of examples and the associated verbal semantic phenomenon has generally escaped GB analysts' attention.

Disappearance sentences involve another group of achievement verbs indicating disappearance, such as *si* ‘to die,’ *xiaoshi* ‘to disappear,’ *diu* ‘to lose,’ etc., and a group of motion verbs\(^{12}\) such as *pao* ‘to run,’ *zou* ‘to walk,’ etc. The semantic status of the latter group is worth discussing. My own observation is that the semantic core of verbs like *pao* and *zou* indicates the mode of certain movement. Only when these verbs occur with certain aspectual markers in specific syntactic constructions do they denote any aspectual situations. In addition, contexts also play a very important role in determining their aspectual implications. In sum, instead of possessing any inherent aspectual properties, their aspectual qualities are conditioned by the semantic situations presented by the syntactic constructions which, after all are determined by the communicative functions of the syntactic constructions involved (I will discuss this point later). Thus we have *pao* and *zou* in (79) and (80):

\[
\begin{align*}
(79) & \quad \text{他在跑步。} \\
& \quad \text{Ta zai paobu}
\end{align*}
\]

He PRT run:step

"He is running."

\(^{12}\) The term “motion” as well as those of “placement” and “posture” which are used later in this study are not terms in the classification of verb types in verbal semantics, but rather working classifications adopted in this dissertation in terms of the descriptive functions these verbs have. I do not have an exhaustive list of verbs classified along this line. These terms are used here simply for the convenience of analytical purpose.
They denote on-going dynamic situations, whereas the same verbs in the following describe how an instantaneous change of state takes place:

(81)  那个贼跑了。
    Nei ge zei pao le.
    "That thief has escaped."

(82)  小李走了。
    Xiao Li zou le.
    "Xiao Li has left."

When these motion verbs occur in presentative sentences, they will denote either a change-of-state, or a state depending on what aspectual marker they are suffixed with. And in the case of disappearance sentences, -le is the only choice; for example:

(83)  我们家跑了一只猫。
    Womn jia pao le yi zhi mao.
    "A cat has escaped from my house."

(84)  屋里走了一个
    Wu li zou le yi ge ren.
    "A person has left the room."

Otherwise the sentences formed will have a different aspectual implication which I will discuss in the next section.
5.4.2 Requirements on Verb Selections in the Existential Group

He (1992) observes that verbs in the existential group typically consist of placement, posture and motion verbs. It is this group of verbs suffixed with the stative aspect marker -zhe that occur in presentative sentences depicting an atemporal, static situation at the location symbolized by the locative NP. It is characteristic of these verbs that they project an image of conceptualized mode of existence in existential sentences. As pointed in section 4, existential sentences describe the existence of entities with different images. Thus we have the following:

(85) 天上挂着无数颗星星。
Tian shang gua zhe wushu ke xingxing.
Sky up han PRT numerous CL star
"There are numerous stars hanging on the sky."

(86) 天上嵌着无数颗星星。
Tian shang qian zhe wushu ke xingxing.
Sky up inlay PRT numerous CL star
"There are numerous stars imbedded in the sky."

(87) 天上装点着无数颗星星。
Tian shang zhuangdian zhe wushu ke xingxing.
Sky up decorate PRT numerous CL star
"There are numerous stars decorating the sky."

Despite the fact that all these sentences talk about the same physical reality, they present quite different images of postures of stars in the sky. However, none of them gives a factual description but rather conceptualized images from the speaker/writer's viewpoint, since no matter how one depicts the scene, how stars exist is always the same and is not affected at all by subjective descriptions. Also note that what each of the above sentences
offers is an integrated picture in a sense that the mode of existence and existence combine together into an inseparable whole. Thus, existential sentences require their verb phrases to be able to present a situation of state, and at the same time be able to depict the image of certain posture of placement. That is, the verbs involved must be semantically compatible with the semantic situation presented by existential sentences. First, they are all verbs of posture description, including those motions verbs, whose semantic characteristics were discussed in the previous section, verbs of placement and verbs of posture. Second, all these verbs, suffixed with -zhe\textsuperscript{13} occurring in the construction of existential sentences, signify a situation of state.

5.4.3 Quasi-Existential Sentences: Group of the Resultative State

Apart from the two basic groups of presentative sentences, there is a third group. I call it the "Quasi-Existential" group because members of this group are traditionally treated the same as those of the existential group. The semantic situation signified by this group is different from the (dis)appearance group, but it is not the same as the existential group either as many mistakenly believe. It is typical of this type of presentative sentences

\textsuperscript{13}He (1992) categorizes -zhe as a stative marker, which may be suffixed to non-absolute stative verbs, activity verbs, placement verbs and posture verbs to indicate the existence of static situations without reference to the temporal structure of such situations.
to have verbs of placement and posture suffixed with -le in the verb phrase. Examples are:

(88) 墙上挂了一幅画.
Qiang shang gua le yi fu hua.
Wall up hang PRT one CL picture
"There is a picture hanging on the wall."

(89) 地上躺着一个人.
Di shang tang le yi ge ren.
Ground up lie PRT one CL person
"There is a person lying on the ground."

(90) 锅里煮了不少土豆.
Guo li zhu le bu shao tudou.
Pot inside cook PRT not few potato
"There are many potatoes cooked in the pot."

(91) 小屋里堆了些倭瓜.
Xiao wu li dui le xie wogua.
Small room inside pile PRT pumpkin
"There are some pumpkins stacked in the small room."

When native speakers are asked about their feelings about these sentences in comparison with the corresponding existential sentences like the following, they often say the corresponding sentences are almost the same, though they can still sense a subtle difference between the two.

(92) 墙上挂着一幅画.
Qiang shang gua zhe yi fu hua.

(93) 地上躺着一个人.
Di shang tang zhe yi ge ren.

(94) 锅里煮着不少土豆.
Guo li zhu zhe bu shao tudou.

(95) 小屋里堆放了一些倭瓜.
Xiao wu li dui zhe xie wo guo.
I would argue that while sentences from the existential group present a situation of state, members of the current group as illustrated by (88)-(91) depict situations of resultative state. That is, they are about states as a result of some previous actions. This turns out to be the case when we consider the following pair:

(96)  隔壁住着一位医生。
Gebi zhu zhe yi wei yisheng.
Next:door live PRT one CL doctor
"There is a doctor living next door."

(97)  隔壁住了一位医生。
Gebi zhu le yi wei yisheng.
Next:door live PRT one CL doctor
"A doctor moved in next door."

Examples (96) gives a description of an on-going situation, whereas (97) involves a change, even though the focus is on the state after the change. This analysis is further supported by two other examples:

(98)  树梢上挂着一轮明月。
Shu shao shang gua zhe yi lun ming yue.
Tree top up hang PRT one CL bright moon
"The bright moon is hanging over the top of the tree."

(99)  *树梢上挂了一轮明月*14
*Shu shao shang gua le yi lun ming yue.
Tree top up hang PRT CL bright moon

In (98) *gua zhe* ‘hanging’ describes an image of the conceptualized mode of existence of *ming yue*, which is fully compatible with the semantic situation of state the sentence

---

*14A possible reading of this sentence is, “A bright moon has been hung on the top of the tree.”*
presents. However, as for (99), since the sentence presents a resultative state which is a state due to certain previous action, there is a conflict between the semantic situation depicted and native speakers' conception about the real world. The unacceptability of (99) is due to the fact that the position of the moon cannot be the result of handling of *gua*. The fact is that once *ming yue* ‘bright moon’ is replaced by (for example) *shizi* ‘persimmon,’ as in the following,\(^{15}\) the sentence becomes acceptable with the meaning that the *shizi* is on top of the tree as a result of certain action with the posture of *gua*.

(100) 树梢上挂了一个柿子。
Shu shao shang gua le yi ge shizi.
Tree top up hang PRT one CL persimmon
"There is a persimmon hanging on the top of the tree."

This analysis is further supported by the fact that resultative verb compounds (RVC) consisting of **elements of posture** fit in perfectly with this type of presentative sentences, for example:

(101) 院子里挤满了人。
Yuanzi li jiman le ren.
Courtyard inside squeeze:full PRT person
"The courtyard is packed with people."

\(^{15}\) One may argue that (100) is ambiguous in that there are two possible readings. One is what we have here as a factual description about a result of an actual action of hanging a persimmon on top of a tree. The other is about a metaphorical usage about a naturally grown persimmon on top of a tree. The question would be raised is that since the second reading with (100) is possible, why such usage is not acceptable with (99). My answer is that in (100) the metaphorical usage and its interpretation are based on the non-metaphorical usage. That is, the phenomenon the first usage refers to does exist in our global experience, and the second usage and its reading are the metaphorical extension of that experience. But as for (99), since the empirical base for its metaphorical extension does not exist, it is not acceptable.
However, despite the fact that this type of presentative sentences presents a resultative state, which involves a change as pointed by He (1992), the information focus of these sentences is on the state itself, rather than on the action or the change of state at the time of the action. That explains why most speakers feel that this type of sentences is more like existential sentences than (dis)appearance sentences.

It is worth pointing out here that Jaxontov's (1988) research on the resultative state with respect to presentative sentences in Mandarin has completely ignored the factual distinction between quasi-existential sentences and existential sentences, but categorized existential sentences as presenting a "resultative state," which I refer to as "state." Jaxontov's analysis is supported by Yeh (1991) with the argument that sentences with -zhe present an imperfective viewpoint having its locus on a state brought about by a telic event. The aspect marker -zhe thus "focuses on the interval after the final end point of the event" (Yeh 1991:238). Yeh illustrates his argument by the following presentation of the viewpoint of -zhe in relation to the situation of gua yi zhang hua 'to hang a piece of picture.'

\[16\]

\[16\] The original glosses are changed by me to fit in with the style of this dissertation. In this illustration, "I" stands for initial endpoint, "F" stands for final endpoint, "Nat" is for "natural," and \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ refers to successive states according to Yeh (1991:237). Yeh explains that zhe is often used with posture and placement verbs and that these verb constellations present the situation as a telic event that brings about a result state. Zhe focuses on the
(103) 墙上挂着一张画。
Qiang shang gua  zhe  yi  zhang hua.
Wall above hang PRT one  CL  picture
"A painting hangs on the wall."

I_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ F Nat _ _
Situation: gua yi zhang hua  /  / +state
Viewpoint: stative -zhe

There is nothing wrong with such an illustration and interpretation of the resultative state. What is wrong is Jaxontov and Yeh's analysis of the Chinese data, to be exact, existential sentences. It is important to keep in mind that viewpoint aspect is the reflection of the speaker/writers' viewpoint in terms of aspectual situations but not that of the analysts. Whether or not the aspectual situation should be categorized as resultative state depends upon whether the given situation, i.e., state, makes any reference to its resulting event. The presence or absence of that reference reflects the intuitive aspectual viewpoint of native speakers using the specific syntactic construction with specific aspect marking. It is exactly this presence or absence of reference to the resulting events that differentiates the two kinds of existential sentences I illustrated by (96)-(99). It would be possible from a pure technical viewpoint to use an arbitrary term for the kind of semantic situation depicted by existential sentences if no such distinction existed between sentences like (96), (98) on the one hand and (97), (99) on the other as illustrated. However, since we do

______________

interval after the final end point of the event. "In other words, the presented interval is part of the state which results from the event."
have this contrastive difference, it is necessary to make a clear distinction in our analysis so that we may keep our account closer to the fact and eliminate possible confusion.

5.4.4 Verb Selection and a Functional Viewpoint

I have discussed the semantic situations of different types of presentative sentences and their corresponding verb selections. Here is the general picture of the relationship among the three groups of presentative sentences presenting various semantic situations and the corresponding verb selection in each group.

The (dis)appearance group, which represents a situation of achievement has the following types of verbs, such as zou, pao, lai etc., and achievement verbs, such as compounds consisting of -lai, and -qu, and si ‘to die,’ diu ‘to lose,’ etc. In this group of sentences, the aspect marker is -le. Existential sentences on the other hand denote an ongoing state. The verbs occurring in this group of sentences are those of conceptualized posture, including placement and posture verbs, and those of motion. The choice of aspect marker with this group is -zhe. Sentences of the quasi-existential group, which were traditionally treated as members of the existential group, present a situation of resultative state. The verb phrases of this group consist of placement and posture verbs. The aspect marker occurring in these sentences is -le. The above offers a factual description of the semantic situations involved in presentative sentences and their requirements on corresponding verb selections. It also explains why some verbs cannot
occur in presentative sentences. It has been observed by Huang (1987) that verbs like *ku* -
to cry' cannot occur in presentative sentences. Huang's argument is that verbs like *ku* do not qualify as existential verbs because they are pure intransitive verbs and do not sub-
categorize for objects. This observation is also cited in Li (1990) to confirm the distinction between ergative verbs and intransitive verbs in Chinese. However, I would argue from a
different standpoint that the unacceptability of verbs like *ku* in presentative sentences is
due to the fact that the aspectual nature of these verbs is incompatible with the semantic
situations signified by preventative sentences. Verbs like *ku* are pure activity verbs.
Unlike motion verbs and posture verbs whose semantic presentation largely depends upon
which aspect marker they are suffixed with and the syntactic construction in which they
occur, these verbs do not permit the semantic adjustment or shift as we have with verbs
like *zou*, or *pao*. Compare:

(104) 他走在路.
Tai zai zou lu.
He PRT walk road
"He is walking."

(105) 他走了.
Ta zou le.
He go PRT
"He is gone."

(106) 他在哭.
Ta zai ku.
He PRT cry
"He is crying."
The contrast between (104) and (105) is obvious. Apart from the fact that the former describes an on-going process while the latter presents a change of state, native speakers feel that even the lexical meanings of the two *zous* are different. However, this is apparently not the case with *ku*. In Chinese, time expressions such as *yi tian* ‘one day,’ *yi xiaoshi* ‘one hour’ can be placed at the post-verbal position. However, as He (1992) points out that they have different temporal indications depending on the inherent aspect of verbs involved. In the case of verbs of activity and verbs of change-of-state, the time expressions will have the functions of durative and elapse of time respectively. That is, with verbs of activity, the time expressions will indicate the time span of the activity itself, while with verbs of change of state, they will indicate the elapse of time since the change of state occurred. Let us apply the time expression of *yi tian* to the post-verbal position of both *zou* and *ku*.

(108) 他走了一天。...
Ta zou le yi tian le.

a. He walk PRT one day PRT
b. He left PRT one day PRT

a. "He has been walking for one day."
b. "It is one day since he left."

(109) 他哭了一天。...
Ta ku le yi tian le.

He cry PRT one day PRT
"He has been crying for the whole day."
Example (108) is ambiguous without context. The dual readings are due to the semantic nature of such motion verbs as zou, which is basically a symbolization of a kind of conceptualized mode without aspektual specification. The aspektual implications of sentences containing such verbs will depend upon contexts, the communicative function of the syntactic construction those sentences build on, and the aspect markers these verbs occur with. As for (109), we have a very clear-cut situation. The post-verbal time expression can only indicate the duration of time of the activity of ku. It does not have the aspektual flexibility as motion verbs have. In addition, verbs like ku, do not project images of posture, or mode of movement. That is one of the essential characteristics of verbs involved in presentative sentences. Thus, we see why verbs like ku, cannot occur in presentative sentences. It is because they can fit in with none of the semantic situations different groups of presentative sentences present. In other words, if a verb by itself, or together with other elements can project a certain image of (dis)appearance or posture, and at the same time denotes the semantic situations compatible with one, or all types of presentative sentences, then it may occur in presentative sentences. For example:

(110) *前面打了一个
Qianmian da le yi ge ren.
Front beat PRT one CL person

(111) 前面打伤了一个人.
Qianmian dashang le yi ge ren.
Front beat:wound PRT one CL person
“Someone has been hurt in a fight down there.”
In (110) the verb phrase with the activity verb *da* ‘to beat’ denotes a pure activity, which is not compatible with any of the semantic situation implicated by presentative sentences. Therefore, it is not acceptable. However, once the verb *da* ‘to beat’ is changed into *dashang* (literally meaning: ‘beat and wound’), the sentence becomes acceptable. This is because, with this compound in the verb phrase, the semantic situation denoted fits in with that of (dis)appearance sentences.\(^{17}\)

By way of summary, I would argue that the semantic situation presented by each group is not a result of the types of verbs involved, but is due to the requirement of the communicative functions of different groups of presentative sentences. The fundamental function of presentative sentences is *presentation*, that is, to introduce an entity into a space. This function is realized through the presentation of an overall conceptualized image of certain entities in space along a continuum of existence. This continuum consists of at least three stages, namely appearance, existence, and disappearance. The different groups of presentative sentences then function to symbolize the conceptualized images of the three states respectively. Appearance and disappearance are the two ends of the state of existence, which are illustrated by the following scheme:

(112) \[\begin{array}{c}
\text{appearance} \\
\text{existence} \\
\text{disappearance}
\end{array}\]

\(^{17}\)Do not confuse (111) with the quasi-existential sentence, although it contains a resultative verb compound. As I pointed out earlier, the RVC in quasi-existential sentences must have an element to indicate certain posture. This is not the case with (111), in which *da* ‘to beat’ does not invoke an image of the posture of existence. Unlike the quasi-existential sentence, the current sentences belongs to the (dis)appearance type, indicating a change of state.
Conceptually, they all involve changes. Accordingly, the linguistic expressions depicting the images of the two states are needed to reflect such changes in terms of verbal semantics. In the same vein, the function of presenting an image of an on-going situation of existence determines that all verbs involved in the existential group must meet the semantic requirement to describe such a situation. However, in the real world, the difference between change and non-change is relative and is not as clear-cut as we would like for the purpose of characterization. Therefore, we also have a situation which, though involving change, has its focus on the impact of that change. The corresponding linguistic expressions reflect a resultative state. This is exactly the case of the group of quasi-existential sentences.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the syntactic structure of presentative sentences in Chinese is determined by the conventionalized conceptual principle of Container-Contained. This principle is compatible with the Ground-Figure relationship, and is in line with the development of communication. I have also discussed the major semantic characteristics of presentative sentences in terms of their situation types, and the relationship among different groups of presentative sentences and their verb selections. It should be pointed out that the different semantic features demonstrated in different groups of presentative sentences cannot be simply explained away by verb classification only. These differences
are controlled by different semantic situations which are determined by the basic communicative functions of presentative sentences. In other words, the functional requirements of different groups of presentative sentences have established the situational conditions for their verbal semantics which in turn dictate the selection of the types of verbs.

Based upon the analysis above, one may claim that the communicative need of presentation, the conventionalized conception about the our spatial relationships, and the situational semantics are the determinative factors responsible for the syntactic and semantic characteristics of presentative sentences in Chinese.

Before closing this chapter, I would like to discuss a little about a special kind of existential sentences, which have been mentioned in many previous studies. That is, the you-sentences.

Many people have noticed that in Chinese, the following sentence is not acceptable:

(113) *一个人来了
Yi ge ren lai le.
One CL person come PRT

However, once you ‘to have’ is added to this sentence, it becomes acceptable. Thus, we have the following:

(114) 有一个人来了。
You yi ge ren lai le.
Have one CL person come PRT
“There comes a person.”
Sentence (113) is not acceptable, because it is in conflict with the tendency in Chinese that
the sentence-initial noun should be definite. The fact that the addition of you in (114) has
given rise to the grammaticality of (114) may lead some to consider you as having a
marking function of definiteness. However, I would argue this is not the case. My analysis
is that (114) consists of two parts. The first part involves a presentative sentence with the
initial locative noun phrase omitted, and second part is a descriptive clause providing
certain stative description about the current state of the presented entity yi ge ren ‘a
person.’

As for the first part, you yi ge ren ‘there is a person,’ native speakers know that
like all existential sentences, it is about the existence of yi ge ren in a space where both the
speaker and hearer are located, despite that the location is not overtly expressed. Thus,
you yi ge ren is the same as the following:

(115) 这儿有一个人。
     Zher you yi ge ren.
     Here have one CL person
     “There is a person.”

More examples can be given:

(116) 有鬼!
       You gui!
       Have ghost
       “There is a ghost!”

(117) 这儿有鬼!
       Zher you gui!
       Here have ghost
       “There is a ghost!”

Thus, rather than a definite marker, you is an existential verb, and the first part of the you-
sentences have the same structure as presentative sentences:
Thus, we see that (114) is acceptable, not because the NP, *yi ge ren* becomes definite, but because it is no longer at the sentence-initial position due to the insertion of *you*.

The second part of the *you*-sentence of (114), as I pointed out, functions to provide a description about the current state of the presented entity *yi ge ren*. What we have in (114) is *lai le*, ‘to have come.’ Thus the object noun phrase of *you* and the verb phrase in the second part of the sentence form a clause with a relationship of the described and the describing.

Hence, *you*-sentences in Chinese can be viewed as a juxtaposition of two linguistic elements representing two events. This type of structure is referred to by Li and Thompson (1975b) as the Paratactic Construction. In the next chapter, I will offer a full account of this construction in terms of its functional, conceptual and syntactic characteristics.
CHAPTER IV

THE PARATACTIC CONSTRUCTION

1. Introduction

Closely linked to presentative sentences is the paratactic construction, which has the following structure:

(1) \( NP \ V_1 \ NP \ (NP) \ V_2 \ (NP) \)

Sentences built on this structure are illustrated as follows:

(2) 王教授有几幅画很值钱。
Wang jiaoshou you ji fu hua hen zhiqian.
Wang professor have several CL painting very valuable
“Prof. Wang has several valuable paintings.”

(3) 前面跑来一个人浑身是伤。
Qianmian pao:ai yi ge ren hun shen shi shang.
Front run:come one CL person whole body be wound
“There came running a person with wounds all over him.”

(4) 我们看见一个女孩儿很漂亮。
Women kanjian yi ge n hair hen piaoliang.
We see one CL female child very pretty
“We saw a very beautiful girl.”

As many linguists (Tai 1978, Li and Thompson 1981, Huang 1987) have noticed, the first part of the paratactic construction, \( NP \ V_1 \ NP \) has a certain presentative function similar to presentative sentences. But different from presentative sentences, the sentence-initial \( NP \) in the
paratactic construction needs not be a NP_{loc} as illustrated in (4). The second part of the paratactic construction, (NP) V_2 (NP), or in Huang’s (1987) convention, (XP) functions to provide certain descriptive information about the objective NP of V_1. (For the convenience of presentation, I will adopt “XP” to present the second part of the paratactic construction following Huang’s (1987) convention).

The paratactic construction is another example of how linguistic structure is governed by conventionalized human conceptions about the real world. In this chapter, I will offer a discussion of the relationship between the paratactic construction and presentative sentences. I will then give a cognition-based functional analysis of the paratactic construction with respect to its conceptual and functional bases. Then I will illustrate that the paratactic construction not only semiotically symbolizes Ground-Figure and Background-Foreground relationships but also signifies the temporal sequence in real time by conjoining two sequentially ordered events. Finally, I will discuss the selection of verbs in the paratactic construction.

2. The Notion of Parataxis

The notion of Parataxis is used by traditional grammar to describe those constructions in which linguistic elements are conjoined together by juxtaposition without overt linking through the device of conjunction, for example:

(5) We laughed, we sang, we danced.
(6) He bought tea, coffee, eggs...

Sentence (5) and (6) can be viewed in essence as having different events juxtaposed together. For detailed discussions, please refer to Quirk et al (1985). It is in this sense that sentences (2)-(4) are referred to as paratactic sentences. Li and Thompson (1981) consider the paratactic construction having a **realis descriptive clause**, which functions to describe a **realized** situation about the entity introduced by the first part of the construction. They (1981: 617) argue that “a realis descriptive clause sentence is actually no different from two sentences juxtaposed together, except that it is pronounced with one single intonation contour.” Their examples are the following: 1

(7) 他有一个妹妹.
是 one CL younger:sister

He has one younger sister,

_________很喜欢看电影.
hen xihuan kan dianying
very like see movie

_________likes to see movies very much.”

(8) 他有一个妹妹很喜欢看电影.
是 one CL younger:sister very like see movie

He has one younger sister who likes to see movies.”

As for the function of the paratactic construction, they (1981: 617) point out,

1I have changed the style and the glosses of the original examples to accord with the current dissertation.
This construction is a type of presentative sentence in that its function in discourse is to present or introduce a noun phrase to be described.

Tai (1978:293) has the following observation:

The first part of this type of sentences has the same function as the existential sentence 'there be----' in introducing a new referent. The second part establishes the newly introduced referent as the topic referent of the entire sentence.

Huang (1987) in his analysis of presentative sentences argues for a clause analysis for the second part of the paratactic construction in the sense that the relationship between the objective NP of \( V_1 \) and what follows should be viewed as that of "subject and predicate, or topic and comment."

3. **Syntactic, Semantic, and Functional Characteristics of the Paratactic Construction**

Based upon previous analyses, here is a list of features of the paratactic construction:

(a) The paratactic construction can be viewed as consisting of two parts. The first part functions to introduce a referent or referents into a discourse, whereas the second part provides some description about the introduced referent or referents.

(b) The object NP of \( V_1 \) is generally indefinite, which functions as a newly introduced referent in the discourse.

(c) The elements following the object NP of \( V_1 \) function as a description of that NP.

(d) Only certain verbs may occur as \( V_1 \).
As for the communicative function of the first part of the paratactic construction, there is little controversy. But one may cast some doubt on the status of the part of XP. Should we treat it as a relative clause rather than the predicate of the objective NP of V₁? The answer is “no.” First, it is a known fact that in Chinese, syntactically all the modifiers precede the modified including the relative clause (cf. Norman 1988). As pointed out by Li and Thompson (1981) and Huang (1987), there are some important differences between the relative clause of a noun and the predicate of the object NP in the paratactic construction. The former names a pre-established category, of which the entity represented by the noun is a member, while the latter describes features accidentally associated with the introduced entity symbolized by that noun. That is, the former has a “sortal” function, whereas the latter has a “characterizing” function.² In Chao’s (1968) term, the distinction is between the “restrictive” and the “descriptive.” Second, they have different discourse functions. The relative clause has a grounding³ function in that it

²As for the terms “sortal” and “characterizing,” please refer to Lyons (1968:337-341).

³The term “grounding” is borrowed from Fox and Thompson (1990: 297-196). In their discussion of English relative clause, Fox and Thompson argue:

In effective communication, referents are presented so as to be RELEVANT for listeners at the point where they are introduced. NPs whose relevance is not clear from prior mention or situation need to be made relevant. ...Grounding is the primary way in which speakers make an NP relevant. To ground a noun phrase is to locate its referent ...by relating it to a referent whose relevance is clear, that is, to a Given referent in the immediate context.
helps situate the introduced referent in the discourse by relating it to certain pre-established category. Unlike a relative clause, a predicate functions to provide some new information, or add to the known information about the introduced referent. The same differences are also true of the relationships between a pre-nominal modifier and a predicate in Chinese.

As with presentative sentences, all previous researchers have noticed the indefiniteness of the object NP of \( V_1 \). Note here that the difference here is that with presentative sentences, the NP in position 3 may or may not be definite depends on what specific type of presentative sentences, and the discourse context, as pointed out in Chapter III, but with the paratactic construction, the object NP of \( V_1 \) is always indefinite. Huang (1987) in his treatment of the paratactic construction, argues that this is again attributed to the thematic structure of the verbs involved in the \( V_1 \) position. Huang argues for a clausal treatment the of NP-[XP] relationship by paralleling the paratactic construction with the You-sentences. He observes that any transitive verb “as long as it suffixed with the experiential -\( guo \) or the perfective -\( le \), may qualify as the verb” (1987: 231) in the paratactic construction. The following examples are taken from Huang:

(9) 我爱过一个女孩很漂亮.
    Wo ai guo yi ge nühai hen piaoliang.
    I love PRT one CL girl very pretty
    “I have the experience of falling in love with a girl who is very pretty.”

For more details, readers are referred to Fox and Thompson’s article.
(10) 我选了一门课很难懂。
Wo xuan le yi men ke hen nandong.
I elect PRT one CL course very hard:understand
"I took a course which was hard to understand."

He supports his claim by arguing that a verb with the experiential and perfective suffix conveys a sense of existence. Following Wang (1965), Huang treats -le as a suppletive allomorph of you, and thus he links the paratactic construction to the you-sentences. Assuming that you ‘have’ is an Aux, he argues that the NP-XP in the paratactic construction can only be a clause, given that Aux can only be followed by one XP.

But this analysis faces a serious problem in its explanation of definiteness effect (DE) found in the paratactic construction. Faced with the actual data, Huang acknowledges the fact that whenever a predication clause is present after the object NP of V₁, DE obtains. This fact obviously poses a problem for Huang’s treatment of the paratactic construction based on analysis of the You-sentences. Remember that in Huang’s analysis of the You-sentences, he treats you as an exceptional ergative verb. He observes that as for you-sentences, there is always a Definiteness Effect when the subject position of a you-sentence is lexically unoccupied. There is no DE, when that position is filled either with a lexical possessor (a locative phrase) or a pro. In his theory, Huang cannot explain why DE must hold when the object NP of V₁ is followed by a predicate, regardless whether the subject position is lexically filled or not. As a result, Huang hints that a functional approach may provide an explanation.
4. Critiques on Previous Analyses of the Paratactic Construction

4.1 Presentative Function vs. Presentative Sentences

Li and Thompson, Tai, and Huang all agree that the first part of the paratactic construction has the same presentative function as presentative sentences. Here I find it necessary to point out that one should not equate the presentative function with presentative sentences. That is, when a sentence is said to have a presentative function, that sentence may or may not be a presentative sentence. For apart from presentative sentences, other types of sentences can also assume a presentative function. In other words, a presentative sentence must have a presentative function, but a sentence with the presentative function is not necessarily a presentative sentence, which is specifically referred to the type of sentences with the syntactic structure described in (1) in Chapter III, which is repeated here as (11):

(11) ...(NP_{inc})... V...NP...

1  2  3

For example, in certain discoursal context, a sentence like (12) can be viewed as having a presentative function in that it introduces a new referent yi ben shu 'a book' into the discourse, but this sentence is not a presentative sentence based upon our syntactic criteria
specified in (11).

(12) 我昨天买了一本书。
    Wo zuotian mai le yi ben shu.
    I yesterday buy PRT one CL book
     "I bought a book yesterday."

Thus, as for the first part of the paratactic construction, I would rather argue that what is important is the presentative function of this part of the construction rather than a specific syntactic type. Although in most cases, the first part of the paratactic construction does consist of a presentative sentence, it is not the determinative factor for the occurrence of the predication clause XP. Rather, it is the function of the first part that counts. This is exactly the case of (7).

4.2 Critiques on Huang’s Analysis

Huang’s analysis of the paratactic construction is aimed at a sentence-internal approach in terms of the thematic structure of the kind of verbs involved so that the applicability of ergative hypothesis to the Chinese data can be proven. Since my interest is quite different, I therefore will look at the problem from a different perspective. But before providing my own analysis, some questions about Huang’s analysis are raised below.

As for Huang’s analysis about the characteristics of the verbs involved in the paratactic construction, I find that one thing is un-clear. That is, on the one hand, Huang
points out that any transitive verbs suffixed with -guo or -le may occur in this
construction, and on the other hand he observes that the verbs used all have to do with
“existence.” As for the latter point he explains that verbs suffixed with these two markers
indicate either the existence of experience or events. But the question is, it is not clear
whether these verbs have certain inherent properties denoting “existence” or they obtain
that function only after the suffixation. In either case, there is some distance between the
description and the empirical evidence. For example, not all transitive verbs suffixed with
-le or -guo can occur in the paratactic construction, and some verbs involved in the
paratactic constructions do not suffix with either of these mentioned aspect markers.

(13)  *这辆车撞了一个人很有钱.
       *Zhe liang che zhuang le yi ge ren hen you qian.
         This CL car hit PRT one CL person very have money

(14)  ??店主杀了一口猪极了. 4
       Dianhu sha le yi kou zhu shou ji le.
       Owner of the restaurant kill PRT one CL pig thin extreme PRT
         “The restaurant owner killed a pig which was very thin.”

(15)  ??我卖过一栋房子全新的.
       Wo mai guo yi dong fangzi quan xin de.
       I sell PRT one CL house all new PRT
         “I sold a house which was brand new.”

(16)  *我们昨天请教过一位教授很有学问.
       *Women zuotian qingjiao guo yi wei jiaoshou hen you xuewen
         We yesterday consult PRT one CL professor very have knowledge

        4If there is a pause between yi kou zhu and the following predicate, then the
sentence is well accepted. But in that case, we actually have two separate sentences.
If we accepted Huang’s analysis, (13)-(16) should be acceptable, and (17) should be impossible, since there is no -le, which is believed to be associated with the Aux you. Thus, on the one hand, we do not have any factual evidence to support Huang’s claim that there is a necessary link between the meaning of existence and the suffixation of -le and -guo, and on the other hand, it is hard to categorize all verbs in the paratactic construction to be inherently existential apart from an arbitrary stipulation. Therefore, it seems that the validity of Huang’s whole analysis of the paratactic construction is questionable.

5. The Analysis of the Paratactic Construction

5.1 The Conceptual Bases for the Paratactic Construction

As pointed out in section 1, the paratactic construction can be viewed as a conjoint structure linking two sentences together to present two related events. Since the first part of this viewpoint was already illustrated in the section of introduction, I will not go into any detail here. As for the latter part of the viewpoint, I shall point out that the relationship between the two presented events should be treated as two events ordered in real time sequence in sentential communication. Consider the following:
(18) \[ \text{NP} \quad \text{V}_1 \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{XP} \]
\[ \text{Presented Entity} \quad \text{Description} \]
\[ \text{New/given} \quad \text{New} \]
\[ \text{Information status} \quad \text{Time} \]

In communicative activities, a description of any entity can only be offered after the introduction of the referent of that entity into the discourse, and any piece of new information can only be added to what is given. It is natural for a linguistic structure conjoining the two events of introduction and the description to follow the real time sequence. Thus, the word order of the paratactic construction is the symbolization of such sequentially occurring events based on PTS.

The syntactic structure of the paratactic construction is also in line with the Background-Foreground schema of the information structure of natural Chinese sentences. With this schema, the sentence-initial NP can be viewed as the symbol of frame containing the newly introduced entity represented by the object NP of \( \text{V}_1 \). Once it is introduced, the just introduced entity in relation to its description, becomes given, and therefore its information in turn serves as the background information for the brand new foreground information offered by its description. Thus we have the following:

(19) \[ \text{Frame} \quad \text{Entity} \quad \text{Description} \]
\[ \text{Ground} \quad \text{Figure} \]
\[ \text{Background} \quad \text{Foreground} \]

Tai (1989c) in his discussion of verb copying in Chinese observes that in Chinese, many syntactic phenomena are due to the interaction of different independently motivated
principles. As for these principles, "they interact, sometimes reinforcing each other, sometimes competing with each other," This is exactly what happens in the case of the syntactic organization of the paratactic construction. PTS and the principle of Background-Before-Foreground enforce each other to condition the structural basis of the word order of the paratactic construction.

5.2 The Functional Basis for the Paratactic Construction

As pointed out earlier, the paratactic construction basically has two functions. One is to introduce a new referent into the discourse and the second is to provide certain characteristic description about that referent. Thus, by conjoining a sentence with the presentative orientation and a sentence with the descriptive orientation together, the paratactic construction in an orderly manner along the temporal sequence fulfills two functional tasks. In the paratactic construction, being the target of the presentative orientation and the starting point of the descriptive orientation in terms of the development of communication, the object NP of $V_1$ serves as a pivotal point. This is illustrated by the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(20)</th>
<th>NP $V_1$</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>(NP) $V_2$ (NP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presentation</td>
<td>target/starting point</td>
<td>description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development of communication</td>
<td>development of communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5According to Fības (1992) semental communication always develops towards (or is oriented towards) its goal, be it presentation or qualification.
The paratactic construction thus can be seen as the very creation of the requirement of our communication in terms of presentation and description. That is, one introduces some new referent, and then characterizes it. It is natural because a description of any entity can only be furnished after its introduction. This ordering sequence is thus naturally reflected in the paratactic construction. This functional basis together with the conceptional basis forms a strong foundation for the structural establishment of the paratactic construction in Chinese.

5.3 Pre-Nominal Modifier Vs. Descriptive Clause

In section 3, I already discussed the basic function of the predicate of the object NP of V1, and its difference from a relative clause or pre-nominal modifier in Chinese. One may have noticed one interesting phenomenon. That is, for some of the relative clauses, there are predicative counterparts, but for others, there are not, and vice versa.

Let us first focus on the latter situation. Consider the following:

(21a) 书架上有一本书我要研究.
Shujia shang you yi ben shu wo yao yanjiu.
"On the bookshelf there is a book I want to study."

(21b) 书架上有一本我要研究的书.
Shujia shang you yi ben wo yao yanjiu de shu.
"On the bookshelf there is a book I want to study."
(22a) 那边有一棵树我要看一看。
Nei bian you yi ke shu wo yao kan yi kan.
That side have one CL tree I want look one look
“Over there there is a tree I want to take a look at.”

(22b) 那边有一棵我要看一看看的树。
Na bian you yi ke wo yao kan yi kan de shu.
That side have one CL I want look one look PRT book

For the phenomena we have in (21)-(22), Li and Thompson (1981) have offered an explanation. Based upon their analysis, both (21a) and (21b) are acceptable because with (21a), the speaker gives a specific, incidental description about the entity, a book, and with (21b), the speaker pre-classifies a specific kind of book with the assumption by all participants of a discourse that there exists a class of books consisting of “the books I want to study.” Both forms are appropriate in their respective contexts to meet their functional goals. As for (22b), Li and Thompson (1981: 616-617) argue that it is not good because “in normal contexts, it is highly unlikely that the speaker and hearer would have agreed on a class of trees consisting of ‘the trees I want to take a look at.’” Therefore, we cannot have a relative clause in this case, but a descriptive clause will be plausible. Their analysis seems to imply that the use of a relative clause for a NP representing a newly presented entity is basically context-dependent. In other words, if contexts (including the global knowledge and the accumulative experiences of the participants) permit, we would expect any XP to have a counterpart relative clause. Supposing that we have a group of people who are specialized in forestry, we would
expect (22b) to be acceptable in their dialogue. Furthermore, since any categorization has to be based on characterizations of individual entities in the real world, it is possible for any characterizations to become the criteria of categorization of certain category. Therefore, generally speaking, all XP’s in the paratactic construction may have their corresponding pre-nominal modifier counterparts. But why in reality, it is not so? My explanation would be that as the case of (22b) shows, since the use of relative clause or pre-nominal modifier in a sentence with the presentative orientation is highly context-dependent, the occurrence of a relative clause in a wrong context would give rise to its unacceptability. This is what happens in Li and Thompson’s illustration.

Now let us turn to the former situation. That is, does every relative clause of the object NP has a XP counterpart? The answer is no. The reason for this negative answer has nothing to do with the relationship between categorization and characterization, and it has lesser to do with contexts. The answer lies elsewhere.

Remember that when I discussed the possible counterparts of the XP, I started with the paratactic construction. But now when I speak of the possible corresponding XP of the relative clause of the NP of V_1, I am dealing with a “paratactic construction” lacking the second part. Therefore we actually start with sentences having any possible functional sentence orientations. In sections 5.1 and 5.2, I illustrated that the syntactic structure of the paratactic construction is closely tied to the temporal-sequential arrangement of presentation and description in the phenomenal world. According to this
arrangement, description by a XP can only occur after the presentation of an entity. In other words, without presentation, no description is possible.

The first important factor for the occurrence of the XP will be whether NP V, NP has a presentative function. For those which do, the occurrence of the XP will be possible, but for those which have nothing to do with presentation, it will be impossible.

Consider the following:

(23a) 我要找一位会唱歌的女孩。
    Wo yao zhao yi wei hui chang ge de nu hai.
    I want look one CL able sing song PRT female child
    “I want to find a girl who is able to sing songs”

(23b) 我在找一位会唱歌的女孩。
    Wo zai zhao yi wei hui chang ge de nu hai.
    I PRT look one CL able sing song PRT female child
    “I am looking for a girl who is able to sing songs.”

(23c) *我要找一位女孩会唱歌。
    Wo yao zhao yi wei nu hai hui chang ge.
    i want look one CL female child able sing song

(23d) *我在找一位女孩会唱歌。
    Wo zai zhao yi wei nu hai hui chang ge.
    I PRT look one CL female child able sing song

(23e) ?我找到一位女孩会唱歌。
    Wo zhaodao yi wei nu hai hui chang ge.
    I find one CL female child able sing song
    “I found a girl who is able to sing songs.”

Example (23) presents us an interesting case. In both (23a) and (23b), the NP mu hai ‘girl’ is modified by hui chang ge ‘able to sing,’ and both of sentences are perfect. But
both of their paratactic counterparts, (23c) and (23d) are unacceptable. The reason for their unacceptability is transparent in that the first part of (23c) rather than presenting a referent into the discourse, depicts the will of someone to find a specific kind of girl, who is not in the scene yet. The first part of (23d) describes an on-going activity instead of introducing a referent. None of them is presentative. Since none of the object NP in these sentences is the presented entity, any further description is impossible. A dramatic change occurs when we come to (23e). Native speakers feel it is much better than the previous two, though something odd can still be sensed. Different from (23c) and (23d), the first part of (23e) introduces into the scene a referent, and this makes a further description possible.

As for this functional analysis, one may not agree since the following sentences are not acceptable:

(24) * 村上死了一个人很有钱
Cun shang si le yi ge ren hen you qian.
Village up die PRT one CL person very have money

(25) * 树上掉了个苹果很红
Shu shang diao le ge pingguo hen hong.
Tree up drop PRT CL apple very red

One would raise the question: If the above argument were correct, why are the above two sentences with the presentative sentence being the first part of the construction not

---

6 Translations for these two sentences cannot reflect the original meaning of these sentences. Some rough meanings can be provided for (24) as “A person, who was very rich, died in the village.,” and for (25) as “An apple, which is very red, has dropped from the top of the tree.”
acceptable? My answer is that instead of being counter-examples to my analysis, these two sentences will further support my hypothesis. Notice that the first parts in both (24) and (25) consist of what we call the disappearance type of presentative sentences, which function to depict the disappearance of certain entities from a space. Since the concerned entities are no longer in existence, no further descriptions will be possible. In other words, the first part of the paratactic construction must introduce the existence of some entities. This point can be brought into highlight if we contrast the unacceptable (14), (15), (24), and (25) with the following examples:

(26) 店主养了一口猪瘦极了。
    Dianhu yang le yi kou zhu shou ji le.
    "The restaurant owner raise PRT one CL pig thin extreme PRT"
    "The restaurant owner raised a pig, which is very thin."

(27) 我买了一栋房子全新的。
    Wo mai le yi dong fangzi quan xin de.
    "I bought a house, which is brand new."

(28) 村上住了一个很有钱。
    Cun shang zhu le yi ge ren hen you qian.
    "In (that) village, there lives a person, who is very rich."

(29) 树上长了颗苹果很红。
    Shu shang zhang le ge pingguo hen hong.
    "On top of the tree, there is a very red apple."

If one views existence as having three stages as illustrated in (112) in Chapter III, it would not be hard to treat the three stages differently in terms of degree of existentiality.
That is, in the first two, appearance and existence have higher degrees of existentiality than the last stage, disappearance. The lower the degree of existentiality, the lower the possibility for the occurrence of a descriptive clause in the paratactic construction. In other words, the higher the degree of existentiality, the more natural a paratactic sentence will be.7 Let us turn back to (23e), which is repeated here as (23f):

(23f)  我找到一位女孩会唱歌.
       Wo zhaodao yi wei nu hai hui chang ge.
       I find one CL female child able sing song
       "I found a girl who is able to sing songs."

As mentioned earlier, it is acceptable but we are still not comfortable with it. Why? The answer lies in another factor involved when we judge the acceptability of the paratactic construction.

As many have pointed out, the second part of this construction functions to describe the presented entity. Therefore we cannot just put whatever predicative clauses

---

7Of course, it does not mean that in Chinese, one cannot describe the characteristics associated with an entity prior to its disappearance. But, this cannot be done with the paratactic construction. To do this, one has to use the pre-nominal modifier. For example, if we want to say, "A red apple dropped from top of the tree." we have to say:

(a)  树上掉下了一个红苹果.
       Shu shang diao xia le yi ge hong pingguo.
       Tree top drop down PRT one CL red apple
       "A red apple dropped from the top of the tree."

But in this case, the basic assumption is that there is a class of apples which are red, and the current apple in question belongs to that class.
in that position as we like. The predicative clause for the second part of the paratactic construction must be descriptive. Furthermore, I would argue that the higher degree of descriptiveness XP has, the more natural a sentence built on this construction will be. This argument is proven true when an intensifier *hen* (very) is inserted into the descriptive clause in (23f). Now we have (23g):

(23g) 我找到一位女孩会唱歌。
    Wo zhaodao yi wei nu hai hen hui chang ge.
    I find one CL female child very able sing song
    "I found a girl who is able to sing songs."

This time we have a perfect sentence. The addition of the adverb *hen* ‘very’ intensifies the degree of descriptiveness and thus makes the predicative clause fit in better with its function. But note that high degree of descriptiveness of the descriptive clause alone will not secure the acceptability of a paratactic sentence. For example:

(23h) *我在找一位女孩会唱歌。
    *Wo zai zhao yi wei nu hai hen hui chang ge.
    I PRT look for one CL female child very able sing song

As pointed earlier, the first part of such a sentence must demonstrate a high degree of presentativeness. Since sentence (23g) meets the two functional requirements of the paratactic construction, namely, presentation and description, it is well accepted by native speakers. This argument about the second part of the paratactic construction is further supported by the fact that a XP consisting of an adjective is better than that consisting of

---

8In Chinese, the adverb *hen* is generally used with adjectives or descriptive phrases such as *hui chang ge* ‘able to sing’ to intensify the degree of quality indicated by those adjectives or descriptive phrases.
other parts of speech. This is because in terms of description, adjectives are the highest in the scale of degree of descriptiveness. If this analysis is correct, we then have the explanation why sometimes, some of the paratactic sentences are better than others even if the first parts of these sentences are all presentative in nature.

5.4 Verb Selections in the First Part of the Paratactic Construction

As in the case of presentative sentences, many consider the verb selections in the paratactic construction with the assumption that the syntactic structure of this construction is determined by the thematic structure of certain kind of verbs, namely the ergative verbs. Therefore their studies very often start with the verbs involved first. However, my concern with the verb selection in this construction is quite different. As I have argued, the structure of the paratactic construction is determined by its conceptual and functional bases rather than the verbs involved. But this is different from claiming that any verbs may occur in this construction. The presentative function of the first part of the paratactic construction determines the kind of verbs to be selected.

Since the function of the first part of the paratactic construction is the same as that of presentative sentences, one would expect the selection of the verbs to be the same as in presentative sentences, with the assumption that the selection is compatible with the communicative function of that part of the construction. But as I pointed out earlier, the first part of the paratactic construction must be in a higher degree of existentiality. Thus,
the first part of a paratactic construction cannot be a disappearance type. Therefore, we will expect all verbs that may occur in different types of presentative sentences except those in the disappearance type to appear in the first part of the paratactic construction.

Here are some examples:

(30) 林子里飞出几只鸟非常好看。
Linzi li feichu ji zhi niao feichang haokan.
Woods inside fly:out several CL bird very good:looking
"Some beautiful birds flew out of the woods."

(31) 门里走出一位老汉满头白发。
Men li zouchu yi wei lao han man tou bai fa.
Door inside walk:out one CL old man full head white hair
"A old man with grey hair all over his head walked out of the door."

(32) 半路杀出来一条汉子手里提着一把刀。
Banlu shachu lai yi tiao hanzi shou li ti zhe yi ba dao.
Halfway fight:out one CL man hand inside take PRT one CL knife
"In route, there came out fighting one man with a knife in his hand."

(33) 院里钻出一条狗瘦得不象样子。
Yuan li zuanchu yi tiao gou shou de bu xiang yangzi.
Courtyard inside squeeze:out one CL dog thin PRT not like shape
"There came out of the courtyard a dog, which was so thin that it had lost its canine shape."

(34) 前面刮来一阵风凉飕飕的。
Qianmian gualai yi zhen feng liang sousou de.
Front blow:come one CL wind cool
"There blew a gust of cold wind from the front."

(35) 那飞来一只八哥学舌都不会。
Na feilai yi zhi bage lian xue she dou bu hui.
Where fly:come one CL myna even learn tongue all not able
"(Wondering) from where came a myna, which even can not learn to speak."
(36) 窗外传来一阵笑声
Chuang wai chuanlai yi zhen xiaosheng
Window outside spread: come one burst laughter
"There came a burst of laughter from outside the window.

听着吓人。
ting zhe xia ren.
listen PRT frighten person
sounding frightening."

(37) 门外走来一男一女举止很怪。
Men wai zoulai yi nan yi nu juzhi hen guai.
Door outside walk: come one male one female behave very odd.
"There came from outside the door a man and a woman behaving oddly."

(38) 前方出现了一片平原
Qianfang chuxian le yi pian ping yuan
Front come: appear PRT one field flat plain
"In the front, a stretch of plain came into sight.

一眼望不到边。
yi yan wang bu dao bian.
one look watch not reach boarder
extending beyond the view."

(39) 眼前呈现出一条大河波澜汹涌。
Yanqian chengxian chu yi tiao da he potao xiongyong.
Eye: front emerge come one CL big river wave great
"A big river with surging waves came into view."

(40) 天上挂着无数颗星星
Tian shang qua zhe wushu ke xingxing
Sky up han PRT numerous CL star
"There are numerous stars hanging on the sky.

如同万家灯火。
rutong wan jia denghuo.
same: as ten: thousand house light
like thousand points of light."
(41) 墙上挂着一幅画好看极了。
Qiāng shàng guā zhe yī fú huà hǎo kàn jí le.
Wall up hang PRT one CL picture good look extreme PRT
“There hangs a picture on the wall, which is very beautiful.”

(42) 地上躺着一个人浑身是血。
Di shàng tián zhe yī ge rén hún shēn shì xuè.
Ground up lie PRT one CL person all body be blood
“On the ground, there lies a person with blood all over his body.”

(43) 锅里煮着不少肉喷香喷香的。
Guō lǐ zhú zhe bù shǎo ròu pènxiāng pènxiāng de.
Pot inside cook PRT not less meat delicious delicious PRT
“In the pot, there cooked a lot of delicious smelling meat.”

(44) 小屋里堆着些倭瓜都快烂了。
Xiao wū lǐ dū zhe xiē wōguā dōu kuài làn le.
Small room inside stack PRT some pumpkin almost near rotten PRT
“In the small room there stacked some pumpkins, which are almost rotten.”

In (30)-(39), the verbs are those of movement indicating appearance, or verbs of appearance, and in (40)-(44), the verbs involved are those indicating the mode of existence. In terms of verbal semantics, as in the appearance type and the existence type of presentative sentences, the verbs involved in the paratactic construction imply change of state and state respectively.
6. Conclusion

From the above discussion, we see that the paratactic construction is structured on the basis of conceptual and functional principles. It has its conceptual roots in both the principle of spatial relationships of Background-Foreground and PTS of the development of events in real time. Functionally, the paratactic construction reflects two functional sentence perspectives, namely the presentative perspective and the descriptive perspective in a naturally sequenced order. The conceptual and functional factors reinforce each other in the determination of the syntactic structure of the paratactic construction.

The descriptive clause in the paratactic construction functions to provide certain incidental characterization of the presented entity introduced by the first part of the paratactic construction. Normally, contexts permitting, all descriptive clauses would have their pre-nominal modifier counterparts. However, the reversed situation is not true. The occurrence and acceptability of the descriptive clause are conditioned by the degree of existentiality of the first part of the construction, and its own degree of descriptiveness. The higher the degree of existentiality the first part of the construction has, the greater the possibility a descriptive clause will occur. That is, the first part of the construction must introduce the existence or presence of an entity into a space. This seems to involve some sort of psychological process. In such a process, there may be an evaluation of the possibility to further describe the presented entity in terms of the conception that one can only describe an existing phenomenon. If this process detects the presence of a high
degree of existentiality in the first part of the construction, further description is allowed to proceed. Otherwise, description will be canceled. However, as for why it is so, and how exactly this process works, I do not presently have an answer. Further studies are needed to gain a clearer picture. As for the second part of the paratactic construction, other factors being equal, the higher degree of descriptiveness the descriptive clause has, the more natural a paratactic sentence will be.

The selection of verbs in the first part of the paratactic construction is conditioned by the presentative function of this part of the construction. All verbs that occur in presentative sentences except those in the disappearance type may appear in this part of the construction.

In light of the above discovery, we may conclude that conceptual and functional factors are not only crucial in the shaping of the paratactic construction, but also determinative in its verb selection.
CHAPTER V
"PSEUDO PASSIVE" SENTENCES: A TYPE
OF DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCES IN CHINESE

1. Introduction

Firbas (1992) classifies two types of sentences in terms of functional sentence perspectives, namely, the type with the presentative perspective and the type with the qualitative perspective. In Chapter II, I pointed out the necessity to further classify the sentences with the qualitative perspective into the "active" and the "non-active" sentences based upon the development of communication. An active sentence has its functional sentence perspective oriented towards the specification of activities. In terms of situation types, it demonstrates an on-going dynamic situation. Examples can be given as follows:

(1) 王老师在教室上课呢。
    Wang Laoshi zai jiaoshi shang ke ne.
    "Teacher Wang is teaching in the classroom."

(2) 她死死地抓住自己的钱包。
    Ta sisi de zhuazhu ziji de qianbao.
    "She took a tight hold of her own purse."
A non-active sentence has a functional sentence perspective towards the specification of some states or properties of certain entities. I call these sentences “Descriptive Sentences.”

(3) 这篇课文很难。
Zhe pian kewen hen nan.
This CL text very difficult
“This lesson is very difficult.”

(4) 北京烤鸭油太多。
Beijing kao ya you tai duo.
Beijing roasted duck fat too much
“Beijing roasted duck has too much fat.”

(5) 这种汽车跑得快。
Zhe zhong qiche pao de kuai.
This kind car run PRT fast
“This kind of car runs fast.”

(6) 那辆车撞坏了。
Na liang che zhuanghuai le.
That CL car hit bad PRT
“That car was crashed.”

All descriptive sentences share a common functional feature. That is, they all provide some qualitative description about certain entity or entities symbolized by the NP at the sentence-initial position with functional sentence perspective towards that description. Thus we have (7): 1

(7) \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{NP} & \text{VP} \\
\text{Entity} & \text{qualitative description} \\
\text{Development of communication} & \text{--------->}
\end{array}
\]

---

1 Note that this illustration shows the syntactic pattern descriptive sentences share, but it is different from saying that a sentence with this pattern must be a descriptive sentence. This latter point will be discussed in section 2.2.5.
There is one kind of descriptive sentences represented by (6) deserves our special attention. This group consists of sentences with an unique semantic relation. That is, in terms of semantic functions, the pre-verbal NP, instead of being the agent of the action indicated by the main verb, is the patient of that action. Because of this special relational structure, these sentence are sometimes called the "pseudo passive" sentences by Chinese grammarians. This term is obviously adopted by analogy with English passive sentences. Others (Cheng 1989, Zhou 1990) analyze these sentences as involving ergative verbs and try to deal with them with ergative hypothesis within the GB framework.

I believe that a detailed analysis of the so called "pseudo passive" sentences is crucial in the study of Chinese syntax, because these sentences count for more than 50% of Chinese sentences (Chao 1968), and these sentences display a special pattern in word order, as well as functional and semantic characteristics unique to themselves. A comprehensive study of these "pseudo passive" sentences will uncover some of important principles underlying the syntactic organizations of Chinese sentences as a whole, and will help us have a full picture of the word order phenomena in Chinese.
2. The So-called "Pseudo Passive" Sentences

2.1 The Misleading Nature of the term of "Pseudo Passive"

As the term "pseudo passive" indicates, the sentences in question are not real passive sentences. In fact, there are great differences between Chinese "pseudo passive" sentences and real passive sentences in other languages, such as English.

The term "voice," as Lyons (1969) points out, is used in grammatical theories to refer to the "active" and the "passive" forms of verbs. The distinction between active and passive is marked by verbal inflections signifying active or the state of being acted upon, the passive. Thus in an active English sentence, the subject is often the agent of the action indicated by the verb, and the verb is in its active form:

(8) John hit Bill.

In a passive sentence, the subject is the patient of the action of the verb, and the verb is in its passive form:

(9) Bill was hit by John.

The original subject (which is the agent of the action) in the active sentence (8) is expressed by means of an agentive adjunct by John in (9). Although such an expression is not obligatory, the sense of agency is always there. We therefore see that the identification of a passive sentence is based upon formal syntactic criteria. It is by inflectional markings that the passive voice is expressed.
From a functional perspective, we may view the change from the active to the passive as involving a shift of attentional focus. That is, from the actor to the acted-upon. In this way the passive sentence functions to depict the state of “being acted upon” of the subject in the passive sentence. However, the sense of agency is still there, and indeed the agent can be brought up any time by the speaker via an agentive adjunct.

In comparison with English, the Chinese data demonstrate quite a different picture. First, due to the lack of inflectional morphology, there are no formal markings whatsoever to indicate the change from “active” to “passive.”

(10a) 我吃过饭了。
Wo chi guo fan le.
I eat PRT meal PRT
“I have eaten the meal.”

(10b) 饭吃过了。
Fan chi guo le.
Meal eat PRT PRT
“The meal has been eaten.”

From (10a) to (10b) nothing has been altered except the seeming change of word order with the object fan ‘meal’ in (10a) becoming the subject in (10b). However, on a closer scrutiny of the Chinese data, it is even doubtful to claim the existence of such change. For many so called “pseudo passive” sentences do not have their corresponding “active” sentences. For example:

(11) 这饭不能吃了。
Zhe fan bu neng chi le.
This meal not can eat PRT
“The food is not edible (anymore).”

≠ (12) 我不能吃这饭了。
Wo bu neng chi zhe fan le.
“I not able eat this meal PRT
“(I) cannot eat this meal.”
Sentence (11) is totally different from sentence (12) in that (11) is about the current status of the food, which is not editable anymore, whereas (12) is literally about wo’s ‘I’ “ability” to eat the food.

Consider another set of examples:

(13) 卖车了。  ≠ (14)?? 卖车了。
   Che mai le.  Ta mai che le.
   Car sell PRT  He sell car PRT
   "(The) car is sold."  "He sold (some) cars."

In the cases of (13) and (14), the latter cannot be accepted as an active equivalent for the former. There is an obvious difference in Definiteness of the NP, che ‘car’ in the two sentences. In (13) it is definite, referring to a specific car in the mind of the addressee, but in (14), che without overt marking is not definite. In fact, this phenomenon of the change of Definiteness with regard to word order has been observed by many Chinese linguists. For example, Chao (1968: 308) points out the difference in Definiteness in the following two sentences:

(15) 写完信了。
   Xie wan xin le.
   Write:finish letter PRT
   “Have finished writing a letter.”

(16) 信写完了。
   Xin xie wan le.
   “The letter has been finished.”

Chao (1968), Light (1979), and Li and Thompson (1981) all have observed the trend in Chinese for the pre-verbal NP to be definite and the post-verbal one to be indefinite.
Thus, this semantic difference in definiteness should be regarded as an important part of the grammatical meaning of word order in Chinese. This feature of definiteness however is not a part of grammatical meaning of the passive in languages which have the real passive pattern. Apart from the definiteness difference, but closely related to the definiteness phenomenon, there exists another important semantic discrepancy between the so-called "pseudo passive" sentences and their "corresponding active" ones:

(17) 衣服洗了。
Yifu xi le.
Clothes wash PRT.
"The clothes have been washed."

(18) 我洗了衣服了。
Wo xi yifu le.
I wash clothes PRT
"I have washed (some) clothes."

Sentence (17) by itself alone without additional contexts means that all the clothes planned to be washed have been washed, whereas (18) does not have that meaning under the same condition. Sentence (18) simply indicates that the action of xi 'to wash' has been performed without reference to whether the clothes in question are all washed, or just some pieces of them are washed. The two sentences therefore can not be regarded as being semantically equivalent.

Furthermore, for real passive sentences, agency exists regardless of whether it is overly expressed or not. In fact, agents can always be brought up by agentive adjuncts. However, this is not the case with the so-called Chinese "pseudo passive" sentences. No
agent can be brought up in these sentences. Agency is not even implied in these sentences. This can be shown by the fact that adverbials of volitionality, such as guyi ‘intentionally’ cannot be inserted into these sentences. Let us try this test with (13), (15) and (17):

(13’) *车故意买了。
   *Che guyi mai le.
   Car intentionally sell PRT

(15’) *信故意写完了。
   *Xin guyi xiewan le.
   Letter intentionally write:finish PRT

(17’) *衣服故意洗了。
   *Yifu guyi xi le.
   Clothes intentionally wash PRT

However some researchers may consider that the well known Bei-Construction is the corresponding marked form to bring out the agents. But our empirical evidence does not sustain such analysis. Although up till today, the Bei-construction is far from fully understood, two observations can be made in relation to “pseudo passive” sentences. One is that in the Bei-construction, the Bei morpheme does not function as an agentive marker. Consider:

(19) 钱被偷了。
    Qian bei tou le.
    Money Bei steal PRT.
    “The money is stolen.”

(20) 手被划破了。
    Shou bei huapo le.
    Hand Bei cut PRT
    “(My) hand is cut.”
No agents occur in these two sentences at all. Second, though both the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences and the Bei-construction have a descriptive function, they differ from each other in that generally the Bei-construction denotes an “unfavorable” (Chao 1968), or “adverse” (Li and Thompson 1981) meaning, while the former does not. Compare:

(21) 稻田分了.
    Dao tian fen le.
    Rice fields divide PRT
    “The rice fields are divided up.”

(22) 稻田被分了.
    Dao tian bei fen le.
    Rice fields Bei divide PRT
    “The rice fields are divided up and (distributed to others against the will of the owner).”

As for (21), it is a factual description about the current status of the fields. But as for (22) it is a description with a certain negative attitude. That is, from the speaker’s viewpoint, the fields should not be divided up. The same difference is true of the following pair:

(23) 饭吃光了.
    Fan chiguang le.
    Meal eat:finish PRT
    “The food is eaten up.”

(24) 饭被吃光了.
    Fan bei chiguang le.
    Meal Bei eat:finish PRT
    “The food is eaten up.” (But it should not be)

2 Despite the fact due to the influence of western languages, nowadays more and more Bei-sentences are used without the adverse meaning, the basic difference between Bei-sentences and non-Bei sentences along this line of distinction can still be felt.
That the food is eaten up is beyond the speaker’s expectation in (24), while there is no such connotation in (23). Due to this adverse meaning of the *Bei*-construction, most of the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences do not have *Bei* counterparts.

(25a) 这本书出版了。
    Zhe ben shu chuban le.
    This CL book publish PRT
    “This book is published.”

(25b) *这本书被(他们)出版了。
    Zhe ben shu bei (tamen) chuban le.
    This CL book Bei (they) publish PRT

(26a) 课文念了。
    Kewen nian le.
    Text read PRT
    “(I) have read this lesson.”

(26b) *课文被(他)念了。
    Kewen bei (ta) nian le.
    Text Bei (he) read PRT

Thus, we see that the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences are not unmarked variations of the *Bei*-construction. The two should not be mixed up. This lack of agency in “pseudo passive” sentences is also observed by Tai (1989a). He (1989: 199) correctly points out that “the notion of agency is not inherent to the meaning of transitive action verbs in Chinese as it is in English.” This is because “while English looks at the ending point of an accomplishment or achievement verb from the viewpoint of agent, Chinese does it from
the viewpoint of the affected patient."³ As we may see from the above evidence, this is what exactly happens in the situation of “pseudo passive” sentences. These sentences function to present the current state of certain affected phenomena, or to depict what has happened to the affected entities.

The above facts suggest that the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences in Chinese are not passive at all by any formal criteria, and are different from the real passive sentences in Indo-European languages in terms of some important semantic characteristics. Therefore the term of “pseudo passive” is misleading in that they create a false link between the type of Chinese sentences with the grammatical notion of “passive” stemming from the analyses of inflectionally-rich Indo-European languages.

2.2 The Nature of the So-called “Pseudo Passive” Sentences

I have so far argued that the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences are not linked to the grammatical term “passive voice” in terms of formal criteria, and the application of ergative hypothesis to their analysis is inappropriate (cf. Chapter IV). Then what is the real nature of these sentences in terms of their syntactic, semantic and functional characteristics? In the following, I will argue that the type of sentences in question is a kind of descriptive sentence, with basically the same function as other types of descriptive

---
³ Accomplishment refers to a process with a natural ending (or a goal), while achievement refers to a change of state with no interval. For detailed discussion, please refer to Vendler (1967) and Dowty (1979, 1986).
sentences, such as adjectival descriptive sentences. I will also argue that the syntactic structure of this type of sentences is patterned on the basis of the general conceptual principle of Background-Foreground schema, conditioned by the functional requirement of perspective taking, and determined by the development of communication in terms of the Functional Sentence Perspective of descriptive sentences.

2.2.1 The Descriptive Nature and Functional Sentence Perspective

As I have pointed out, the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences belong to the category of descriptive sentences. That is, these sentences have a functional sentence perspective towards the specification of some states, or properties of certain entities. This particular feature is characteristic of all descriptive sentences. In this sense, I argue that “pseudo passive” sentences have the same general function as other descriptive sentences, for example, the adjectival descriptive sentences in Chinese. Consider the following sentences:

(27) 这饭很好吃。
Zhe fan hen haochi.  
This meal very good:eat  
“This meal tastes good.”

(28) 这饭能吃。
Zhe fan neng chi.  
This meal fit eat  
“This meal tastes OK.”

4 The term of adjectival descriptive sentences are used here to refer to the type of descriptive sentences consisting of adjectives as predicates.
(29) 这饭馊了．
    Zhe fan sou le.
    This meal spoiled PRT
    “This meal has spoiled.”

(30) 这饭不可以吃了．
    Zhe fan bu keyi chi le.
    This meal not may eat PRT
    “The food has gone bad.”

(31) 这饭吃光了．
    Zhe fan chiguang le.
    This meal eat:finish PRT
    “This food is all eaten up.”

Sentence (27) and (29) are adjectival descriptive sentences, and (28), (30), and (31) are the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences. All these sentences present certain qualitative description of the entities presented at the sentence-initial position. Of our examples, both (27) and (28) depict some inherent qualities about zhe fan ‘this meal,’ despite the fact that (27) consists of an adjectival predicate while (28) consists of a verbal predicate. Sentences (29), (30), and (31) all present descriptions of some non-inherent quality about the entities at the sentence-initial position. That is, they depict certain acquired properties of the entities in question. Again those sentences consist of both adjectival and verbal predicates. From this fact, we may conclude that as far as the descriptive function is concerned, “pseudo passive” sentences are no different from other descriptive sentences in Chinese.

Like all descriptive sentences, “pseudo passive” sentences have a functional sentence perspective oriented towards the specification of the qualities of the presented
entities. Thus, in the case of (28), the specification of the quality, *neng chi* ‘fit to eat’ carries the burden of the information communicated. It is the delivery of this piece of information that has completed the communicative goal of the sentence, and therefore it has the highest degree of communicative dynamism. In this sense, we say that “*neng chi*” constitutes the information focus which contributes most to the development of communication in the sentence. This functional feature is also true of (30), (31) and all “pseudo passive” sentences.

In the current theoretical framework, I look upon a sentence as a structural carrier of the information the speaker/writer intends to communicate. Furthermore, I would argue that the syntactic structure of a sentence is so constructed that there is a compatible rather than conflicting relationship between this structural carrier and the information structure of the sentence to meet the ultimate communicative purposes. In the following section I will demonstrate how this compatibility is obtained, and regulated by the informational structure in descriptive sentences in Chinese.

2.2.2 The Conceptualized Information Structure of “Pseudo Passive”

**Sentences**

So far I have discussed the descriptive nature of “pseudo passive” sentences. In this section, I will address the relationship between the syntactic structure of these sentences and its determinative conceptual factors.
One fact about "pseudo passive" sentences is that, to native speakers, the pre-verbal NP is obviously the entity affected, and the verb has reference to certain action affecting that entity. The question is why the NP is placed pre-verbally rather than post-verbally, since in cases involving two placement predicates such as X has done Y in Chinese, the NPs symbolizing the affected entities are usually at the post-verbal position as in the following:

(32a) 我吃过饭了。
    Wo chi guo fan le.
    "I have eaten the meal."

(33a) 小李打了老张。
    Xiao Li da le Lao Zhang.
    "Xiao Li has beaten up Lao Zhang."

(32b) *饭吃过我了。
    Fan chi guo wo le.
    "Meal has eaten me."

(33b) 老张打了小李。
    Lao Zhang da le Xiao Li.
    "Lao Zhang has beaten up Xiao Li."

Sentence (32b) is unacceptable because our global experience tells us that it is impossible and absurd. Sentence (33b) with Laozhang being the agent and Xiao Li the patient has a different semantic relationship from (33a) in which Xiao Li is the agent and Laozhang is the patient.
The explanation to the NP placement in "pseudo passive sentences is as follows. The only NP in the structure of "pseudo passive" sentences is placed pre-verbally, not because of its agent or patient status, but because of its informational status and functional characteristics.

If we take the view that our verbal communication is a linearly developing process, we would not have difficulty, within the sentential context, to pinpoint a starting point and an ending point of such a process. As I have indicated earlier in Chapter II, the information focus in sentences with the qualitative perspective is on the cumulative information of the specified quality of the described phenomena the entire predicated carries. However, in an isolated situation, as in a descriptive sentence, the description carried out by the predicate will be baseless without the introduction of the phenomenon to be described. In fact, a successful communication of the information of a sentence the speaker/writer intended depends upon the delivery of the total information accumulated throughout the entire sentential communicative process. Based on the development of communication indicated in (7), in such a process, the entity to be described is the very first piece of information to be introduced since it is the foundation for all other layers of information. This piece of information forms the background for all later information to appear. This background status of the described entity in part determines that it is introduced before the descriptive information which is the information focus. Thus, the syntactic pattern of "pseudo passive" sentences, NP V, is in full conformity with the
information structure and the Background-Foreground conceptual schema in descriptive sentences. However, the information structure and the conceptual schema of Background-Foreground are not the sole factors responsible for the word order of "pseudo passive" sentences. These factors are re-enforced by functional factors of perspective taking, the development of communication involved in descriptive sentences in general, and other pragmatic factors, which I will discuss in sections 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.5.

2.2.3 Three Determinative Functional Factors in the Selection of Stating Points of "Pseudo Passive" Sentences

As I already pointed out in Chapter II in MacWhinney's (1977) words, there are four basic functions of the starting point of a sentence. That is, the **attentional focus**, the **perspective**, the **agent**, and the **given**. As for descriptive sentences in general, the function of the agent does not apply, since there is no agency involved in this type of sentences as I have already pointed out. Therefore we have the other three functions left. Before I discuss the function of perspective, I will first deal with the other two, namely the attentional focus and the given.

In an isolated situation, for a sentence to fulfill the functional task to describe certain entity, it is natural to lay a foundation with the introduction of the entity to be described first in the linear process of sentential communication. On the one hand, to the
addresser, it is natural to direct the addressee’s attention first to that very entity in discussion before any further information is provided, and on the other hand, to the addressee, it is easier to process all the information provided bit by bit with certain ground knowledge of the entity described. To all the participants of a discourse, a description can only be possible after the introduction of the phenomenon in question. This task of introduction, or presentation is carried out by sentences with the presentative orientation. Generally speaking, in a normal situation, a descriptive sentence is only adopted after the presentation of a given phenomenon. This being the case, the piece of information of the specific phenomenon is assumed to be known to the addressee, and therefore that information is viewed as “given.” This particular informational status determines that the information carried by the NP, which symbolizes the described phenomenon in a descriptive sentence is the most qualified information for the ground in comparison with any other information, which is still unknown to the addressee. As a result, in a normal situation, the function of attentional focus, and the function of given interplay with each other to place the NP representing the described phenomenon at the sentence-initial position in “pseudo passive” sentences.

Now let us come to the perspective taking in the syntactic organization of “pseudo passive” sentences. The function of perspective is defined by MacWhinney (1977) as the standpoint with which the speaker identifies himself. In this sense, the notion, perspective, is similar to Kuno’s (1987) “Empathy,” though they are not exactly the same.
Basically, the notion of perspective here refers to the addressee’s subjective identification with the standpoint of an entity in the event or state depicted in a sentence. Since in a "pseudo passive" sentence, as in all descriptive sentences, the described phenomenon is the only participant, it is the only one with which the addressee can identify himself, if that identification ever occurs. That is, should the speaker ever take any perspective, he has no other choice but the phenomenon to be described. When the speaker takes the standpoint of the entity under description, the NP symbolizing that entity in a normal situation has only one place to go. That is the sentence-initial position. This is because on the one hand this particular perspective taking determines that the camera angle is from the entity described towards the descriptive information provided. On the other hand, once an entity is taken as the perspective, that entity becomes the point from which the process of information accumulation starts, or in other words, from which the development of information flow towards the descriptive goal begins. The above two points are perfectly in agreement with the development of communication in terms of the functional sentence perspective of descriptive sentences.

From the above discussion, we see that conditioned by the three functions of the starting point of a sentence, the element symbolizing the described phenomenon in a

---

5 In certain circumstances, due to specific pragmatic factors, such identification may not occur. This is especially the case when the entity involved is not so "important" in the speaker’s mind in the whole chunk of information he intends to communicate at the time of speaking. In such case, there is no need for the speaker to take the standpoint of that entity. As for this point, I will offer a more detailed discussion in Chapter VI.
descriptive sentence in a normal discourse situation is to occur sentence-initially before the
description. In a “pseudo passive” sentence, this element is the NP rather than the V
which provides the descriptive message. Therefore that NP occurs sentence-initially. We
also see that the force for such syntactic pattern does not come from a single factor, but
from several functional factors. These functional factors not only re-enforce each other
but also interplay with the conditioning information structure discussed earlier in section
2.2.2.

2.2.4 The Role of Development of Communication, and the Distribution of CD

As pointed out several times, the development of communication plays an
important role in structuring the syntactic pattern of “pseudo passive” sentences as in
sentences with other functional sentence perspectives. According to Firbas, the rate of
CD is measured on the basis of the relative contribution by a linguistic element within a
sentence to the further development of the communication. Therefore, the element
carrying the information that completes the communication has the highest degree of CD,
and the element carrying the information that serves as the base for all later development
of the communication has within a sentence the lowest degree of CD. This is illustrated
by the following scheme:

(34) FSP6 ------------------------->Communicative Goal
     Information Base------------------>Completion of Communication
     Rate of CD Lowest----------------->Highest

6 Functional Sentence Perspective.
This scheme tells us that within a sentence the functional sentence perspective is towards the communicative goal, be it the specification of qualities or a presented entity. It also indicates that the process of this sentential communication starts from the initial information base and develops towards the completion of the communication through continuous accumulation of information. In accordance to this process of information development, the degree of CD rises from the lowest to the highest through the information base to the last piece of information that completes the communication. At the syntactic level, the structure of the sentence pattern of descriptive sentences in Chinese neatly corresponds to this development of communication by placing the element that carries the base information, or background information embodied by the described entity at sentence-initial position and the element that contributes most to the development of communication (that completes the communication), the description, at the sentence final position. This correspondence is no accident, but conditioned by the general descriptive function and the conceptual schema of the information structure of descriptive sentences. And the syntactic pattern of descriptive sentences is so structured in accordance to the development of communication to serve the development of sentential communication, and to serve the ultimate communicative purpose designated to the specific sentence. As members of descriptive sentences, "pseudo passive" sentences are no exceptions to these conditions and are regulated by all these conceptual and functional constraints.
2.2.5 Global Experience, Discourse Factors and Disambiguation

In the above sections, I illustrated the syntactic structure of "pseudo passive" sentences is in a great part determined by the conceptual and functional conditions in Chinese in terms of information structure and functional sentence perspective. However, if we for the time being leave aside all these conceptual and functional explanations, there is one problem with regard to the sentence structure in question. That is, intuitively, native speakers know that in "pseudo passive" sentences, the sentence-initial NP is the patient. But where does this intuition come from? In other words, what makes it possible for native speakers to interpret correctly the semantic relationship in these sentences without any confusion.

To answer this question, let us consider some syntactic patterns. First look at a case in which there is a verb taking two arguments with the following pattern:

\[(35) \quad \text{NP}_1 \text{ V NP}_2\]

If here involves both agent and patient, there is only one way to order the two NPs. That is, \(\text{NP}_1\) stands for the agent and \(\text{NP}_2\) stands for the patient. This is the situation of \((32a)\) and \((33a)\). But with a different sentence pattern, things change.

\[(36) \quad \text{NP}_1 \text{ NP}_2 \text{ V}\]

With respect to this pattern, the general trend is for \(\text{NP}_1\) to stand for the patient and \(\text{NP}_2\) to stand for the agent of action. Thus, in the following example, the second NP stands for the agent.
Now if there is a verb taking only one argument, and there is a sentence pattern like (38),
then the sole NP may stand for either agent or patient:

(38) NP V

For example:

(39) 书卖了.
Shu mai le.
Book sell PRT
“The books are sold.”

(40) 小李打了.
Xiao Li da le.
“Xiao Li has done the beating.”

These are factual descriptions of some isolated sentences with respect to some
major sentence patterns in Chinese. As for (35), the word order corresponding to the
semantic functions is quite straightforward. Problems can be found with both (36) and
(38). As for (36), people do find reversed situations such as the following:

(41) 我衣服换过了.
Wo yifu huan guo le.
I clothes change PRT PRT
“I have changed (my) clothes.”

(42) 我饭还没吃呢.
Wo fan hai mei chi ne.
I meal still not eat PRT
“I have not eaten yet.”
The question is how the current analysis would explain this phenomenon. As for (38) the problem is that if the description is correct as stated above, how could native speakers tell when the NP stands for the agent and when it stands for the patient without confusion. Therefore the ultimate question to ask about both (36) and (38) is that how such flexible arrangement of semantic functions in relation to either of the syntactic patterns could meet the needs of communicative purpose without jeopardizing the correct comprehension of the intended messages delivered in real communicative activities.

To answer this question, we now have to take into account all pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic factors involved in linguistic communicative activities. First, patterns (36) and (38) involve sentences quite different from sentences built on pattern (35) in terms of FSP. Sentences with pattern (35), for example (32a) and (33a) are active sentences, while sentences with patterns (36) and (38) are usually descriptive sentences. That is, sentences like (32a) and (33a) all have active functional perspectives. Therefore, the predicates involved serve the purpose of specifying certain actions instead of that of description. Since actions are emphasized, directions of those actions must also be involved. This difference in functional sentence perspective determines that descriptive sentences with patterns of (36) and (38) should not be viewed the same as those active sentences with the patterns of (35).

Now let us return to the earlier question about (36) and (38). As stated earlier in this dissertation, from the viewpoint of functional grammar, the final output of syntactic
patterns is a result of the interplay among pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic factors. Since all linguistic expressions are produced in certain socio-cultural environments and specific immediate discourse contexts, their production and comprehension are conditioned by these environments and contexts. Two of the important factors effecting our interpretation of the information carried by a sentence are our global experience and the immediate discourse context. In these respects, I have found that Chinese grammar on the one hand is sensitive to our global experience and semantic relationship, and on the other hand it is quite flexible to the extent that no unacceptability or ambiguity occurs. In a given communicative context, especially in an on-going process of oral communication, all participants are fully aware of the physical and social status of the entities involved in the discourse. They know from the immediate discourse and physical environment which entity symbolized by a given NP in a sentence stands for the agent, the causer or the source, and the patient or the recipient with respect to the action in question. In such situations, it really does not matter whether NP₁ or NP₂ in the pattern of (36) is for the agent. The participants in that communicative environment will have little difficulty either designating or identifying the semantic relations in that sentence. Thus, as in (37), if the context tells the participants of the communicative activity that in reality it is the tiger ‘lao hu’ that ate the lion, the addressee will not miss the point by confusing which entity symbolized by which NP is the agent. This is because information from the physical environment and the discourse context is clear.
Sometimes, however, when the information provided by the immediate context is not clear enough, our global experience plays an important role in determining which NP stands for the agent and which for the patient. The global experience gained via our interaction with the physical world and our fellow human beings gives rise to a conceptualized scale whereby we measure the likelihood of agency of a certain entity relative to others with respect to certain actions. Thus, suppose that there are two entities symbolized by two NP's, \( NP_1 \) and \( NP_2 \) in a sentence with the syntactic pattern of (36). One of them has the features of +volitional, +sentience, +causational, etc, and the other has the features -volitional, -sentience, -causational, etc. Our global experience about the world tells us the former one is more likely to be the agent, or actor of certain action. Of course what we have here is an extreme example. In fact, things are much more complicated. The measurement of the likelihood of agency does not depend on one or two distinctive features but relies on the comparison between features denoted by the two NPs in totality. The possession of certain features may carry more weight than others. This viewpoint of measurement of agency seems to certain degree similar to Dowty's (1991) theory of thematic proto-roles. Dowty views thematic roles as having "different 'degrees of membership' in role types" (1991: 571) along the scale of the Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties lexically entailed by the predicate, rather than some discrete categories. But since the current focus of this research is not on the relationships between role types and argument selection, I will not go into any details about Dowty's analysis.
What I am trying to figure out is: given a predicate with two arguments with the pattern of (36), how would native speakers determine which argument with the particular predicate is more agent-like and which is more patient-like? I hold that while Dowty’s view that the determination depends upon the comparison between the characteristic properties associated with each argument entailed by the predicate is well applicable to sentences with the active perspectives like (32a) and (33a), it does not solve the problem with (36). As for an active sentence, the direction of the action expressed by the predicate is very clear. Thus, with a sentence like (43), the predicate in question entails that the argument of Zhang San is volitionally involved in the event of “da Li Si ‘to beat up Li Si.’” It entails that the participant, Zhang San causes a change of state in the other participant, Li Si, for example, Zhang San causes pain in Li Si. It also entails that the argument of Li Si undergone the change of state is causally affected by the other participant Zhang San.

(43) 张三打了李四。
Zhang San da le Li Si.
Zhang San beat PRT Li Si
“Zhang San has beaten up Li Si.”

Comparing these characteristic properties of the two arguments, we therefore know that Zhang San is more agent like, since it possesses more agent-like characteristics, and Li Si is more patient like, because it has more patient-like characteristics.

However, with (36), such “lexical entailment” does not work. First, pattern (36) has a different function from that of the pattern on which (43) is constructed. That is, it has the same descriptive function as “pseudo passive” sentences, on which I have spent so
much time already. What is different from “pseudo passive” sentences is that instead of simply describing some existing entities, sentences built on (36) describe some existing entity in relation to another existing entity. Thus, in the case of (41), wo ‘I’ is described in terms of whether or not the clothes are washed. That the participant, wo is under description can be brought into highlight by the following contrast between wo and wo didi ‘my younger brother’:

(44) 我衣服洗了，我弟弟衣服还没洗呢。
    Wo yifu xile, wo didi yifu hai mei xine.
    I clothes wash PRT I brother clothes still not wash PRT
    “I have washed my clothes, (but) my younger brother has not yet.”

Because of this functional difference, the predicate as a whole does not specify an event, but rather some stative situation, (including the resultative state.) It is impossible for one to perceive any entailment of proto-agent or proto-patient properties for the arguments involved under this circumstance. However, native speakers intuitively still know that wo and wo didi are the agents and yifu is the patient. How? I will argue that such agent-patient relationship is obtained from our knowledge base instead of lexical entailment. As for the first clause of (44), we know that wo instead of yifu is the agent, because our global experience tells us that only wo, a human referent can be the agent in comparison with some inanimate, non-human referents, yifu ‘clothes,’ with respect to the action of xi ‘to wash.’ Now consider another example:

(45) 狮子老虎吃了。
    Shizi laohu chi le.
    Lion tiger eat PRT
If we leave aside the general trend of agent placement in such a sentence as described earlier for the moment, we can hardly decide which argument, NP$_1$ or NP$_2$, has more proto-agent properties from this specific predicate. That is, we really have a hard time to know who eats whom here. Why is this? It is because people tend to view lions and tigers as having equal status, such as wildness, powerfulness, ferociousness, etc. These properties cannot be entailed by the predicate but rather are obtained from their knowledge base. In fact, even if we take into consideration of the general trend of agent placement, we still find that many people are quite confused at (45), or the earlier example of (37).  

The next is a clearer case of how our global experience conditions our determination of agency:

(46a) 老鼠猫吃了。
Laoshu mao chi le.
Mouse cat eat PRT
“The cat ate the mouse.”

---

7One way to make the patient outstanding is to insert the BA morpheme before the patient as in the following:

(A) 老虎把狮子吃了。
Laohu ba shizi chi le.
Tiger BA lion eat PRT
“The tiger ate the lion.”

(B) 狮子把老虎吃了。
Shizi ba laohu chi le.
Lion BA tiger eat PRT
“The lion ate the tiger.”
(46b) 猫老鼠吃了.
Mao laoshu chi le.
Cat mouse eat PRT
"The cat ate the mouse."

In this case, no matter mao is NP₁ or NP₂, it is always the agent, despite the fact there is a general trend for NP₂ to be the agent. For we know that cats are the natural enemies of mice. Again, this feature of cat is not obtained from lexical entailment. All these features mentioned are inferred from our global experience via our interaction with the real world.

From the above discussion, we may now come to a generalized picture concerning the determination of agent and patient in the pattern of (36).

There are altogether three groups of factors involved, namely, the immediate discourse factors, conceptual semantics based upon our global knowledge about the real world, and the general trend of structural organization of the semantic functions.

Based upon the observation of the general trend in terms of the ordering pattern of semantic functions in relation to the verb, I would stipulate that the default position for the agent in the pattern of (36) is NP₂, and the patient is NP₁. This pattern, however, may be overridden by discourse and conceptual factors whenever these factors are available. In other words, the identification of semantic functions in (36) largely depends upon contextual environments, and "pragmatic inferences" based upon our knowledge of the world.⁸ The default pattern functions only as a last resort when no other determinative

---
⁸Tai (1975) discusses in detailed manner about "pragmatic inferences." Although this situation under discussion is not the same as what is encountered in Tai's study, Tai's analysis of the role of "pragmatic inference" in Chinese grammar is still valid, and can be
factors are accessible, or in a circumstance when other factors fail to solve the problem as in the case of (45).

Now it is time to consider pattern (38). As pointed out, in this case, the sole NP involved can either be the agent, or the patient of the action in question. How could this be?

In fact, sentences involving this pattern are from two types, namely the active type and the descriptive type. In the former type, there are two situations. The first one includes sentences involving intransitive verbs such as:

(47) 小王哭了.
    Xiao Wang ku le.
    “Xiao Wang cried.”

(48) 小王笑了.
    Xiao Wang xiao le.
    “Xiao Wang laughed.”

The second one has sentences consisting of transitive verbs like:

(49) 小王吃了.
    Xiao Wang chi le.
    “Xiao Wang ate (something).”

(50) 小王看了.
    Xiao Wang kan le.
    “Xiao Wang read (something).”

applied to the current study as I have demonstrated in my analysis with equal analytical and explanatory strength.
In both situations, the agent properties of the NP are entailed by the predicate. Sentences (49) and (50) are always produced when all the participants of the discourse understand the relevant objects referred to. Therefore, they are omitted. In the cases of (49) and (50), as in all active sentences, the agency of the NP’s is determined by lexical entailment. In both situations above, because of the active nature of these sentences, there is no confusion about the semantic properties of the sentence-initial NP’s. The second type involves “pseudo passive” sentences. As I have already argued, what we have here is a pattern for descriptive sentences. Therefore, action is not a factor. But as in the case of (36), people can still differentiate whether the semantic function corresponding to the NP involved is the agent or the patient based on discourse factors and their conception obtained from their knowledge base about the entities in question. Again the judgment depends on pragmatic inferences rather than lexical entailment, or the knowledge about linguistic structure. Thus, in the case of (51), from our knowledge base we know that the meal can only be prepared, but cannot prepare something else.

(51) 饭做好了.
    Fan zuohao le.
    Meal make:ready PRT
    “The meal is ready”

But in the following example, we have a different situation:

(52) 鱼吃了.
    Yu chi le.
    Fish eat PRT
    a. “The fish is eaten.”
    b. “The fish has eaten (something).
In isolation (52) seems ambiguous in that there would be two interpretations available. However, in real communicative activities, there is never an misunderstanding regarding what it means in the immediate context. If the immediate context indicates that \textit{yu} ‘fish’ is the agent, then it is the agent. If that context shows otherwise, then it is the patient. I should point out here, the latter case is extremely rare, which I will address very soon.

Now consider the following:

(53) 小王看到了。
Xiao Wang kandao le.
Xao Wang see PRT

a. “Xiao Wang saw (something/somebody).”
b. “Xiao Wang was seen.”

As for the mean of (53), the first choice from native speakers is a. That is, Xiao Wang is the agent. In this case, like (49) and (50), (53) is an active sentence with a clear direction of action. The agent property is entailed by the predicate with respect to the lexical meaning of \textit{kandao} ‘to look and see.’ The b. meaning can usually be obtained in a contrastive situation in which somebody asks “\textit{Ni kandao Xiao Wang he Xiao Li le ma?} ‘Do you see Xiao Wang and Xiao Li?’ Then we may have following:

(54) 小王看到了，小李还没看到。
Xiao Wang kandao le, Xiao Li hai mei kandao.
Xiao Wang see PRT, Xiao Li still not see.
“(I) saw Xiao Wang but not Xiao Li.”

In such a situation, the context provides a clear clue about whether Xiao Wang is the agent or patient. But without a similar situation like the above, a single sentence like (53) with the intended meaning of b. is really awkward. From the above analysis, one may
conclude that the knowledge of the linguistic structure of (38) lends us no help in the
determination of its semantic functions. What matters is again the contextual information
and native speakers’ global experience about the real world.

It however does not mean that there is no regularity in the patterning of semantic
functions pertaining to (38). Note that I have used the term “regularity” instead of “rule”.
That is, what is involved here is a question of trend rather than absoluteness.

From the above analysis of (38), we know that whenever ambiguity is not a
problem, it does not matter whether the NP is an agent or a patient. However, one may
point out that there still remains the possibility for ambiguity to occur, especially when
contexts and our knowledge of the world fail to solve the problem. Fortunately, as I have
already pointed out, such a situation is rare. Liu, Pan and Gu (1983), Li (1986b) and
LaPolla (1988) observe that in “pseudo passive” sentences, the subject NP’s usually
represent non-animate entities, which cannot be any source of action. Therefore, there is
no ambiguity. In cases that the sole NP does represent human and animate entities, the
communicative contexts can easily make it clear whether it is the agent or patient.
Sentences with confusing interpretations are not acceptable, such as:9

(55) *卓玛打了一顿。
    *Zhuoma da le yi dun.
    Zhuoma beat PRT one time

---

9 These examples are from Liu, Pan, and Gu (1983: 480).
(56) *狗踢了一脚。
* Gou ti le yi jiao
Dog kick PRT one foot

This observation tells us that there do exist certain conditions on "pseudo passive sentences. Unlike some Indo-European languages, which are more rule-governed, the Chinese grammar is more sensitive to pragmatic and conceptual factors. Constructed on the basis of the information structure required by descriptive sentences, the so-called "pseudo passive" sentences make a maximum use of pragmatic and cognitive resources in their organization, and the identification of their relational structures of semantic functions. At the same time, in order to reduce the probability of ambiguity, there is a pragmatically oriented condition. This condition limits the NP's representation of animate entities, unless such representation is absolutely necessary, and such representation can be possibly interpreted in the immediate communicative contexts and within the limit of native speakers' global experience.

3. Topic-Comment and the Direction of Verbs

Li and Thompson (1981) basically treat "pseudo passive" as having a "topic-comment" structure with the sentence-initial element being the topic and the following element being the comment on that topic. As a description of symptomatic characteristics of the type of sentences concerned, this treatment does not conflict with my analysis. However, it does not equate to an analysis of the syntactic phenomenon in question.
Especially, it does not provide any explanatory answers as to how such a structure comes into being, and does not specify what conditions this structure has on its linguistic components, particularly the verbs. Thus, their description seems to suggest that anything can be put into this concerned pattern to achieve a topic-comment effect in Chinese.

Another related analysis comes from Y. R. Chao. Chao (1968: 702) concludes that due to the lack of distinction of voice in Chinese verbs, the direction of a verb may be outward from the subject as actor or inward toward the subject as goal. Chao (1968: 702), however, observes that there exists a group of "Middle Voice" verbs in Chinese. The direction of these verbs "goes either way." Consider the verbs in the following:

(57) 门已经开了.
Men yijing kai le.
Door already open PRT
"The door has already opened."

(58) 画儿挂的不正.
Huar gua de buzheng
Picuture hangs PRT crooked
"The picture hangs crooked (not necessarily has been hung)."

Chao (1968: 703) points out:

The simplest way is to treat them as intransitive verbs of action rather than transitive verbs of action inwards or in the passive, unless there is an agent word to make the received action explicit.
Based upon my understanding, Chao basically interprets these "middle voice" verbs the same as adjectives. Actually, these verbs can be distinguished from other verbs by attaching the aspect marker *zhe* to them.

(59) 门开着呢。
Men kāi zhe ne.
Door open PRT PRT
"The door is open."

(60) 大衣在墙上挂着。
Dàyī zài qiáng shàng guā zhe.
Coat at wall up hang PRT
"The coat is hanging on the wall."

(61) *仗打着。
* Zhàng dǎ zhe.
Battle fight PRT

(62) *饭吃着(呢)。
* Fàn chí zhe (ne).
Meal eat PRT (PRT)

Thus, on the one hand Chao seems to imply that because of the lack of voice in Chinese verbs, all transitive verbs may take a patient-like subject as in "pseudo passive" sentences, and on the other hand, however, there are some verbs of a special category, which are more likely to involve in such sentences. Then two questions may be asked. The first is, do Chinese verbs have voice distinctions? The second, is the phenomenon of "pseudo passive" sentences a result of the lack of voice, or a syntactic symptom that covers up the

---

10In Chinese, it's hard to tell adjectives from intransitive verbs in terms of their syntactic distribution.
real nature of Chinese verbs? In other words, do Chinese verbs have directions? In the following, I shall try to answer these questions associated with both analyses.

3.1 Conditions on “Pseudo Passive” Sentences

In this chapter, I have pointed out that the function of “pseudo passive” sentences is to depict some state or properties of certain presented entities. However, these states, or properties are not any kind of states. Considering all the examples listed, we see that sentences denote a resultative state. Consider the following:

(63)  ?字写了。
      Zi  xie  le.
      Character  write  PRT

(64)  字写完了。
      Zi  xiewan  le.
      Character  write:finish  PRT
      “(I) have finished writing these characters.”

Obviously, (64) with the result explicitly spelled out is much better than (63). One may argue that sentence (28) could hardly be a resultative sentence. For readers’ convenience, I repeat (28) here as (65):

(65)  这饭能吃。
      Zhe  fan  neng  chi.
      This meal  fit  eat
      “This meal tastes OK.”

I should point out that “pseudo passive” sentences with model verbs like neng ‘can,’ and keyi ‘may’ describe the current states of entities based on the interpretation of the results
of some potential actions. In fact, verbs that may occur in the concerned sentences are action verbs, and those “Middle Voice” verbs. The former, as I pointed out previously, have a very clear direction from the agent to the patient in sentences with the active perspective, and the latter, as Chao observes, have directions going either way. The reason for this selection may lie in the nature of the resultative state itself. A resultative state is the current state of an entity caused by a certain previous event. For the described entity to be affected, there must be certain action with clear direction towards that target entity. That may explain why only transitive action verbs and “middle voice” verbs may occur in the sentences in question. As resultative state is closely associated with “pseudo passive” sentences, the verbs selected must be compatible with, or capable of denoting such a state either by themselves, or in combination with other elements in the verb phrase in such sentences. Thus, unlike what people may believe, not all transitive verbs may occur in “pseudo passive” sentences. For example:

(66a) 小王喜欢那位姑娘.
Xiao Wang xihuan nei wei guniang.
Xiao Wang like that CL girl
“Xiao Wang likes that girl.”

(66b) *那位姑娘喜欢.
*Na wei guniang xihuan
That CL girl like

(67a) 小王恨老张.
Xiao Wang hen Lao Zhang
Xiao Wang hate Lao Zhang
“Xiao Wang hates Lao Zhang.”
Although the verbs in above sentences are transitive, they cannot occur in “pseudo passive” sentences, since they do not depict a resultative state, but rather constant stative situations.

Closely linked to the resultative state is the boundedness exhibited in “pseudo passive” sentences. That is, “pseudo passive” sentences are bounded with some individualized event. In other words, they cannot depict some generic situations.

Compare:

(68a) 他洗了一件衣服。
Ta xi le yi jian yifu.
He wash PRT one CL clothes
“He has washed a piece of garment.”

(68b) 衣服洗了。
Yifu xi le.
Clothes wash PRT
“(That piece of) garment has been washed.”

(69a) 他天天洗衣服。
Ta tiantian xi yifu.
He everyday wash clothes
“He washes clothes everyday.”

(69b) *衣服天天洗。
* Yifu tiantian xi.
Clothes everyday wash

As a result of the boundedness, the described entity must be definite.
To sum up, the resultative state, the boundedness with individualized events, and the definiteness of the described entities together give rise to the symptomatic "Topic-Comment" structure in "pseudo passive" sentences. We therefore see that the pattern of "pseudo passive" sentences is not a convenient structure for any kind of description without condition. These conditions are: first, it is associated with the semantic situation of resultative state; second, it is bounded with individualized events affecting some definite entities; third, only transitive action verbs, and "middle voice" verbs may occur in this pattern. In addition, to avoid possible ambiguity, there is a pragmatic condition to limit the sentence-initial NP to inanimate entities. This latter condition, however, is somewhat flexible if contexts can help pin down the correct interpretation.

3.2 Revisit the Direction of Verbs

Now let us come back to the question raised at the beginning of last section. That is, whether there is a voice distinction in Chinese verbs, or whether Chinese verbs have directions. From the analysis in section 3.1, we see that the selection of verbs in "pseudo passive" sentences is obviously associated with the direction of action of verbs. Verbs denoting pure state, such as ai ‘love,’ xihuan ‘like,’ hen ‘hate,’ etc., do not have directions of action, therefore do not occur in "pseudo passive" sentences. Verbs with inherent direction of action, such as those transitive action verbs, and "middle voice" verbs, may occur in these sentences. This verb selection is determined by the resultative
state involved in "pseudo passive" sentences. For the described entity to be affected in some way, the verbs involved must have a direction towards that entity, and that direction must be a direction of action. Since transitive action verbs have a clear direction of action, and combined with other elements in the verb phrase may denote a resultative state, they may occur in "pseudo passive" sentences. As for "middle voice" verbs, since their direction of action may go either way, and they may also manifest a resultative state with the combination with other elements in the verb phrase, they can also occur in the sentences in question. Thus, it seems that Chinese verbs do have a distinction of direction of actions. Then the question is why such direction of action is not that obvious in "pseudo passive" sentences.

One should bear in mind that the verb selection in "pseudo passive" sentences, as verb selections in other Chinese sentence types is determined by the specific sentence function and the verbal semantics involved, rather than the other way around. The basic function of "pseudo passive" sentences is description about the state of certain entity as a result of some individualized event. This descriptive nature, as illustrated in section 3.1 gives rise to the topic-comment structure based upon the Background-Foreground schema. The strong descriptive orientation and the apparent resultative situation manifested via the form of topic-comment have neutralized the inherent direction of action of verbs. That is why native speakers do not feel the direction of action implied in a
“pseudo passive” sentence, despite that fact they may still have a sense of that direction from their global experience associated with the inherent meaning of the verbs involved.

From the above analysis, it seems that there do exist inherent directions of actions in Chinese verbs, though the directionality of verbs may not be as strong as some Indo-European languages, such as English. This may explain why the direction of action can be neutralized in some circumstances. However, despite such neutralization, native speakers can still get the sense of direction from the inherent meanings of verbs.

3.3 Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that syntactic structure of “pseudo passive sentences is patterned on the basis of the information schema of Background-Foreground to meet its descriptive function. As a type of descriptive sentences, action and direction of actions are not factors in determining the structural make-up of these sentences. However, that is different from saying that the verbs involved do not have any inherent direction of action. In fact, such property of direction is an important factor, as argued, in the selection of verbs in “pseudo passive” sentences. This inherent property of the verbs involved is neutralized, or covered up by the descriptive characteristics and the situational semantics of resultative state.

The topic-comment relationship demonstrated in “pseudo passive” sentences is only a symptomatic feature associated with the descriptive function of such sentences. As
for the sentences in question, this relational structure does not exist without conditions. It is closely associated with the resultative state, which is bounded with individualized events. As a result of this boundedness, the entities described by such sentences must be definite. In addition, to avoid ambiguity, there is a trend for the sentence-initial NP in “pseudo passive” sentences to refer to inanimate entities. Thus, the structure of “pseudo passive” sentences is a strictly conditioned pattern.

4. Conclusion

In this part of study I have pointed out the misleading nature of the term “pseudo passive,” and argued that the sentences in question belong to the category of descriptive sentences with the functional characteristics to present certain inherent or non-inherent properties about the entities symbolized by the sentence-initial NPs. The syntactic structure of these sentences is constructed on the basis of the conceptual informational structure of Background-Foreground, and conditioned by the functional perspective of descriptive sentences in general. The identificatation of semantic functions associated with the sentence initial NP is achieved via pragmatic inferences with the help of native speakers global experience. The case of the so called “pseudo passive” sentences set another example that in Chinese, the formation of syntactic patterns is governed by conceptual and functional factors.
CHAPTER VI

"INVERTED" SENTENCES, PRAGMATICS AND

THE EMERGENT GRAMMAR

1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminary

Throughout this dissertation, I have maintained that word order is a system governed by principles at different levels of grammar. It is constrained not only by conceptual, functional, and syntactic principles, but also regulated by pragmatic factors. One of the important pragmatic factors is the speaker's communicative intent in the immediate communicative context. In Chapter V, I pointed out that Chinese grammar is pragmatically oriented in a sense that it is more sensitive to pragmatic factors, such as contextual environments and pragmatic inferences. I also pointed out, particularly in Chapter II, that in certain communicative environments, the structures of sentences may vary due to the active manipulation of information structure to satisfy speakers' communicative purposes in those contexts. Up till this chapter, I have mostly concentrated on how word order in Chinese is subject to constraints of conceptual and functional conditions, and the interplay among these conditions. In the current chapter, I shall focus on what impact pragmatic factors, such as speakers' communicative intents and immediate communicative environments, will have on the output of word order of Chinese
immediate communicative environments, will have on the output of word order of Chinese sentences. I have found that the best examples of such impact are the so called “inverted sentences” in Beijing conversational discourse. In this part of the study, I will demonstrate step by step in a detailed manner that in live conversational communications, functional and pragmatic motivations are the dominate factors determining word order.

1.2 Inverted Sentences

In Chinese, inverted sentences are syntactic phenomena found exclusively in the conversational discourse.

It is characteristic of inverted sentences to place various pre-verbal elements, for example, subject, auxiliary, and adverb to the end of the sentence:

(1) 来了，您!
Lai le, nin!
Come PRT you
"You are here!"1

(2) 吃什么，你要?
Chi shenme, ni yao?
Eat what you want
"What do you like to eat."

(3) 找什么呢，你又?
Zhao shenme ne, ni you.
Look what PRT you again

1 Due to the differences between Chinese and English, it is impossible to offer the corresponding English version of inverted sentence in every case. The English glosses offered for all examples only serve to give some rough idea of the meanings of these sentences. Please do not depend on the English translation for clues of the corresponding Chinese syntactic structure.
“What are you looking for this time?”

The early mention of “inverted sentences” can be found in Li (1957: 31). Although such phenomena may be found across Chinese dialects, those in Beijing dialect have caught special attention from many linguists. The phenomena are documented by Chao (1968: 69). Chao refers to the following sentences as “inverted sentences,” in that the normal order of subject-predicate of these sentences is reversed.²

(4) 进来吧，你！
    Jinlai ba, ni.
    Enter:cme PRT you
    “come in, you!”

(5) 要睡了，我。
    Yao shui le, wo.
    Want sleep PRT I
    “Want to sleep, I (do).”

(6) 可笑极了，这个人。
    Kexiao ji le, zhe ge ren.
    Funny awfully this CL person
    “Awfully funny, this man.”

At the same time, Chao also treats sentences (7)-(10) as containing “inverted subjects” (1968: 323, 673-674), regarding grammatical objects in these sentences as logical subjects.

² Examples (1)-(3) are taken from Chao (1968: 69).
(7) 下雨了。
Xia yu le.
Fall rain PRT
“It is raining.”

(8) 来了三只大狗。
Lai le san zhi da gou.
Come PRT three CL big dog
“There came three big dogs.”

(9) 跑掉了两个贼。
Pao diao le liang ge zei.
Run away PRT two CL thief
“There ran away two thieves.”

(10) 墙上挂着一幅画。
Qiang shang qua zhe yi fu hua.
Wall top hang PRT one CL picture
“On the wall hangs a picture.”

However, a clear distinction between (1)-(6) and (7)-(10) should be made. There are several reasons for this distinction. First, sentences (7)-(10) belong to a specific syntactic category, which I have identified in Chapter III as the presentative sentences, with the specific functional sentence orientation to fulfill the task of presentation. Their syntactic structure is determined by conceptual principles in relation to the spatial relationships in the real world, and the functional principles with regard to presentation. Second, because of the presentative function of these sentences, usually, and in fact most often, the seemingly “inverted” subjects in these sentences are indefinite. However, this is usually not the case with sentences like (1)-(6). Third, due to the functional conditions on presentative sentences, the verbs in sentences like (7)-(10) are limited to a set of verbs
denoting either state, or change of state, compatible with the presentative function of presentative sentences. Therefore, the structural and semantic characteristics of these sentences are explained in terms of conceptual principles of spatial relationship in conjunction with Vendler (1967) and Dowty's (1979) theory about verbal semantics. Fourth, as pointed out by Tai and Hu (1991), while sentences like (1)-(6) occur almost exclusively in informal, spontaneous conversations, presentative sentences such as (7)-(10) occur in both formal and informal discourse.

Apart from presentative sentences, some other sentences should also be distinguished from "inverted" sentences, including sentences as follows:

(11) 您来了，您。
    Nin lai le, nin.
    You come PRT you
    "You have come, you!"

(12) 他七十了，他。
    Ta qishi le, ta.
    He seventy he
    "He is already seventy years old, he."

It is typical for these sentences to have subjects repeated at the end of the sentence. In my MA thesis (1989), I pointed out that these sentences have an emphatic function, which is different from that of inverted sentences.

There are some other sentences structurally seem the same as the inverted sentences. However, they cannot be restored to the "normal" order as can the "inverted sentences."
(13) 好啊，你！
Hao a, ni!
Good PRT you
“How good of you! (Sarcastically)”

(14) 得了吧，你!
De le ba, ni!
Enough PRT PRT you
“That’s enough!”

The order of both sentences cannot be reversed. In the case of (13), if it is reversed to the “normal” order, the resulting meaning will be, “How are you?” which is a greeting. As for (14), the order is conventionalized. Thus, the scope of the current study will cover only those sentences exemplified by (1)-(6).

1.3 Previous Studies of Inverted Sentences

Both Li (1957) and Chao (1969) give only very brief descriptions about inverted sentences, and include no detailed analyses. Chao’s description indicates his recognition of inverted sentences as a spoken phenomenon. He basically treats inverted sentences as a result of “afterthought” in the speech activities. His major concern is on the syntactic characteristics of such phenomena.

Along the line of the afterthought treatment comes Chen’s (1982) analysis. Considering pragmatic factors exclusively associated with informal spoken language, he argues that “inverted” sentences are due to the phenomenon of zhujia ‘afterthought appendage’ by speakers after their expressing what are in their minds first.
The most comprehensive structural description of "inverted sentences" comes from Lu (1980). From a structuralist standpoint, Lu has not only offered a detailed characterization of the syntactic features of the inverted sentences, but also provided a list of patterns between the "normal" sentences and their inverted counterparts. Lu concludes that inverted sentences are the results of structural "transposition," which involves not merely a single directional movement of certain sentential elements, but rather a transposition of two constituents. Thus in (15), the subject and the predicate have exchanged their positions:

(15a) 你哥哥来了吗？-------------->
    Ni gege lai le ma?
    You elder brother come PRT PRT
    "Has your elder brother come?"

(15b) 来了吗，你哥哥？
    Lai le ma, ni gege?
    Come PRT PRT you elder brother

Against the afterthought treatment, Packard (1986) offers a "Left Dislocation" analysis, arguing that the sentence-initial elements are moved to that position due to focusing purpose.

Basically, all these analyses are more concerned with the structural descriptions of the syntactic patterns in terms of the canonical word order of SVO and its possible variation within the sentence-grammar. Despite the important descriptive value of these

---

3 Here Packard’s use of “dislocation” is obviously different from the term’s original notion. For an introduction of the term “dislocation,” please refer to Radford (1988:530-533).
studies, they have offered very few theoretical explanations of this common linguistic phenomenon in spontaneous spoken Chinese. Although here and there, some of them have touched upon some motivations for the occurrences of inverted sentences, they generally lack of any detailed and systematic analyses of those aspects. As a result, what is missed is a full account of the relationship among the syntactic pattern in question, its motivating factors and Chinese grammar. However, the understanding of such relationship is key to the understanding of the important pragmatic-sensitive characteristic of Chinese grammar.

To fill in this gap in the study of inverted sentences, Hu (1989), and Tai and Hu (1991) concentrate their efforts mostly on the pragmatic motivations of “inverted” sentences in terms of the characteristics of conversational discourse. Although the two studies differ in perspective, the main results can be summarized as follows:

The occurrence of “inverted” sentences are pragmatically motivated in the environment of informal conversation discourse. They are conditioned by conversation structure such as the local management systems, namely, turn taking, adjacency pairs, and repairs (Sack, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Levinson 1983). They are also constrained by the organization of the information structure unique to the spontaneous conversational speech such as idea units (Chafe 1979, 1982). Thus, the occurrences, and the structuring of inverted sentences are in fact called upon to fulfill various oral communicative tasks by the characteristics found exclusively in the spontaneous conversational environment, rather than determined by autonomous sentence-internal rules.

The above discovery demonstrates again that rather than arbitrary, self-contained and autonomous, Chinese grammar is sensitive to functional and pragmatic factors. It allows within the scope of convention a maximum degree of freedom to negotiate various
regularities in different communicative environments. This relationship between Chinese grammar and the contextual environments is the focus of this chapter.

1.4 Conversational Discourse and Inverted Sentences

In Chinese, the informal conversational discourse is drastically different from formal written as well as formal spoken discourses. However, so far, most of the grammatical descriptions of word order in Chinese are results from studies of formal Chinese, despite the fact that great discrepancies in terms of informational and structural organizations can be found between the informal spontaneous conversations and formal written and spoken Chinese. Therefore, very often, and not uncommonly, analysts are ignoring linguistic phenomena found in the former situation regardless their persuasiveness and naturalness in the specific contextual environment in question and their importance to the understanding of Chinese grammar as a whole. For example, in the description of Chinese word order, the canonical view is that the subject is before the predicate, and the verb is before its object. This conclusion is obviously based upon the observation of patterns of active sentences in formal Chinese. Though there is nothing wrong with this observation itself, it covers only part of what is going on in Chinese language with respect to word order. Very often people tend to view generalizations based on formal written Chinese as absolute governing rules over the entire Chinese language system, instead of a trend of regularities associated with that particular discourse in question. I believe that if
one takes a close examination of patterns actually occurring in different genres of
discourse, he would arrive at a quite different conclusion. Differences among various
genres of discourse are far greater than we might think of from a pure sentence grammar
standpoint. As for this respect, Chafe (1979) identifies four types of discourse genres in
terms of formal vs. informal distinction, namely informal spoken, informal written, formal
spoken, and formal written. Since the focus of the current study is not to characterize the
distinctions among the corresponding Chinese discourse types, I will only concentrate on
the features of naturally occurring conversations which belong to the informal spoken
discourse.

One striking difference between informal spontaneous conversations and formal
Chinese is word order, which seems much more flexible in the former than in the latter.
One apparent piece of evidence to show for this difference is that while inverted sentences
permeate daily conversations, they can be rarely found in formal written and spoken
Chinese. This is largely due to the characteristic differences in informational as well as
organizational structures between naturally occurring conversations and formal written
and spoken language. To fully understand these differences, it is necessary to distinguish
some major functional and structural differences between naturally occurring spontaneous
conversations and formal spoken language such as classroom lectures, public speeches on
the one hand, and formal written language such academic papers, reports and newspaper
editorials on the other. Tai and Hu (1991:79) have the following observation:
Conversation is constructed through social interaction, and is itself a form of social interaction. In conversation, human beings utilize language to make inquiries for information, to make requests, to negotiate, to react to different speech acts and social actions (Geis 1989), and to “create the self” through the eyes of other participants (Mead 1962).

Such functional characteristic of conversation requires participants in conversation not only to co-ordinate with each other in the process of conversation in terms of its organizational structure such as topic selecting, turn-taking, but also follow a set of cooperative principles such as described by Grice (1975), so that successful communications can be achieved within given contextual environments. It also requires participants of conversations to negotiate certain norms of regularity in terms of the syntactic patterns adopted in accordance to the intended communicative purpose in the full range of interactive contexts. This latter point can be better understood in terms of Hopper’s (1988) Emergent Grammar, which I will further discuss in section 2.4.

Considering all these characteristics of conversations, we see that instead of being marginal and irregular instances, linguistic patterns generated from conversations are required and conditioned by features unique to the conversational communication.

As observed by Sack, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in their work on conversation analysis, rather than bulks of randomly occurring sentences by interlocutors, conversations are orderly structured.

This orderly structured organization of conversation is reflected in its local management system turn-taking and adjacency pairs. It is characteristic of
conversations to follow the format of an A-B-A-B-A-B distribution of talks across two participants, and to develop in paired exchanges of question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance, apology-minimization, and the like (Levinson 1983). Another two important notions of the local management system are transition constructional units and transition relevance place which are closely associated with the mechanism of turn-taking. The former refers to the minimal units over which turns of talk are constructed and the latter refers to the ending point of such units, at which the transition of speakers may take place. It is observed by Tai and Hu (1991) that in Beijing conversational discourse, inverted sentences signal transition relevance places more clearly than non-inverted sentences both intonationally and syntactically. Therefore it is reasonable to hypothesize that such linguistic phenomena are closely linked to the organizational mechanism of turn-taking in naturally occurring conversations.

Different from formal written language, which is produced in highly integrated sentences, conversation, like all forms of spontaneous spoken language, is produced with idea units. As for idea units, Chafe (1982: 37) has the following observation:

Idea units typically have a coherent intonation contour, they are typically bounded by pauses, and they usually exhibit one of a small set of syntactic structure.

Another feature of naturally occurring conversations is their unplanned nature. Unlike formal written and spoken language, whose organizations are well pondered upon, informal conversations are impromptu. Like all forms of spontaneous spoken language,
conversations are limited by contextual settings, such as the pressure to compete with others to take turns, and the limitation of the time available to each speaker. Many linguists have observed that in actual speech, speakers frequently, though not always, lose control due to the lack of preparation, the pressure of the speech environment, and the problem of linearization. Therefore, communicative breakdowns and repair due to mishearing and misunderstandings occur frequently in naturally occurring conversations.

The interactive nature, specific information structure, unique local management systems and frequent error-repairs compounding the communicative intents by speakers on each conversational occasion and physical communicative contexts constitute the triggering environment for the occurrences of inverted sentences. In the next section, I will demonstrate how these factors work together in the formation of the inverted sentences by some concrete cases in Beijing conversational discourse.

2. Case Analyses

2.1 Data Base

The data base for this part of study consists of independently collected recordings of naturally occurring face-to-face conversations in daily speech in Beijing. The data includes excerpts from the corpus of recordings compiled by Robert Sanders, and recordings collected by the current author.
2.2 Some General Observations

Based upon the data collected, generally speaking, word order seems "freer" in conversational discourse than in formal written and spoken languages. However, at a closer scrutiny, one will find that this "freedom" is a result of interactive negotiation by participants in the conversational discourse to serve given communicative purpose, and is demanded and regulated by the information structure and various structural mechanisms of the conversational discourse. Thus, the linguistic patterns adopted in the conversational discourse as patterns found in formal written and spoken discourse follow a set of regularities to best serve their given purposes rather than occur arbitrarily and randomly. The significant informational and management differences between the conversational discourse and formal written and spoken Chinese give rise to different organizational strategies, which follow different sets of regularities. It is in this sense that I doubt whether the term "free," or "freedom" without specification of its implication would capture the real nature of what has been observed in the conversational discourse. But on the other hand, if we look upon Chinese grammar as a system regulating the structural organizations of that language, including patterns in all types of discourse genres, we will accept the fact that it serves all the communicative needs demanded by these different genres with its flexibility to vary its regularities in accordance to each of these genres. For example, to fit in with the integrated and succinct characteristics of formal written or spoken discourse, it tightens the rules for the patterning of word order, whereby no
ambiguity and misunderstanding would occur, and information can be delivered most efficiently. With the conversational discourse, due to the rich contextual information functioning to secure correct understanding of the information communicated. Chinese grammar allows more variations in word order to meet the needs of social interaction in spontaneous spoken communication. Comparing with the rigidity of word order patterning in formal written and spoken Chinese, we can say that the word order in naturally occurring conversations is freer. However, it should be understood that such freedom is well within the scope of regularities negotiated by participants via their past experience and convention, and conditioned by the informational and organizational systems of the conversational discourse.

2.3 Data Analyses

Different from formal written and spoken Chinese, sentences in conversational discourse allow subjects, adverbs, and in some cases subjects together with adverbs or main verbs to be placed at the sentence-final position. Here are some examples:

(16a) 录音机怎么了?
Luyin ji zenme le?
Recorder what PRT
Subj Predicate
“What is (wrong) with the recorder?”

---

4 All the (b) sentences have the same meaning as the (a) sentences despite that the intended messages may be different.
(16b) 怎么了， 录音机？
Zenme le, luyin ji?
What PRT recorder
Predicate Subj

(17a) 这小孩儿没辙。
Zhei xiaohar metzhe.
This child hopeless
Subj Predicate
“This child is hopeless.”

(17b) 没辙， 这小孩儿。
Meizhe, zhei xiaohar.
Hopeless this child
Predicate Subj

(18a) 您又找什么？
Nin you zhao shenme?
You again look:for what
Subj Adv Verb Obj
“What are you looking for again?”

(18b) 找什么，您又？
Zhao shenme, nin you?
Look:for what you again
Verb Obj Subj Adv

(19a) 你就拖着吧。
Ni jiu tuo zhe ba.
You simply delay PRT PRT
Sub Adv Verb
“You simply delay doing it.”

(19b) 拖着吧，你就。
Tuo zhe ba, ni jiu.
Delay PRT PRT, you simply
Verb Subj Adv
(20a) 你想半傻不傻吧？
Ni xiang ban sha bu sha ba?
You think half automatic not automatic PRT
Subj Verb Subordinate Clause
“(So) you know that it is a semi-automatic (camera)?”

(20b) 半傻不傻吧，你想？
Ban sha bu sha ba, ni xiang?
Half automatic not automatic PRT you think
Subordinate Clause Subj Verb

(21a) 你就觉着习惯了吧。
Ni jiu jue zhe xiguan le.
You then feel PRT accustomed PRT
Subj Verb Subordinate Clause
“You then feel accustomed to it.”

(22b) 习惯了吧，你就觉着。
Xiguan le, ni jiu jue zhe.
Accustomed PRT you then feel PRT
Subordinate Clause Subj Verb

In (16)-(22), only the (a) order is permitted in formal written or spoken Chinese, while both (a) and (b) orders can occur in naturally occurring conversational discourse. As pointed out in section 2.2 and previous sections, such flexibility is systematically conditioned by the communicative function, the informational structure and the organizational mechanisms unique to the conversational discourse. Next, I will demonstrate that the (b) orders are on the one hand regulated by the functional principles of coherence and relevance in the management of information and on the other hand motivated by speakers’ efforts to meet the requirements of the cooperative principles and local management systems in conversational discourse.
As for coherence, it is achieved on the basis of the assumption of relevance by the addressees, including the speakers' communicative intents and the shared socio-cultural knowledge by all the participants in the discourse. The assumption of relevance depends upon the contextual effect achieved in the immediate communicative context. For discussions of both notions, readers are referred to Chapter II.

As for the triggering factors for the occurrences of inverted sentences, Tai and Hu (1991) identified basically three major motivations, namely thematization, repair and afterthought appendage which are directly responsible for the occurrence of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse.

2.3.1 Attentional Focus, Thematization, and the Implication Behind

In this section, I shall demonstrate that one of the important motivations for the occurrences of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse is the factor of attentional focusing. One tactical strategy to materialize such a focus at the sentential level in naturally occurring conversation is thematization, whereby the focal information intended is placed at the sentence-initial position to serve as an ostensive stimulus to the addressee so that maximum contextual effect can be achieved, and the relevance of the utterance in question and the coherence of the discourse are sustained.

As pointed out in section 1.4, conversation is produced through active interactions among its participants in the full range of linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. The
speaker has access to a quick feedback from the context, but at the same time he is limited by the contextual settings, such as the pressure to compete with other speakers to take turns in conversation and the limitation of the time available to him due to the constraint of the linear property of time and speech. Therefore, the speaker actively adopts all kinds of linguistic and paralinguistic devices in his speech to drive home his intended meaning. One of the important devices in the informational organization is word order. In Chapter II, I pointed out that in the information structure of a sentence, the initial point of a sentence is extremely important in that it functions both as the attentional focus to the addressee, and the informational base for further informational build-up to the addressee and its processing to the addressee. Thus, the starting point serves as the departure point of information structure in a sentence. In terms of these specific characteristics, Traugott and Pratt (1980), and Brown and Yule (1983) recognize the starting point as the theme, and treat it as a formal category of a sentence. The theme of a sentence can be any part of speech or any syntactic constituent. In terms of information structure, the theme should be understood as an information unit realized as the left-most constituent of a sentence. Thus, the process of organizing the information structure by making certain constituents the theme of a sentence is a process of thematization. In such process, a certain syntactic constituent, instead of being at its usual position in formal Chinese, is placed at the sentence-initial position as the theme of the sentence. In the process of choosing a theme, two factors are worth discussing. One is the speaker’s
communicative intent, and the other is the contextual environment, including the immediate communicative context and the physical environment. The first one involves the speaker’s active manipulation of the information structure, and second one involves the speaker’s response to the contextual constraints. Both of the factors are conditioned by the interactive nature of naturally occurring conversations.

As for the first factor, Brown and Yule (1983: 128) observe that “what is primarily at issue is the judgment that the speaker makes about what the hearer believes to be the case with respect to what he wants to talk about.” Therefore the determination of the theme of a sentence is a choice by the speaker depending on what he wants to focus upon in his utterance. Traugott and Pratt (1980) also point out that the order of words in the surface structure communicates an emphasis or perspective being adopted by the speaker.

The second factor indicates that the determination of theme is also conditioned by the contextual environment, so that the utterance produced is relevance in that it achieves the largest contextual effect. In naturally occurring conversations, these factors work together in the process of thematization.

The following are some excerpts demonstrating how inverted sentences occur as a result of thematization in the conversational discourse. Excerpt (23) consists of one utterance produced by a younger participant of the discourse to an older one at the entrance of a school.
A's utterance is a typical imperative sentence in Beijing Mandarin. Here it is utilized to perform the social action of suggestion. One special characteristic of the Chinese imperative sentence is that it may or may not contain an actor. When the actor is mentioned, it may be put at the sentence-initial position or at the end of the sentence. As for its actual sentential position, I find that it is totally contextually determined rather than syntactic required. In the current case, (23) A thematizes the verbal expression because the information it carries is the most important message he tries to convey in that specific circumstance. As Firbas (1964), Halliday (1967), and Prince (1981) have noticed, speakers tend to begin with the most salient information and progress toward less salient information in their speech. By thematizing the verbal expression, Speaker A not only places an emphasis on the informational message of direction, but also catches the audience attention, because of the effect of the overlap of attentional focus and the informational focus the sentences inversion achieves.

One important point about thematization is that very often, a speaker places a certain sentential element at the sentence-initial position, not because he conscientiously tries to invert a given syntactic structure to achieve certain communicative effect, but because that the piece of information carried by that element occurs first to his mind due
to its value of importance in the immediate communicative context. Thus, if we follow Chafe's (1979, 1982) observation about spontaneous spoken language, we may view an inverted sentence as consisting of two juxtaposed idea units in a linear order along the axis of real time. The one that occurs first to the mind of the speaker comes first, and the one that occurs second comes next. The order of their occurrences in the mind of the speaker is conditioned by the value of importance attached to the individual piece of information in the relevant context. In an action of suggestion of direction, nothing is more important than the suggestion itself. Therefore it is produced first. The occurrence of the second person pronoun is due to the social reason of politeness as it is indicated by the polite form of nin 'you.' I argued in Hu (1989) that that "nin" is placed after the verbal expression is due to its given status in the discourse. However at a closer scrutiny, I find that that conclusion is inadequate, because what we have here is not a mere second person pronoun, but a linguistic element attached with specific social meaning. That piece of information carried by "nin" is definitely not given in terms of either the speaker's assumption about the state of consciousness of the addressee, or its retrievability in that given context. Its latter placement is simply because it is not as important as the verbal expression of the sentence in the social action of direction (though it is necessary for the sake of politeness), and it is not urgent. The intended message delivered via sentence inversion by the speaker has fulfilled its communicative goal of direction, and has obtained its relevance in that it has achieved the maximum contextual effect in that circumstance.
By maximum contextual effect, I refer to the fact that the addressee has processed that piece of information with the least effort in that given context, or in other words, the addressee has little difficulty in comprehending that message in that communicative environment.

Excerpt (20) is a conversation among three participants about going to hospital.

An inverted sentence is indicated by a right arrow (→).

(24)  A: 去医院的时候儿你妈跟着吧?
       Qu yiyuan de shihour ni ma gen zhe ba?
       Go hospital PRT time you mother follow PRT PRT
       “Will your mother go to the hospital with (your father)?”

       B: 今天我没让她跟着啊. . .
       Jintian wo mei rang ta gen zhe a...
       Today I not let her follow PRT PRT
       “Today I did not let her go (with him)...”

       C: 对了, 这两天别让她去.
       Dui le, zhei liang tian bie rang ta qu.
       Right PRT these two day not let her go
       “Right, you had better not let her go these days.”

       明天可能更够呛. 都冻冰了.
       Mingtian keneng geng gouqiang. Dou dong bing le.
       Tomorrow perhaps even worse Already freeze ice PRT
       “Tomorrow it will be even worse perhaps. It’s already icy (on the road).”

       B: 明天更够呛. . .
       Mingtian geng gouqiang...
       Tomorrow even worse
       “Tomorrow will be even worse...”
Excerpt (24) is a good example of ostensive communication, in which the participant utilizes an inverted sentence to change the direction of conversation following the principle of cohesion and relevance. As the excerpt shows, all the utterances before the inverted sentence indicated by the right arrow are about who is to go to the hospital and the weather and road condition relevant to that topic. After several exchanges of talk, A’s utterance leads to a shift of attention to the hospital itself. This shift is initiated by A’s placing a piece of unexpected information that “it is inconvenient to register” at the sentence-initial position. Effectively, this unexpected new information immediately catches the attention of the hearer. This is evidenced by B’s following repair, “It is actually not inconvenient.” Up till now the shift has been successfully accomplished. We see that this sentence inversion by Speaker A effectively gives out an ostensive stimulus to call on the attention from other participants in the discourse. In this sense it has achieved its largest contextual effect, and thus obtains the relevance of the information conveyed. To the speaker, in his attempt to shift the discourse direction, the verbal information is
obviously the most important message, and therefore it occurs first in his mind. As for the hospital, since it is already known and is of little informative value at the moment. Therefore that piece of information is not something urgent and is squeezed to the end of the sentence.

The above two examples show how the process of thematization is utilized by addressees to call on attentions from addressees to their intended messages. Note that in both cases, exactly as I argued in Chapter II, the prominent informational status of the inverted elements is achieved by the status of the starting point of these inverted sentences. In above (32) and (24), the starting point of each of the inverted sentences functions not only as the attentional focus but also the informational load to the addressee. Therefore, they appear much more outstanding to the addressee than they are in normal non-inverted sentences.

2.3.2 Thematization and the Principle of Temporal Sequence

Now let us come to some theoretical implications of the relationship between the process of thematization and the conceptual principle of PTS. The above analysis of intentional focusing via the process of thematization seems against PTS, in that in many cases it puts what is new ahead of what is given as shown by (24). Citing Givon's re-statement of Jespersen's "principle of actuality" that "attend first to the most urgent task," Haiman (1993: 903) points out that there co-exist two universals. "The first universal
puts topics at the beginning of their sentences, while the second puts focused elements there."

It is true that there is a general trend to order the given before the new among languages, and it is also generally observable in languages that the most urgent is placed ahead of the less urgent as demonstrated in section 2.3.1, and pointed by many linguists such as Firbas (1964), Halliday (1967), and Prince (1981). However, I shall argue that these two observations are made at two different levels, at least in the case of Chinese.

The general trend to place the linguistic carrier of what is known before that of what is new is in line with the conceptual schema of Background-Foreground, which is an abstract extension of the perceptual principle of Containing-Contained spatial relationship. It is at the conceptual level that I argue that the Background-Foreground schema is in line with PTS, since Background is always assumed to be known and the Foreground is always assumed to be new in a relative sense. This relationship can be illustrated by the following scheme:

(25) Development of Communication: ------------------------------>
Conceptual Information Structure: Background----------Foreground
Discourse Information Status: Given New
PTS: First Second

This scheme tells us that along the axis of the development of communication, the general trend in Chinese is to order background before foreground based on the Background-Foreground schema. At the discourse level, this ordering corresponds to the Given-New arrangement. Since the given occurs first and the the new occurs second long the
development of communication, it is in line with PTS. This is an extended application of PTS at the conceptual level. I would call the principles of Background-Foreground and the conceptual extension of PTS **conception-based principles** in terms of the following point. These principles are abstract extensions of perceptual-based principles such as Container-Contained and the perceptual core of PTS which are relatively transparent reflections of the phenomenal world. They deal with the patterning of word order in relation with the order of thoughts with respect to communicative environments in general, including all discourse genres.

The second trend occurs in a quite limited scope, generally in naturally occurring, unplanned, spontaneous, and informal speech, although I do not preclude artificial reproductions of what is going on in these mentioned environments in other genres of discourse. This second trend is triggered and conditioned by the characteristics of naturally occurring spontaneous speech. This second trend follows the perceptual core of PTS. I term this perceptual core of PTS as Perception-Based Real-Time Principle. It applies to the actual flow of thought of the speaker in the immediate communicative contexts at the moment of speaking along the development of real time within the time span of that single utterance. It is illustrated as follows:

```
(26)  Development of Communication  ---------------->
      Development of Real Time  ---------------->
      Flow of Thought  ---------------->
      Status of Urgency  Urgent----------Less Urgent
      PTS:  First          Second
```
Following Chafe (1979, 1982), I view an utterance in unplanned spontaneous speech as consisting of a sequence of juxtaposed idea units along the axis of real time. The ordering of idea units is regulated by conception-based principles in terms of the informational status associated with each unit relative to others both before and after itself. It is also regulated by the actual emergence of thoughts stimulated by the urgency of the information due to the pressure of the immediate context. The status of urgency is in a different dimension from those of given and new, though what is urgent is usually new or unknown to the addressee in the discourse. The informational urgency usually, and very often is a direct reflection of the order of phenomena in the real world, including the socio-linguistic behavior of the participants of the discourse, as perceived by the speaker. Thus, no matter whether in the case of offering direction, calling attention to some immediate danger, or change of direction of conversation due to social or physical need, the status of urgency is associated with the relative status of urgency of each element in the entire chain of events perceived by the speaker. The status of urgency is not discussed in the same domain of information status of “given” and “new,” the determination of which are based on the speaker’s assumption of what is in the mind of the addressee at the moment of speaking. Therefore as illustrated in the analysis of (23) and (24), the order of inverted sentences symbolizes the actual sequence of emergence of chain of thoughts at the moment of speaking, rather than a reflection of the information status evaluated at the conceptual level. This order of the most urgent attended first is a transparent reflection of
the mapping relationship between the real world and the corresponding linguistic form. Thus, it is in conformity with PTS.

The conception-based principles are responsible for the order of information structure at the conceptual level while the perception-based real-time principle functions at a different level in the organization of syntactic patterns in terms of a more direct relationship between word order and the real world. In communicative activities, when there is a conflict between conception-based principles and the real-time principle, the former give way to the latter due to the pressure of the immediate communicative requirements in terms of immediate communicative purposes. This is exactly what we have in (23) and (24).

In this sense, one may have a better understanding of the rare occurrences of inverted sentences in formal written and spoken Chinese, and their high degree of prevalence in spontaneous speech. The differences are in great part determined by the former’s detachment from the rich and ever changing contextual environment and the latter’s close association with interactive and complex or even “unfriendly” communicative contexts. The former is able to evade the linear problem of spontaneous speech in terms of development of real time, while the latter has to deal with that problem now and then compounding other unexpected situations. The difference in terms of the detachment and the involvement allows formal Chinese to follow the conceptual extension of PTS at ease to fit in with the characteristics of formal writing and speech to meet their communicative
purposes, and forces informal spontaneous speech to follow the perceptual core of PTS to cope with the linear problem and the ever changing and evolving situations. Thus, in formal written and spoken Chinese, there is a trend to order sentences in such a way that the pattern reflects the conceptual schema of Background-Foreground in which the format of Topic-Comment has its roots, while in unplanned, spontaneous speech, such as naturally occurring conversations, the trend is to follow the order of “the most urgent attended first” as demonstrated in section 2.3.1.

2.3.3 Repair

In naturally occurring conversations, due to time pressure, the problem of linearization, and the hardship in maintaining the flow of thoughts in the interactive process of conversation, speakers make errors here and there. It is common place that a speaker now and then modifies his previously spoken utterance. As Brown and Yule (1983: 17) point out, “the speaker may replace or refine expressions as he goes along.” This kind of modification is repair. In their works on conversation analysis, Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) have identified four types of repairs, namely self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated self-repair, self-initiated other-repair, and other initiated other-repair. Tai and Hu (1991) have found that in Beijing conversational discourse, self-initiated self-repair is one of the key factors contributing to the occurrences of inverted sentences. Self-initiated repair is a common feature in spontaneous speech. It is an
important aspect of the speaker’s active control of his own speech. Judging from my data, I have found that it is a trend for such a repair to occur at the end of a sentence, which very often serves as a transition relevance place for possible exchange of speakers. Since at this point, the current turn may be taken over by the next speaker, it is natural for a self-initiated repair to occur here to keep the on-going conversation coherent and the repair in question relevant. Consider the following example:

(27) A: 哎，还有一斤多呢吧？
   Ai, hai you yi jin duo ne ba.
   PRT still exist one catty more PRT PRT
   “There is still (perhaps) more than one catty (left)”

B: 甚么呀！
   Shenme ya!
   What  PRT
   “What!”

C: 将近二斤。
   Jiangjin er jin.
   About  two jin
   “It’s about two catties.”

B: 将近二斤。
   Jiangjin er jin.
   About  two jin
   “It’s about two catties.”

   哎，上回称的是一斤零点儿，
   Ai, shanghui cheng de shi yi jin ling diar,
   PRT last:time weigh PRT be one catty and a:little
   “Last time the weight was a little more than one catty,”

   -------> 一斤二两吧也就。......
   yi jin er liang ba ye jiu......
   one catty two tael PART only
   “it’s perhaps only one catty and two tael.”
This is a conversation among three participants when they weigh some apples. The repair in question initiated by B actually starts from his second utterance, indicated by the discourse marker “Ai.” After B’s utterance of “about two catties,” he immediately realizes that the weight is incorrect. The first attempt of repair is initiated at his second utterance. The speaker at this moment is still not very sure about the exact weight. But he quickly offers the correct number in his last utterance, which is produced in an inverted form. As one may have expected, it is the correct number of weight that is placed sentence-initially. Since the information of the weight is the key message in this repair, it is only natural for it to be the focal point in the whole sentence. Considering the repairing sequence, one can see that the inverted sentence has made the effect of repair stronger and more salient by placing the constituent bearing the repairing message immediately beside the previous number. Thus, the inverted sentence has not only fulfilled the speaker’s goal of repair, but also sustained the coherence of the discourse and the relevance of the utterance in question. At this moment, one may point out that, well, it seems that in this process of repair, thematization is also involved, since the repairing message is placed at the sentence-initial position as the focus of the sentence. That is correct. Thematization and repair are two devices utilized by speakers to fulfill different functional purposes. The former one establishes an attentional focus at the sentential level by making certain constituent the theme as pointed out earlier, while the latter is a discourse device to

---

5 For detailed discussions about discourse markers, please refer to Miracle (1991).
correct incorrect, inaccurate, or inadequate messages. Although the two have different functions, one may involve the other. Therefore, sometimes, among other means, repair may utilize the process of thematization to meet its own goal. This is what has happened in the current case. What we have is the interplay among different discourse tactics rather than an absolutely clear-cut situation.

2.3.4 Afterthought Appendage

Naturally occurring speech is produced in idea units along the axis of real time. Due to the interactive characteristic, the restriction of the linear property of spontaneous speech, and the context of natural environment, in conversation, the speaker utters the most salient and the most important in his mind first to strive home his intended message and direct the addressee’s attention so as to sustain the coherence of the discourse. Very often at the end of the current turn before the next turn takes over, the current speaker may append some additional information to what he has just expressed. This kind of appendage is referred to as afterthought appendage. This is exactly the situation in (5) in Chapter II. To refresh the readers memory, I will repeat it as (28)

(28)→干嘛去呀，拿着个脸盆？
        Ga ma qu ya, na zhe ge liangper?
Do what go PRT take PRT CL washbowl
        “What are you going to do, taking a washbowl?”

This first part of the utterance is produced in a situation when the speaker saw his child running towards him, and the second part na zhe ge lianper (taking a washbowl) is added
to the first part as he noticed that there is a washbowl in the child’s hand. As a result, an inverted sentence is yielded. This order of speech reflects the speaker’s response to the speaker’s visual perception of the real world along the development of time. The constituent *gan ma qu ya* (what are you going to do) is produced first because it represents what strikes the speaker’s eye first. The afterthought appendage represents what comes in his sight next. Of course, the actual appendage is determined by the speaker himself, rather than required by the sentence structure. However, in this case, the addition of the afterthought appendage provides the hearer with some extra information which makes the question more specific. Therefore it is necessary for the communicative purpose. One implication of this case is that in naturally occurring speech, word order reflects the thought flow of the speaker at the moment of speaking. The order of that flow is regulated by the contextual environment of the discourse as well as of the speaker’s perception of the immediate physical world. Another example can be given as follows:

(29)—*回家吗， (停顿) 你们？*

*Hui jia ma, (pause) nimen*

*Go home PRT you?*

*“Are you going home?”*

Example (29) is produced by a student to his classmates after class. The speaker’s utterance is produced when a group of students are walking out of the classroom. The speaker asks some of his classmates whether they are going home. But immediately after the utterance of *hui jia ma* (going home?), the speaker finds that this already spoken utterance is not clear in that it does not contain the information that to whom it is
addressed. One sees that in this particular situation such information is necessary since there are many students coming out of the classroom at the same time. Thus, an inverted sentence is produced as a result of the afterthought appendage. This appendage is clearly indicated by a pause between the previously spoken and the additional appendage.

Consider one more example:

(30)  A: 小李上门口来了。
      Xiao Li shang menkou lai le.
      Xiao Li up doorway come PRT
      “Xiao Li is coming to the doorway.”

      B: 是吗?
      Shi ma?
      Be PRT
      “Is that true?”

      A: 嗯。
      Hmm
      “Hmm.”

---C: 昨天中午谁值班呀 (停顿),
      Zuotian zhongwu shui zhiban ya (pause),
      Yesterday noon who on duty PRT
      “Who was on duty yesterday noon (pause),

      我给你打电话时?
      wo gei ni da dianhua shi?
      I to you make call time
      when I called you.”

      A: 你跟人家横来着啊?
      Ni gen renjia heng laizhe a?
      You to somebody harsh PRT PRT
      “Were you harsh to that person?”
C: 我没跟人家横啊.
    Wo mei gen renjia heng a.
    I not to somebody harsh PRT
    “I was not.”

In this conversation, C produces an inverted sentence in her question about who was on duty yesterday noon at the telephone switchboard. The fact that the dialogue starts immediately after C enters the doorway, and the first part of the utterance is produced without any preliminary warm-up opening, has evidenced that that question has occupied her mind for some time. It is obvious that the most important information she wants to get from A and B is who the person on duty was. Therefore the questioning part is produced first without any hesitation. However, immediately after the utterance of it, she finds that it is necessary to further narrow down the time range so that the addressees can have a better idea about the specific person she is talking about. Thus, after a pause, an appendage of time frame is added to the first part of the utterance, and as a result, an inverted sentence occurs.

As for the inverted sentence in (30), there is one point worth discussing. In formal Chinese, an adverbial clause is placed before the main clause. In a sentence, a time expression servers as a conceptual frame containing certain event in question. Based upon the Background-foreground schema, such an expression is placed before the main clause or before the verb phrase. However, in spontaneous speech, such an order may change due to the specific ordering of information flow in the mind of the speaker at the moment of speaking. As in (30), the question about who was on duty is in the speaker’s mind for
quite some time and stands silently at that moment, and all other thoughts have to give their way. What comes second depends on the status of relevance of the given information in terms of contextual coherence regarding the communicative purpose. Thus, the order of main body of question-time frame in this utterance follows exactly the perceptual core of PTS. Now we see that there is a conflict between the conceptual principle of Background--Foreground arrangement and the perceptual core of PTS. As argued previously, the principle of Background-Foreground is an abstract extension of the more primitive Containing-Contained relationship in the spatial relationship. Therefore it is a general principle which belongs to conception-based principles. In live conversational environments, such a conception-based principle, as argued in 2.3.2, gives way to the perceptual core of PTS, which directly reflects the ordering relationship along the axis of the development of real time. If we treat the actual order of thoughts due to the relative urgency in relation to communicative purpose as certain reality regardless of the abstract information status of the thoughts themselves, we would accept that such an order is in conformity with PTS. Thus, at the linguistic level, the perceptual core of PTS takes precedence over other abstract conception-based principles, such as Background-Foreground, and conditions the organization of word order. Thus, (30) serves as a good example of how immediate contextual factors affect the output of syntactic patterns.
2.4. Inverted sentences and the Concept of Emergent Grammar

So far I have demonstrated that the occurrences of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse are basically triggered by three pragmatic motivations, namely, attentional focusing, repair and afterthought appendage. The above analyses have shown that Chinese grammar is not only constrained by conceptual and functional principles, but also sensitive to pragmatic factors. It allows within its convention the maximum freedom to vary syntactic patterns to meet different communicative purposes. The patterns of variation, rather than pre-determined, are derived from negotiation via the interaction among participants of specific discourse within the immediate context. This relationship between contexts and grammar can be better comprehended in terms of Hopper's notion of Emergent Grammar. Hopper treats grammar as a "real-time social phenomenon, which is always in a process but never arriving and therefore emergent." The notion of Emergent Grammar, based on Hopper (1987: 142), suggests that

Structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process. Grammar is hence not to be understood as a pre-requisite for discourse, a prior possession attributable in identical form to both speaker and hearer. Its forms are not fixed templates, but are negotiable in face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers' past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, ...the term Emergent Grammar points to a grammar which is not abstractly formulated and abstractly represented, but always anchored in the specific concrete form of utterance.

Come to the conversational discourse, such a grammatical negotiation should not be simplistically understood in terms of certain verbal expressions, but in terms of speech acts
(Austin 1962) and social actions (Geis 1989). The output of such negotiation establishes certain temporary regularities within the current contextual environment. The re-emergence of such regularities in similar situations may give rise to grammaticalization of such contextual constraints. It is in this sense that we understand the emergent characteristics of grammar, and it is in this sense that we may have a better understanding of the relationship between language and context. However, one should not take regularities generated from one type of discourse as absolute rules that are applicable to all discourse genres. They are discourse dependent. For example, formal written and spoken Chinese generally do not allow the occurrence of inverted sentences. For that will not only destroy its integrated and succinct characteristics but also may give rise to ambiguities and hence decrease its communicative effectiveness. Nevertheless the “rigidity” of formal Chinese and the “looseness” of informal spontaneous conversations are both embraced by the system of Chinese grammar. Both of the “rigidity” and “looseness” are frequently redefined in the endless process of grammatical emergence via the interaction among speakers of that language in the full range of communicative contexts, written as well as spoken, and formal as well as informal.

From the analysis of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse, we see that Chinese grammar is very sensitive to pragmatic factors, allowing sentential variations to meet different communicative goals. But this does not mean in conversational discourse, Chinese sentences are totally free from grammatical rules. For example, even
an inverted sentence like (31a) cannot be changed into the order of (31b) under any circumstances.

(31a) 钱包掉了，你！
    Qianbo diao le,   ni!
    Wallet drop PRT you
    "(Your) wallet dropped, You!".

(31b) *掉钱包了，你!
* Diao qianbao le,   ni!
    Drop wallet PRT you

As for (31a, b), one possible explanation to the fact the sequence qianbao diao le cannot be reversed as in (31b) might be that the relationship, Described Entity-Description of Resultative State, demonstrated between the elements of qianbao ‘wallet,’ and diao le ‘to have dropped’ is already grammaticalized based on the Background-Foreground schema. It is so rigid that other factors may not change it. Another fact is that as for some syntactic patterns, such as presentative sentences, no inverted forms can be found even in conversational contexts. Consider:

(32a) 前边住着老张。
    Qianbian zhu zhe   Lao Zhang.
    Front live PRT Lao Zhang
    "Lao Zhang lives in the front."

(32b) *老张，前边住着。
    Lao Zhang, qianbian zhu zhe.
    Lao Zhang   Front live PRT

Then the question is whether in Chinese there are grammatical rules to start with. If there are, where do they come from, and how do they arise from different discourse contexts?
The following comparison may not be accurate, but it suffices the purpose of making my point. If we compare grammar with traffic controls, we may find two situations. In highly developed big cities, traffic rules are clearly spelled out. During most of the day time, the traffic control at intersections is very tight. Everyone has to act according to the traffic signals issued either by traffic lights or by policemen. However, at night, at some less important intersections, the control may be loosened. Though the rules are still there, arriving at those intersections, drivers and pedestrians will use their common sense to decide whether they should go or not. But in some less developed rural areas, we may not have traffic rules to start with. The traffic control at intersections in those areas may totally depend on common sense and negotiations via social interactions among drivers and pedestrians. As a result, some conventions may be worked out. For example, those who arrive first, go first. In this sense, the English grammatical system is more like the tightly enforced traffic control in big cities during day time. It is more rule-governed. How about the Chinese situation? In this aspect, the Emergent Grammar does not give us the whole answer. It seems to me, the Chinese system does have rules, but most time it relies on pragmatics factors. Only when pragmatic, and semantic factors fail to give out hints do grammatical rules come into play. But based on Emergent Grammar, the Chinese system can only be like the traffic control in the less developed rural areas. This seems not the case to me. Therefore to answer this question fully, more comparative studies of data
from conversational discourse, narratives as well as formal written and spoken Chinese are necessary.

3. Conclusion

Having discussed the relationships among occurrences of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse, their pragmatic motivations, and the emergent grammar, I have demonstrated that Chinese grammar is sensitive to pragmatic factors associated with communicative environments, including the speaker’s communicative intents and discourse contexts. Chinese grammar allows variations within the scope of convention to meet different communicative functions of different discourse genres. Thus, in naturally occurring spontaneous conversations, Chinese grammar varies its regularities via the interactive negotiation among participants in given communicative contexts to achieve the best communicative effects. Such interactive negotiation is carried out via the means of speech acts and social actions not only within the boundary of discourse contexts, but also within the scope of the socio-cultural conventions established by native speakers of Chinese. Thus the regularities established are in line with the conventionalized conceptual viewpoint about the real world in that socio-cultural society, and at the same time serve the purpose of effective and efficient communication among native speakers of that language. The notion of emergent grammar helps us obtain a better understanding of how different regularities come into being in discourse genres, and even more importantly, the dynamic process of grammaticalization. From the case of inverted sentences, we see that
instead of relying on sentence-internal rules, Chinese depends heavily on pragmatic regulating factors as shown in the discussions of motivations behind the formation of inverted sentences, and conceptual semantics as illustrated in the iconic reflection of the schema of Background-Foreground and the Principle of Temporal Sequence. It is in this sense that I claim that Chinese is a pragmatically oriented language.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

1. Preliminary Remarks

This dissertation started with a theoretical background, which laid out the theoretical basis and set the orientation for the entire research of this dissertation. The purpose of this study is to set a new direction for the analysis of Chinese word order, so that a better understanding of the relationship between Chinese word order and word order principles can be achieved. To conclude this study, a summary is provided, and some related issues will be briefly discussed.

2. A Summary

This study has examined a wide range of word order phenomena in Mandarin Chinese, including sentential starting points of Chinese sentences, presentative sentences, the paratactic construction, the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences, and inverted sentences. Though it is far from being exhaustive, it nevertheless has provided some basic understanding of word order principles, and the impact of these principles on the formation of word order patterns in Chinese.
2.1 Word Order Principles

There are generally three sets of word order principles with regards to Chinese word order. They are: conceptual principles, functional principles, and grammatical principle.

The conceptual principles are further classified into two types. The first type consists of conception-based principles, including the Principle of Temporal Scope, the Abstract Extension of the Principle of Temporal Sequence, the Ground-Figure and the Background-Foreground schemata. These principles work at an abstract level conditioning the general arrangement of word order patterns of Chinese sentences. PTSC dictates that the word order of Chinese sentences is patterned in such a way that the entity representing a larger temporal scope of conceptual state is ordered before that representing a smaller temporal scope of conceptual state. Thus, a sequence of temporal expressions in Chinese such as (1) follows the following order rather than a reversed one:

(1) 明年三月十号上午八点
    Qunian san yue shi hao shangwu ba dian
    Next:year march 10th number morning eight clock
    "at eight a.m. March 10 of next year."

In (1), starting from the left, each element symbolizes a larger temporal scope containing a smaller one on its right. In Chinese, this sequential order cannot be changed. The Abstract Extension of PTS patterns a sentence on the basis of the information status of the information each linguistic unit carries at the discourse level. Thus, the given is ordered
before the new, since the given is always provided before the new. The Ground-Figure and the Background-Foreground schemata are responsible for the general information structure of Chinese sentences.

The second type consists of perception-based principles, including the Principle of Container-Contained, the Principle of Whole-Before-Part, the Principle of Trajectory-Landmark and the perceptual core of PTS. These are more transparent reflections of the phenomenal world. However, there are some differences among them. In Chapter VI, I pointed out that these perception-based principles work in a limited environment in a sense that rather than at an abstract level, they apply in the immediate communicative contexts of spontaneous speech at the moment of speaking. This description fits in with the perceptual core of PTS very well, but it does not fit well with the Principle of Container-Contained, the Principle of Whole-Before-Part and the Principle of Trajectory-Landmark. Those latter principles are all principles of spatial relationships. Nevertheless, in contrast with all conception-based principles, all these principles share a common ground. That is, they are more perception-based. Thus, the Principles of Container-Contained, Whole-Before-Part and Trajectory-Landmark are grouped together with the perceptual core of PTS, because they directly reflect images of the real world. However, they apply in a different dimension from the perceptual core of PTS, since they are concerned with spatial relationships rather than one dimensional development of real time. Another difference is that in conversational communicative activities, the impact of the perceptual core of PTS
seems more obvious than spatial principles. This is due to the linear property commonly shared by both the development of speech and the development of real time. In other words, the mapping from the perceptual core of PTS to the syntactic structure is more direct than that from spatial relationships.

Note that a syntactic structure in Chinese is not a result of a single kind of principle. Usually, its patterning involves both conception-based and perception-based principles. For example:

(2) 桌上放了一本书。
Zhuo shang fang le yi ben shu.
Desk top put PRT one CL book
Desk book
[Container [contained]]
[Background [foreground]]
“There is a book on the desk.”

(3) 五个苹果吃了一个。
Wu ge pingguo chi le yi ge.
Five CL apple eat PRT one CL
Five apples one apple
[Whole [part]]
[Background [Foreground]]
“Of five apples, one is eaten.

Though (2) and (3) are built on the basis of two different perception-based principles, namely the Principle of Container-Contained, and the Principle of Whole-Before-Part. In terms of information structure, they are all in line with the Background-Foreground schema, which is a conception-based principle.
In actual communicative activities, different conceptual principles interplay with each other. When they are compatible with each other, they enforce each other as demonstrated in the cases of presentative sentences, the paratactic construction, and “pseudo passive” sentences. In these cases, word order is basically patterned on the basis of the Background-Foreground Schema, and is supported by the abstract extension of PTS. These two conception-based principles are in harmony with, and further enforced by the perceptual core of PTS. This can be illustrated by the compound sentences discussed in Chapter II. Here is one example:

(4)    天晚了，不出去了.
Tian wan le, bu chu qu le.
Day late PRT not out:go PRT
Reason Consequence
[Background [Foreground]]
Time -------------------->
Urgent Less Urgent
“It is late. (We ) are not going out.”

In Chapter II, I pointed out that this type of sentences are constructed on the basis of PTS by placing the reason before the consequence. It is also compatible with the Background-Foreground schema in that the first part of the sentence, tian wan le ‘it is late’ serves as the informational background for the foreground information to be presented. In a situation to explain to someone why “we are not going out,” the reason itself is the most important message for the speaker to deliver. Therefore according to “attend first to the most urgent task,” it is placed at the sentence-initial position in real time communication.
Thus, it is also in line with the perceptual core of PTS, which follows the thought flow along the axis of the development of real time.

However, when there is a conflict between the conception-based principles and the perception-based principles, the former give way to the latter as in the case of inverted sentences. For example:

(5a) 那地方挂号麻烦着呢。
Na difang guahao mafan zhe ne.
That place register inconvenient PRT PRT
“It is very inconvenient to register at that hospital.”

(5b) 挂号麻烦着呢，那地方。
Guahao mafan zhe ne, na difang
Register inconvenient PRT PRT that place
“It is very inconvenient to register at that hospital.”

Example (5a) is a typical descriptive sentence constructed on the basis of the Background-Foreground schema, which is conception-based. However, as illustrated in Chapter VI, this sentence can be changed into (5b) by the speaker according to the status of urgency of the idea units in the thought flow. Thus, according to the perceptual core of PTS, the speaker puts what is urgent first in his speech. We see that in this case, the Background-Foreground schema gives way to the perceptual core of PTS.

The most important functional principle pertaining to Chinese word order is Functional Sentence Perspective. This principle orders the syntactic pattern in such a way that within a sentence, the communication develops towards its communicative goal, be it presentation, or qualification. It also determines that the distribution of communicative
dynamism is from the lowest to the highest in terms of the informational contribution to the completion of the communicative goal. This functional principle is one of the key factors conditioning word order, and the selection of starting points of natural sentences in Chinese. In conformity with the Background-Foreground schema, it places the element with the lowest CD at the sentence-initial position as the background for further information build-up in the process of sentential communication.

In addition to FSP, other functional principles include the Principle of Perspective Taking, the Principle of Focus and the Principles of Coherence and Relevance. These are more discourse-oriented principles. That is, unlike FSP, which is a general principle for the organization of information structure of a sentence, these principles generally work in the immediate discourse environment in terms of the addressee's communicative intents. In the immediate communicative environment, these principles take precedence over FSP. This is evidenced by examples of inverted sentences in Chapter VI. Generally speaking, the syntactic structure of Chinese sentences is a transparent reflection of FSP. But in the immediate communicative environment, to meet the speaker's specific communicative purpose, such a transparent reflection is shattered in favor of a re-organization in line with more discourse-oriented principles. Thus, for active sentences, even if the communication develops towards the specification of actions, due to the purposes of information focusing, and coherence keeping, the order can be altered from Actor-Action to Action-Actor. For descriptive sentences, though the communication develops towards the specification of the
description of certain presented entities, the order may change from Described-Describing to Describing-Described. But, as argued and illustrated in both Chapter II and Chapter VI, these word order changes are by no means random and free. They are well conditioned by the above functional principles and communicative requirements in their corresponding discourse contexts.

In comparison to conceptual principles and functional principles, the grammatical principle is the last resort in the organization of Chinese word order as pointed out in 2.2.5 in Chapter V. It functions to avoid possible ambiguities in situations when global experience and pragmatic inference cannot help or are not sufficient in the determination of relational properties within sentences. Instead of being a set of absolute and clear-cut rules applicable across discourse genres, it should be viewed as a collection of regularities generated from different discourse genres for their best communicative effects. These regularities vary from one type of discourse to another. In formal written/spoken Chinese, Chinese grammar tightens its grip on the patterning of word order in accordance with the integrated and succinct characteristics of formal Chinese. In that situation, active sentences strictly follow the SVO order, and presentative sentences, descriptive sentences strictly follow their conventionalized patterns on the basis of their respective conceptual schemata. In informal spontaneous spoken discourse, Chinese grammar allows word order to vary in response to the pragmatic requirements of the ever changing discourse
environments. The clear evidence to show for this latter point is the case of inverted sentences.

2.2 Word Order and the Conceptualized World

In the beginning of this dissertation, I stated that grammar is a symbolization of the conventionalized conceptual world. Reflected in the grammatical structure of Chinese is an iconic relationship between the extra-linguistic reality and the linguistic reality. However, such an iconic relationship cannot be simply understood as some one-to-one correspondence between the physical world and linguistic structure, but should be viewed as a relationship generally mediated and regulated by conventionalized conceptions at an abstract level. This kind of relationship is well evidenced by the selected word order phenomena discussed in this research.

From what has been discussed in this dissertation, we see that Chinese word order is basically a reflection of two basic relationships in the real world. The first one is spatial, and the second one is temporal.

However, Chinese word order does not directly copy the order of the phenomenal world. In fact, as for some relations in the real world, it is impossible for language to copy. For example, in the real world, the spatial relationship is three-dimensional, whereas human speech is one-dimensional. For such a three-dimensional relationship to map onto a one-dimensional system, there are two possibilities. That is, it is either from the whole to
the part, or from the part to the whole. However, it is the conventionialized conceptions of the spatial relationships of Container-Contained and Whole-Before-Part that are responsible for many word order patterns in Chinese. These conventionialized conceptions about the spatial relationship reflect an attitude of the Chinese culture towards the real world, rather than present a mirror image of the physical reality. Even the perception-based Container-Contained and the Whole-Before-Part conceptions themselves are already abstractions from the perceptual experience obtained via the interaction with the physical world by the Chinese people. The cases of the paratactic construction, "pseudo passive" sentences, and the general pattern of Chinese noun phrases have shown that these word order patterns are generally conditioned by conception-based principles, including the Background-Foreground schema, and PTSC. Though presentative sentences transparently reflect the Container-Contained relationship, their information structure follows the conception-based Background-Foreground schema. The same is true of the relationship between word order and the temporal relationship in the real world. As demonstrated in the compatible relationship between the arrangement of Background-Foreground, or that of the Given-New and PTS, it is the abstract extension of PTS that is responsible for the general patterns of word order of Chinese sentences, although I am not denying the existence of more perception-based direct mapping relationship between temporal development of events in the real world and word order in spontaneous speech as demonstrated in the case of inverted sentences.
2.3 Word Order and Communicative Function

This dissertation has demonstrated that patterns of word order in Chinese are closely associated with communicative functions different types of sentences assume.

I have examined three major syntactic patterns, namely presentative sentences in Chapter III, the paratactic construction in Chapter IV, "pseudo passive" sentences in Chapter V, and two word order phenomena, the selection of sentential starting points in Chapter II, and inverted sentences in Chapter VI.

As for the three syntactic patterns, as demonstrated and analyzed in the respective chapters, each of them is constructed for the fulfillment of its own specific communicative function. This function-sensitive feature of Chinese syntax is not only self-evident in the syntactic organization of the selected syntactic patterns, but also is reflected in their semantic characteristics, especially the verbal semantics around these patterns.

Thus, to meet the communicative function of presentation, presentative sentences are so constructed that the spatial relationship between the containing space and the contained entity is iconically, transparently, and most economically incarnated by the syntactic pattern (1) in Chapter III, which I repeat here as (6):

(6) \[ (NP_{loc}) \ldots V \ldots NP \ldots \\
\begin{array}{ccc}
1 & 2 & 3 
\end{array} \]

Except activity, the situational types demonstrated by the three types of presentative sentences, the (Dis)appearance type, the Existential type, and the Quasi-Existential type
cover all the possible semantic situations, change of state, state, and resultative state, corresponding to the three phases of the physical reality of existence: appearance, existence, and disappearance, and their fuzzy categorizational border lines between change of state and state.¹

The same is true of the paratactic construction. Built in conformity with the real time arrangement of presentation first and description second on the basis of PTS, the syntactic organization of the paratactic construction meets exactly the functional requirements of presentation and description in communicative activities.

Being members of descriptive sentences, the so-called “pseudo passive” sentences are closely associated with their descriptive function. In the syntactic organization of such sentences, the information structure of Background-Foreground in terms of the information of the described and the describing plays the determinative role.

As argued in Chapter II, the starting point in Chinese sentences is basically determined by sentential information structure in terms of the development of communication. That is, in line with the principle of FSP, the starting point constitutes the initial information base for any further informational build-up along the process of communication. It is also conditioned by its own functions within a sentence such as the attentional focus, the perspective, the agent, and the given. Thus, among other things, the

¹The resultative state can be viewed as a situation across the border-line between change of state and state, since it focuses on the result, which is a state, but the same time makes a reference to the event of change giving rise to the current state.
starting point in Chinese sentences is the product of the interplay among the principle of FSP in terms of information structure of sentential communication and the other functions the starting point assumes in a sentence as required by specific communicative purpose.

The phenomenon of inverted sentences is a good example of how communicative functions, as reflected in the manipulation of information, repair and afterthought appendage by speakers in natural spontaneous conversations, determine the word order of Chinese sentences.

2.4 Word Order and Pragmatics

One important finding of this dissertation is that Chinese is pragmatically oriented. In both Chapter V and Chapter VI, I spend considerable space on this point.

Generally speaking, word order of Chinese sentences is patterned on the basis of information structure in terms of temporal-spatial conceptual principles and FSP. However, identification of semantic functions, and word order variations in spontaneous speech environments largely depend upon pragmatic inferences based on native speakers’ knowledge of the world, and the immediate contextual environments. The former situation is illustrated in detail in the analysis of “pseudo passive” sentences and the latter is evidenced by the phenomenon of inverted sentences.

As for “pseudo passive” sentences, semantic functions, such as agent and patient, do not matter much in the formation of their syntactic structure. However, this fact does
not prevent native speakers from obtaining the correct interpretation of the relational structure in these sentences from their global experience and the immediate contexts.

In the case of inverted sentences, the speaker's communicative intents in terms of speech acts and social actions play the most determinative role in the word order patterning process. It is the pragmatic factors in different immediate communicative contexts compounding the interactive characteristics of the conversational discourse that motivate and regulate the patterns of word order of inverted sentences in Beijing conversational discourse.

The comparison between the conversational discourse and the formal written/spoken Chinese in the analysis of inverted sentences has also shown that Chinese grammar is discourse-sensitive. This is evidenced by both the word order flexibility in informal spontaneous conversational discourse, and its rigidness in formal written and spoken Chinese. Chinese grammar varies its regularities in accordance with different discourse requirements to best serve their communicative purposes.

3. Some Related Issues

During the course of discussion, there are some issues which I have touched upon but have not systematically elaborated on due to the limitation of this study. The first one is about the flexibility of conceptual constraints on word order, the second one is the
relationship between syntactic patterns and information structure, and the third one is about word order and processing. In the following, I will discuss each of them briefly.

3.1 The Flexibility of Conceptual Constraints.

In the discussion of natural order and sentential starting points in Chapter II, I pointed out that although the conventionalized conception of the phenomenal order in the real world plays a key role in Chinese word order, in actual communicative activities, when circumstances arise, conceptual constraints may give way to immediate functional requirements such as focus, coherence, relevance, etc. Such situations are exemplified by (6)-(12) in Chapter II. One of these examples is repeated here.

(7)  "We are not going out today, it is raining.

As pointed out in Chapter II, in a neutral situation, (7) is not acceptable because the sequence we have here is in conflict with PTS, since it has placed the consequence before the reason. However, when (7) is produced to answer a question such as, “Weren’t we going to go out today?” (7) is quite acceptable. In this situation, by reversing the order, the speaker has answered the question right to the point, and thus maintained the coherence of the discourse.

However, certain conceptual constraints are so rigid that they cannot be overridden by functional principles or changed by pragmatic requirements. The best
example is the Cause-Result relationship, which is illustrated by (18)-(21) in Chapter II.

One of the examples is repeated here as (8):

(8) 经过激烈的争论，他让步了。
    jingguo jilie de zhenglun, ta rangbu le.
    Through fierce PRT debate he gave in PRT
    "After a heated debate, he gave in."

As demonstrated in Chapter II, under no circumstances, the order, Cause-Before-Result can be reversed. In addition, it seems to me that the Container-Contained relation also belongs to this category, since the reversed order is never found in the syntactic realization of presentative sentences. This phenomenon might be due to the existence of its parallel principle of Trajector-Landmark (see 2.5 Chapter II). But this does not explain why even in spontaneous speech activities, no inverted sentences such as the following can be found.

(9) *坐着一个人，台上。
    Zuo zhe yi ge ren, tai shang.
    Sit PRT one CL person platform up

(10) *种了一行垂柳，河边。
    Zhong le yi hang chui liu, he bian.
    Plant PRT one CL weeping willow river side

(11) *走了一个人，屋里。
    Zou le yi ge ren, wu li.
    Walk PRT one CL person room inside

Therefore, a further investigation into the flexibility of conceptual constraints on Chinese word order is necessary for a full understanding of the weight conceptual principles carry in the interplay with other conditioning factors in the organization of Chinese syntactic patterns.
3.2 Information Structure and Chinese Syntax

The analysis of the selected patterns of Chinese sentences have shown that the organization of information structure along the line of PTS and the conceptual arrangement of Background-Foreground is responsible for many word order patterns of Chinese sentences, such as presentative sentences, the paratactic construction and descriptive sentences including "pseudo passive" sentences. These types of sentences count for a large number of Chinese sentences.

However, up till now, most researches on Chinese syntax start with the semantic structure of the Agent-Action-Patient and its mapping relationship with syntactic patterns. As I have pointed out in many sections in this dissertation, such a relationship between syntactic structure and semantic structure is only obvious in one type of Chinese sentences, namely active sentences. For the majority of Chinese sentence types, the semantic relationship in terms of Agent-Action-Patient is of no importance in the formation of syntactic patterns. Y. R. Chao (1968) points out that in Chinese, sentences with the above relation are no more than 50%. If this observation is correct, and the analysis of the selected sentence patterns with regard to information structure holds for more than fifty percent of sentences in Chinese, then the traditional viewpoint of grammatical relations in terms of the grammatical meaning of Agent-Action-Patient should be re-considered.
Unfortunately, most researches of Chinese syntax have overlooked the significance of information structure in the general organization of syntactic patterns. Even discussions about the most related issue of the Topic-Comment relationship in Chinese sentences have not gone beyond discourse or syntactic level. For example, Li and Thompson (1981) basically treat Topic-Comment as a co-existing syntactic structure with that of Subject-Predicate in terms of the Agent-Action-Patient relationship in Chinese sentences. This treatment has first confused different types of sentences, and second, failed to see that the Topic-Comment relationship is only a reflection of some higher level conceptual principles in Chinese. In order to have a better understanding of information structure with regard to word order in Chinese, I believe that further studies along the line of this dissertation are called for.

3.3 Word Order and Processing

Recently, linguists such as MacWhinney and Bates (1989), and Hawkings (1994) point out that there is an important relationship between word order and processing. Hawkings (1994: 23) argues that grammar define a mapping between surface forms and meanings, and this mapping must be capable of being produced in real time. MacWhinney and Bates observe that grammar can be viewed as a class of solutions to the problem of mapping nonlinear meanings onto a highly constrained linear medium whose
only devices are word order, lexical marking, and superasemgmentals. They (1989: 8) further point out:

The universal and culture-specific contents of cognition interact with universal constraints on human information processing, creating a complex multivectorial problem space (Bates & MacWhinney, 1982; Karmiloff-Smith, 1984) In fact, there may be no perfect and stable pathway through this problem space.

They believe that "many processing constraints are in direct competition, and stability in one area may create instability in another." As for this aspect, they point out that in language there are two opposite forces. They are, (1) the charge to be "quick and easy," and (2) the charge to be "clear." It differs from the speaker to the listener with respect to the two forces. From the listener's perspective, "the more detail the speaker provides, the easier the listener's job." From the speaker's perspective, however, the quicker and the easier the utterance is, the less cost of articulatory effort for the speaker, and the more efficient speech output.

In light of the above observation, looking at the findings in this dissertation, I have the impression that this kind competition in terms of the two strives within language may well contribute to word order patterning in different genres of discourse in Chinese. In conversational Chinese, the tendency to attend the most urgent first can be seen as a result of the strive from the speaker to "get right to the point." Thus, "inverted sentences" can be viewed as effective devices to deliver the intended information quickly, since they put the information focus at the sentence-initial position, and everything else latter. From the
listener's point of view, in a live conversational context, this kind of information structure
can not be a barrier for them to process the entire message, since other necessary cues for
information process can be easily retrieved from contextual environments. Thus, maybe
in conversational discourse, the pattern of word order is more speaker-oriented.
However, conversational discourse is only one of the discourse genres. There is clear
evidence as shown in this dissertation that generally, the structural make-up of Chinese
sentences is organized on the Background-Foreground schema, such as the selection of
starting point, presentative sentences\(^2\) and "pseudo passive" sentences. This is especially
true in written Chinese. This might be due to its general detachment from contextual
hints associated with a live interaction between the producer and the receiver as in the
case of conversation. Therefore usually in written Chinese, a sentence will start with the
background information and proceeds towards the foreground (the information focus). In
this case, the production of sentences may be considered reader-oriented. But what is the
situation in oral narratives. Is it more like the written Chinese, or the conversational
Chinese, or a compromise between the two strives? I do not have a definitive answer for
the time being. As for the impact of competition between the two opposite forces with
respect to processing on word order across all discourse genres, I feel that we still have a
lot of unknowns.

\(^2\)The Contained-Contained schema on which presentative sentences are built is
well compatible with Background-Foreground.
Another point worth discussing is that faced with the dominant trend to organize Chinese sentences in terms of the Background-Foreground schema, which can be viewed as a reflection of the Whole-Before-Part and the Container-Contained relationships, I wonder if this is required by some universal strategies in processing. In other words, in terms of processing, I wonder if it is easier to proceed from the whole to part, or from the part to the whole. With regard to this aspect of processing, future researches are necessary.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


289


