Word Order in Mandarin: Reading and Speaking

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This paper starts with a close look at the relationship between Chinese transitive verbs and their object positions in sentences. Then large body of data were collected to show that the spoken form of contemporary Chinese has become more like a head-final language, in sharp contrast with the written form, which remains largely as a head-initial language. The split in grammatical rules has posted great challenge to the English learners of Chinese. In order to facilitate the beginning learners, this paper has made some pedagogical suggestions at the end.

1. The Issue

Chinese grammar has seemed notoriously flexible to many Chinese language learners. In some cases, the word order is so free that some scholars even claim Chinese has no grammar at all. However, as Teng (2007) puts it, no language may ever exist without a rigid grammatical system because for all languages in the world, word order is one of the default rules to determine the meaning of an information structure. Chinese is no exception. Looking back at the historical debates on the Chinese word order, two issues stand out. One is whether Chinese is an SVO language or an SOV language. The second one is whether the written form and spoken form share the same grammar.

It has been long noted that in Chinese the object of a verb can be on either side of the verb, which has induced the hot debate over the past several decades about whether Chinese is an SVO or SOV language. Although many linguists describe Chinese as an SVO language, Tai (1973) tries to solve the word order issue by observing the relationship between *ba*-construction and passive *bei*-construction, as shown in (1).

(1) a. 张三把玻璃打破了。
     'Zhangsan broke the glass.'
  b. 玻璃被张三打破了。
     'The glass was broken by Zhangsan.'

Based on the general passivization rules of languages, which turns the object NP of an active sentence into the subject of a passive sentence, Tai (1973) argues that *boli* introduced by *ba* in (1a) should be treated as the object of the verb since it allows the passivization rule to map it into the subject position in the passive sentence in (1b).

Hence, he claims that Chinese should be classified as an SOV language. To explain the difference between *ba*-construction and non-*ba*-construction, raised in Li and Thompson (1981) and as is shown in (2), Travis (1984) uses the Principles and Parameters theory to define Mandarin as underlyingly an SOV language, but superficially an SVO word order in the surface structure.

(2)   a. 张三**打破**了<u>玻璃</u>。
          'Zhangsan broke the glass.'
      b. 张三把<u>玻璃</u>**打破**了。
          'Zhangsan broke the glass.'

Travis argues that a Chinese transitive verb assigns its theta role to the left but its accusative case to the right. After the theta role assignment, *ba* is inserted to let the preverbal NP have Case. Otherwise, the preverbal NP would have to move to the post-verbal position to get Case from the verb. Li (1990) pushes this idea even further and claims that Chinese is an SOV language except under the Case assignment requirement. Gao (2000 and 2008) gives many more examples other than *ba*-construction, shown as (3) and (4), to demonstrate that Mandarin should be treated as a base-generated SOV language.

(3)   a. 他们**去**了<u>北京</u>。
          'They went to Beijing.'
      b. 他们到<u>北京</u>**去**了。
          'They went to Beijing.'

(4)   a. 李小姐**很满意**王先生的<u>处理方式</u>。
          'Miss Li is very satisfied with the way Mr Wang handled the matter.'
      b. 李小姐对王先生的<u>处理方式</u>**很满意**。
          'Miss Li is very satisfied with the way Mr Wang handled the matter.'

Bear in mind that these claims generally only refer to the structures within a VP. Gao (2000) has also brought out the issue that the term SOV should really mean head-final and the phenomenon is seen in many other phrases, such as NP, PP, CP, etc. According to Greenberg (1963), head-final means that for a phrase, the head is found at the end (the right peripheral) of the phrase. For instance, in a noun phrase (NP) in Chinese, the head noun always occurs last to form an [AP N]$_{NP}$. It is obvious that in an SOV language, the head verb always comes after the object NP to form a [NP V]$_{VP}$ if the verb is a transitive one. Since a VP is just an instance of phrases in a language, an SOV language is generally considered to be head-final. Japanese and Korean are the most cited languages to demonstrate head-final or SOV phenomenon. In the same manner, French is

considered to be an example of SVO/head-initial language since the heads are generally found at the beginning of all phrases, regardless of whether it is a VP, or an NP. The claim that Chinese is undergoing the change from head-initial to head-final is greatly supported in Gao (2000) and later works. For instance, Gao (2007) has argued very convincingly that many of the coverbs/prepositions in the traditional analyses actually should be analyzed as case markers while the locative endings are really postpositions that combine with the NP before them to form postpositional phrases.

In Feng (2002), we see another aspect of the debate. By quoting many phrases in newspapers and magazines, he notes that many VO compounds can take another postverbal object in the written form, but not in the spoken form.

(5)　a.　面临九七回归，近两成市民有意**迁居**加拿大。（书面用语）
　　　　　'Before the return of Hong Kong to China, nearly twenty percent of the city residents planned to move to Canada.'

　　　b.　*在一九九七年香港回归大陆前夕，近百分之二十的城市居民打算**搬家**加拿大。
　　　　　'On the eve of the return of Hong Kong to China, nearly twenty percent of the city residents planned to move to Canada.'

Gao (2008) explains the different grammaticality judgments of the minimal pair *qianju* and *banjia* in (5) as follows: The VO compound *qianju* was formed a long time ago and had enough time to undergo re-analysis, a process in which an object nominal is incorporated into the verb to form a compound verb. Then the new verb was transformed by the transitivity strengthening rule and became a strong transitive verb that could take an object to its right. The *banjia*, on the other hand, may only be a recently coined VO structure and there simply hasn't been enough time for it to undergo all the syntactic/morphological changes, and therefore could not be used as a single transitive verb.[1]

With such a variety of variations in Mandarin phrase structures, people begin to seriously ask whether Mandarin should still be classified as a fundamentally head-initial language. In many recent publications (Chen 2007, Gao 2002, 2007 and 2008, Feng 2002, etc), some Chinese linguists began to note that the differences are systematically distributed in the different registers of the language. Gao 2008 has done a special research on

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[1]　The difference can be seen in the following examples, where a lexical item can be inserted into *banjia*, but not *qianju*. This shows that *banjia* is still a V-O sequence while *qianju* is an inseparable single compound verb.

(i)　在过去的几年里他搬了好几次家。
(ii)　*在过去的几年里他搬家了好几次。
(iii)　他曾数次迁居。
(iv)　*他曾迁数次居。

the differences and found that the head-final phrases are mainly found in the spoken form in the northern dialects, while the head-initial structure remains with the written form and in the southern dialect group. In this paper, I take a closer look at the word order issues in Mandarin Chinese and show that the current analysis of Chinese word order could demonstrate that Mandarin Chinese is split on its syntactic constructions in the different registers. The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, I lay out the theoretic background of the current analysis. In section 3, I show that there is a systematic difference in the phrase structures of CP, PP, and VP in the spoken and written forms. In section 4, I conclude the paper with remarks on how the change started to take place and what the change means in current CSL education.

2. Theoretical Background

Whether a language should be categorized as an SVO language or an SOV language depends on the linear positions of the objects to their verbs. In this sense, Japanese and Korean are typical SOV languages since the objects in these languages are usually found before their selecting verbs. In the terms of Greensburg (1963), an SOV language usually also displays head-final properties in other phrases. For instance, in Japanese, besides the OV sequence of the VP, we also see the head noun appear at the end of an NP. In a head-initial language, on the other hand, we usually find prepositions rather than postpositions. This phenomenon can be described with X-bar theories laid out in Jackendoff (1990) and Pollard and Sag (1994) as (6) and (7). The left-branching configuration in (6) is used to demonstrate the head-initial phenomenon, while the right branching configuration in (7) is used to explain the head-final languages.
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(6) Head-initial Structures:
   a. XP $\rightarrow$ X' YP   b. X' $\rightarrow$ X' YP   c. X' $\rightarrow$ X   YP

(7) Head-final Structures:
   a. XP $\rightarrow$ YP X'   b. X' $\rightarrow$ YP X'   c. X' $\rightarrow$ YP X

Theoretically, according to the Principles and Parameters framework, if a language displays all properties in (6), it should be classified as an SVO language. On the other hand, if a language displays the properties in (7), it should be categorized as an SOV language. However, Chinese is found to display properties of both (6) and (7) in all phrases except the ones listed in (8) and exemplified in (9), where the bold characters/ expressions are the head of the phrase and the underlined expressions are modifiers.

(8) a. NP $\rightarrow$ AP N'
     b. N' $\rightarrow$ NP N
     c. VP $\rightarrow$ AP V'

(9) a. <u>张三去年五月写的</u> 那部 <u>长篇</u>小说。
         'the thick novel that Zhangsan wrote last May'
     b. <u>王五的汉语语言学</u>专著。
         'Wangwu's book on Chinese linguistics'
     c. 李小姐<u>每天</u> 都 <u>兢兢业业地</u>工作。
         'Miss Li works wholeheartedly everyday.'

Thus, for an NP, its modifiers *Zhangsan qunian wuyue xie de*, *nei-bu*, and *changpian* in (9a) and *Wangwu de* in (9b) and arguments *hanyu yuyanxue* in (9b) all come before the head noun in both written and spoken forms. This is also true with adverbial modifiers: *meitian*, *dou*, and *jingjingyeyede* must appear before the head verb *gongzuo*, as is shown in (9c). However, in the next section, I will show that in all other phrases, Mandarin Chinese displays both head-initial and head-final properties. I will focus my arguments on how the different properties are distributed in the different registers of the language and show that the spoken form displays more head-final properties. In particular, I want to argue that the spoken form displays more head-final properties, while the written form displays more head-initial properties in the following structures, where IP stands for an inflexion phrase that is equivalent to a sentence in general grammatical terms.

(10) a. CP → S(=IP) C
     b. PP → NP P
     c. VP → NP V
     d. XP → YP X' (NP → AP N'; VP → AP V'; CP → CP C')

3. Empirical Evidence

In this section, I will take a look at many examples to demonstrate that the head-final phenomenon is not just limited to VP structures. They are found in other major phrases as well. In particular, I want to show that (a) within a CP, a conjunction can appear on both/either side of the IP; (b) the term PP can mean a postpositional phrase in Chinese; (c) the VO vs. OV difference is very clearly seen as the difference between southern dialects and northern dialects; and (d) only in the written form can a subordinate clause appear after the matrix clause.

3.1. Complementizers/Conjunctions

In most Chinese grammar books, Complementizers (i.e. conjunctions) are introduced as a pre-clause element that introduces a subordinate clause to be placed before the matrix clause as a sentential modifier. For instance, *ruguo* in (11a) introduces a conditional clause. However, in the spoken form, we find that a lot of people like to add a post-clause element *dehua* to the end of the subordinate clause, as is shown in (11b). Moreover, when *dehua* is added, we also notice that on many occasions, the pre-clause complementizer

ruguo is omitted, leaving *dehua* as the only element to introduce the conditional clause. Since complementizers are treated as the head of CP, in cases like this, we will have no other choice but to analyze *dehua* as a post-clause complementizer, which will take the structure of (10a).

(11) a. 如果教学环境改变了，学生的学习情绪也会随之改变的。
　　　 'The mood of the students will also change if the teaching environment changes.'
　　 b. （如果）下雨的话，我们就不去了。
　　　 'We will not go if it rains.'

The analysis of *dehua* also reminds us of the use of *deshihou* as the post-clause complementizer that introduces a temporal adverbial clause in Chinese. Although in the written form we often find the use of *dang* or *zai* before the clause as the pre-clause element optional, in the spoken form the post-clause *deshihou* seems to be the only element we could find to be analyzed as the complementizer to introduce the subordinate clause of time. The same is true with other temporal complementizers such as *yiqian* and *yihou*, etc. They are illustrated with the following examples.

(12) a. （当)祖国需要我们的时候，我们都应该毫不犹豫地挺身而出。
　　　 'We will not hesitate to die when our motherland needs us to.'
　　 b. 你见到他的时候，别忘了替我问声好。
　　　 'Don't forget to say hello for me when you see him.'

(13) a. （自从)新中国成立以后，很多在国外学习工作的爱国志士纷纷返回家园。
　　　 'After the new China was founded, many overseas Chinese scholars returned to their homeland.'
　　 b. 到了北京以后，一定要常给家里打个电话。
　　　 'Remember to call home after you arrive in Beijing.'

(14) a.. (在)中国改革开放以前，很少有学者关注去西方留学的信息。
　　　 'Very few scholars paid any attention to the information on studying abroad before China opened up to the world.'
　　 b. 来北京上学以前，我就听说了您的大名。
　　　 'I heard your name before I came to school in Beijing.'

Thus I have shown that in the spoken form, head-final structures are the dominant forms for subordinate clauses.

3.2. Prepositions vs. Postpositions

No matter whether they are called coverbs (Li and Thompson 1981) or prepositions (Li 1990), the optional use of the spaciotemporal elements such as *zai* and *cong* signifies that they have lost their primary properties as the heads to produce prepositional phrases.

(15) a. 随着京宁沪高速铁路的投入使用，**从**北京到上海现在只需要五个小时。
'It takes only five hours from Beijing to Shanghai after the high-speed railway went into operation.'
b. 同志，买票。大西湖到小西湖多少钱？
'Tickets, please. How much does it cost from Big West Lake to Little West Lake?'

(16) a. (**在**)正面的墙上写着五个金光闪闪的大字----为人民服务。
'Five shining characters are written on the front wall ---- Serve the People.'
b. 桌子上给你留着午饭。
'Your lunch is on the table.'

Gao (2000) and (2007) has challenged the preposition analysis. He argues that a preposition must have at least three major linguistic properties. First, as a lexical head, it should have a full semantic or grammatical content of its own. For instance, in English, the meaning of the preposition *on* in the phrase *on the table* is the space on or above the table. This is seen from its grammatical function of mapping the NP to the space above it. Second, it must be able to combine with another phrase to form a (different) phrase with it as the head. That is, it should be able to change the syntactic category of the phrase it combines with. For instance, in English, the preposition *on*, when combined with the NP *the table*, changes the NP to a PP *on the table*. Third, since the preposition is the head of a PP, it should be the obligatory element of the phrase. That is, its existence should be independent of the element it combines with or any other element in the sentence. In English, this property can be seen from the fact that prepositions generally are allowed to be stranded. However, we find that *zai*, for example, has none of these properties in the following sentences.

(17) a. 他**在**墙*(上)挂了一幅画。
'He hung a painting on the wall.'
b. (*在)墙*(上)被他挂了一幅画。
'A painting was hung on the wall by him.'
c. (*在)墙*(上)挂了一幅画。
'A painting is hung on the wall.'

Please note that the sentences in (16) and (17) show that the use of *zai* is optional. It only occurs when an overt case marker[2] is needed. Thus, it occurs obligatorily only in (17a). In (17b) and (17c), it cannot occur because a covert case marker is already in place. Secondly, the word *zai* does not have any meaningful content except marking the following phrase as a locative. Thus, *zai zhuozi-shang* and *zhuozi-shang* carry exactly the same meaning. Thirdly, the phrase, when combined with *zai*, does not project to a different syntactic category. For instance, *zai qiang-shang* is still a locative phrase just as *qiang-shang* is. Compared to *ba* in (1), *zai* in (17) displays exactly the same syntactic properties of a case marker rather than a preposition. Based on the properties that *zai* has, Gao (2000) claims that the so-called prepositions such as *zai* and *cong* should be analyzed as case markers rather than prepositions.

Instead, Gao (2007) has argued for a postpositional analysis of the locative endings such as *-shang* and *-li*. He notes that, in many locative phrases, it is the locative ending that functions as the head to project into a locative phrase. We also understand that the grammatical function of the locative endings is to map the NP to its related areas. For instance, *-shang*, when combined with *zhuozi*, maps *zhuozi* to the area above it, which is how we understand what *zhuozi-shang* or *zai zhuozi-shang* means. Since those locatives are heads and they appear at the end of the projected locative phrases, they are postpositions. Thus these locative phrases are also known as postpositional phrases.

We also find the similar cases in time adverbials. In the written form, we often see the use of *yu* or *zai* before a time expression, but in the spoken form, these time expressions are used without those prepositions.

(18) a. 你的来信于昨日收到，内情详知，勿念。
    'Don't worry, I have read your letter that arrived yesterday.'
   b. 我十五号就收到了他的来信。
    'I received his letter on the fifteenth.'

 (19) a. 据考证，此画作于十九世纪三十年代。
    'According our research, this painting was painted in the 1830s.'
   b. 我看这封信应该是一九六四年写的。
    'I believe this letter was written in 1964.'

The drop of the temporal prepositions supports the claim that the head-initial phrases are disappearing in the spoken form. So far we could not confirm any use of postpositions in temporal adverbials, although we suspect that some temporal words like *hao* and *nian* began to show some properties of postpositions.

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[2] Gao (2000) has argued for two kinds of case markers. A covert case marker is phonologically null and only occurs in topic, subject, or object positions. Otherwise an overt case marker must be used before a marked complement of the verb.

In recent years, we have found that it is more likely to read (a) sentences and to hear (b) phrases in the following, thus confirming that structure in (8b) has become more popular in the spoken form.

(20) a. **除了**英国和法国(**以外**)，一些其它西方列强也参与了对圆明园的抢劫掠夺。
'Besides Great Britain and France, other western powers also took part in the plunder of Yuanming Yuan.'
b. 李四**除外**，凡是想去听课的人，请把手举起来.
'Except Lisi, anyone who would like to attend the class, please raise your hand.'

(21) a. 学校希望每个学生(**在**)中考**以前**都能把所欠的学费交清。
'The school hopes that every student hands in his tuition to the school before the mid-term exams.'
b. 五一**以后**，西藏所有的旅游点将全部对中外游客开放。
'After May 1, all sightseeing places in Tibet will be open to domestic and international tourists.'

Therefore, I have shown that in the spoken form, Chinese is dominantly postpositional and (10b) is the most popular structure to use.

3.3. VO vs. OV

Speaking of variations within the VP structure, many linguists have concentrated on the different analyses of the *ba-* and non-*ba*-construction. However, many other verbs also demonstrate the flexibility of letting the object choose either preverbal positions in spoken forms or postverbal positions in written forms, as shown in (3) and (4). What's more, we even find that in highly educated speech, people also like to choose preverbal objects with the insertion of a light verb[3] to introduce a nominalized action verb, as is shown in the following.

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[3]   A light verb is a verb that has little or no semantic content of its own. It takes an action-denoting nominal as its object, as are shown in the following sentences, where the light verbs are in bold letters. In many cases, the light verb may be dropped and the action-denoting nominal will serve as the verb (with appropriate morphological changes).

(i)   You should **take** a walk after dinner.
(ii) You should walk a little after dinner.
(iii) Let's **take** a break.
(iv) 他们就这个问题**进行**了长时间的讨论。
(v) 他们就这个问题讨论了很长的时间。
(vi) 对政府给与的鼎力协助，我们**表示**由衷的感谢。
(vii) 我们由衷地感谢政府给与的鼎力协助。

.(22) a. 学校领导**很高兴**<u>你们能来参加母校百年华诞</u>。
'The school leaders are very happy to know that you could come to the centennial ceremony of your home school.'

b. <u>你能来</u>我**很高兴**。
'I am very glad that you could come.'

c. 学校领导对<u>你们能来参加母校百年华诞</u>**感到**非常**高兴**。
'The school leaders are very happy to know that you could come to the centennial ceremony of your home school.'

(23) a. 学校很快就处理了这件事。
'The school handled this matter .'

b. 学校很快就对这件事进行了处理。
'I am very glad that you could come.'

c. 学校领导对<u>你们来参加母校百年华诞</u>**表示**最热烈的**欢迎**。
'The school leaders express their warmest welcome to your coming to the centennial ceremony of your home school.'

Feng (2002) reveals a very interesting phenomenon. Some compacted VO compounds in Chinese can take an additional post-verbal object only in written forms. Gao (2008) argues that only a strong transitive verb can display this ability and those kinds of verbs are only found in the written form. The same kind of transitive verbs become weak in spoken forms, where the additional objects become marked complements that appear before the verb, and thus display a kind of SOV structure.

(23) a. 不少人已经**移民**<u>美国</u>。（多见于书面用语）
'Many people have immigrated to the United States.'

b. 许多人正在<u>向西部</u>**移民**。
'Many people are immigrating to the west region.'

(24) a. 一九三一年九月十八日，日本帝国主义开始**进兵**<u>东北</u>。
'The Japanese began to march their troops to the Northwest in Sept. 18, 1931.'

b. 一九三一年九月十八日，日本帝国主义开始<u>向东北</u>**进兵**。
'The Japanese began to march their troops to the Northwest in Sept. 18, 1931.'

(25) a. 杨教授**作客**<u>中南海</u>。（只限于书面用语）
'Professor Yang was invited to be a guest in Zhongnanhai.'

b. 杨教授<u>到中南海</u>**作客**。
'Professor Yang was invited to be a guest in Zhongnanhai.'

We have shown that in Mandarin written form, the word order within a VP can vary with head-initial phrases as the preferred order, but in the spoken form, more and more head-final phrases are used, thus confirming that (8c) is now the dominant word order in the spoken form.

3.4. Subordinate Clauses

In modern Chinese, placing subordinate clauses before the matrix clauses has become a dominant word order. However, in the written form, some archaic Chinese conjunctions still linger on to render some head-initial phrases. When these archaic conjunctions are replaced with modern ones in the spoken form, no head-initial order is allowed, as are shown in the following.

(26) a. 已有八百多头牲口被杀，**以**防止疫情扩散。
          'More than 800 cattle were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease.'
      b. *已有八百多头牲口被杀，**为了**防止疫情扩散。
          'More than 800 cattle were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease.'
      c. **为了**防止疫情扩散，已有八百多头牲口被杀。
          'More than 800 cattle were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease.'
      d. *以防止疫情扩散，已有八百多头牲口被杀。
          'More than 800 cattle were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease.'

Thus, the examples in (26) show that only the archaic conjunctions can trigger head-initial word order in the written form. Since no archaic conjunctions are used in the spoken form, no subordinate clauses are found before the matrix clauses, thus confirming that only in the speaking register do we have absolute head–final word order structures that are illustrated in (8d).

3.5. Other Modifiers

It has been well-known that in contemporary Chinese no nominal modifiers such as PPs and adjectives can appear after the nominal heads. Likewise, all adverbials must also occur pre-verbally. Some structures may stand out as potential counter-examples. They are the verb-complement constructions and its extension of the de-clause constructions, as is shown in the following.

(27) a. 张三把桌子擦干净了。
          'Zhangsan has cleaned the table..'
      b. 刚才这件事把王小姐弄得一头雾水。
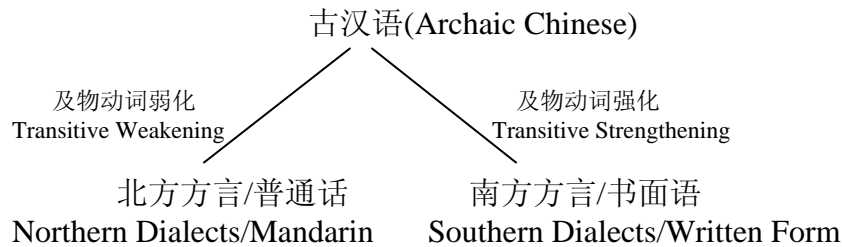   'Ms. Wang was greatly puzzled by what had happened.'

However, Gao (2000) has given a very convincing argumentation for these structures to be analyzed as head-final. That is, in (27a), *ganjing* should be treated as both the semantic and syntactic center of the compound verb *ca-ganjing*. Likewise, *yitouwushui* in (27b) is shown to function as the primary predicate of the sentence.

Accompanied by the pre-nominal adjectival modifiers and pre-verbal adverbial modifiers, we have demonstrated that the spoken form displays mostly head-final properties and should be classified as a head-final language while the written form remains mostly head-initial except for the modifiers. Thus I have shown that the head-final properties are displayed in all phrases in Chinese. The distribution of head-initial and head-final phrases demonstrates that the Chinese spoken form displays mostly head-final properties while the written form is still dominantly head-initial.
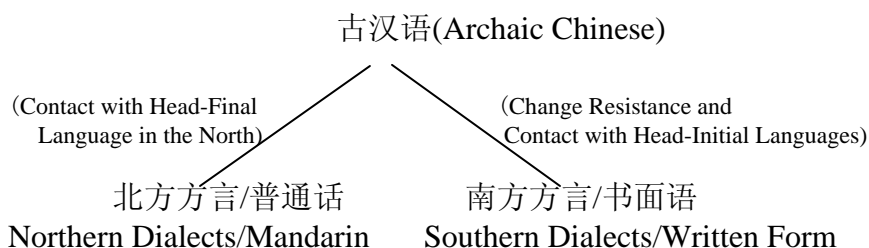
4. Conclusion

Gao (2000) has argued that the change in the spoken form is most likely due to frequent contact with head-final languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Mongolian, since surveys show that the change is gradually spreading from the North to the South. The written form, as the most solid and stable form of the language, has resisted the change. In analyzing the variation within the VP structure, Gao (2008) has found the same pattern of change and made a proposal to explain the differences with the chart in (28). According to this chart, the prepositioning of the verbal object in the spoken form is due to the weakening of the transitive verbs' ability to assign Cases in the northern dialects.

(28)   Variation within VP

古汉语(Archaic Chinese)

及物动词弱化   及物动词强化
Transitive Weakening   Transitive Strengthening

北方方言/普通话   南方方言/书面语
Northern Dialects/Mandarin   Southern Dialects/Written Form

Now this chart can be modified as (29) to explain the difference between the written form and the spoken form. The weakening of the transitive verbs could be regarded as being influenced by the languages that have weak transitive verbs.

(29) Word Order Variation

古汉语(Archaic Chinese)

（Contact with Head-Final　　　　　　　　　（Change Resistance and
Language in the North)　　　　　　　　Contact with Head-Initial Languages)

北方方言/普通话　　　南方方言/书面语
Northern Dialects/Mandarin　　Southern Dialects/Written Form

　　　　The difference between the spoken and written forms has put a big challenge to educators of CFL. Please note that this analysis reveals that the word order of the written form resembles the English word order much more than the spoken form. If we often hear improper Chinese sentences from our Chinese students, we may want to consider if the improperness actually could be avoided if we put more effort into explaining the different grammars in the two different registers of the language.

5. Current Study and CFL Education

　　　　From the above discussions and examples with translations, we have seen the split in the word order between the written and spoken forms in Chinese. We notice that the word order of Chinese written form is quite similar to that of English, but in the spoken form, it is quite different, or even reversed. The similarities between the written form and English have made it very easy and convenient for Chinese students to pick up the wrong grammar to use in speech. This is especially true with students in the beginning stages, when they learn their grammar mostly from the written form. Mistakes such as the following can be seen from these confused students, who are not well-informed of the differences.

(30)　a.　*当你到了那边，别忘了早点儿联系我。
　　　　　'When you arrive there, don't forget to contact me early.'
　　　b.　*我说过好多次我会负责你到底的。
　　　　　'I told you several times that I will be responsible for you all the way through.'
　　　c.　*我昨天就已经交钱了这本书。
　　　　　'I have paid for the book yesterday.'
　　　d.　*以前上大学，我们搬家过好几次。
　　　　　'Before going to college, we moved several times.'
　　　e.　*以后我到了北京，会给你打电话的。
　　　　　'After I arrive in Beijing, I will give you a call.'

　　　　The problems in these sentences strike me most by their similarities to the English word order. For (30a), *lianxi*, according to Gao (2008), could be a strengthened transitive verb in the written form and southern dialect groups, as we often see *lianxi women* on the

websites or newspaper ads. Even in some Chinese-English dictionaries *lianxi* is translated as a transitive verb *contact*, but it is still a weak transitive verb in the northern dialect group and therefore the object *wo* should occur preverbally as a marked complement, as is shown in (31a). The same is true with (30b). For (30c), *jiaoqian* is mistakenly understood as a Chinese version of *pay* in English. The same problem is found in (30d) when *banjia* is mistakenly understood as having exactly the same function as *move*. In (30d) and (30e), students mistakenly use *yiqian* and *yihou* as pre-clause complementizers. The corrected sentences are given in (31).

(31) a. (你)到了那边，别忘了早点儿和/跟我联系。
         'When you arrive there, don't forget to contact me early.'
      b. 我已经说过好多次了，我会对你负责到底的。
         'I told you several times that I will be responsible for you all the way through.'
      c. 这本书，我昨天就已经交过钱了/我昨天就已经交过这本书的钱了。
         'I have paid for the book yesterday.'
      d. 上大学以前，我们搬过好几次家。
         'Before going to college, we moved several times.'
      e. 到了北京以后，我会给你打电话的。
         After I arrive in Beijing, I will give you a call.

The problem sentences in (30) also show that it is very difficult for English learners of Chinese to receive Chinese as a head-final language. This should come as no surprise at all since English itself is a head-initial language. According to first language transfer studies, it is very natural for students to accept similar language structures first. The best way to teach our students to avoid these kinds of mistakes is to show them the different word orders in different registers of the language. According to the principles of the Comparative Grammar, we can focus our instruction on the differences of the languages rather than the similarities. That is, we must spend more time on the different word orders of the spoken form with our beginning learners. Language is the manifestation of the thoughts and cultures of its speakers. To show our students the differences in different cultures, we can start by letting our students note the different ways that people arrange things in many basic cultural examples. The simplest examples are the names of people of both cultures. In China, it is well known that family name always comes first, followed by the given name. However, in the United States, the given name has to come first and family name is always last. Other examples include the different arrangements for postal addresses and dates. In English, people like to arrange the address from smaller units to larger ones while the Chinese people like to do the reverse. Take a look at the following examples.

(32) Postal Address
   a. 中国湖南省武冈县城关镇光明路 274 号
   'China Hunan Province Wugang County Chengguan City Guangming Rd. No. 274'
   b. 275 Lighthouse Ave. New City, California, USA
   '275 号灯塔大街新城市加利福尼亚州美国'

(33) Army Unit
   a. 中国人民解放军第 38 军红九师机步团三营钢八连一排二班战士刘铁柱
   'PLA 38th Army the Red 9 Division Mechanical Regiment Third Battalion the Iron 8 Company First Platoon Second Squad soldier Liu Tiezhu '
   b. Company H, 2nd Battalion, 55th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 42nd Airborne Division, US Army
   'H 连第二营第五十五伞兵团第三作战旅第八十二空降师美国陆军'

(34) Time/Dates
   a. 二零零八年五月十二日下午两点二十八分
   'The Year 2008 May 12 in the afternoon at 2 O'clock 28th minute
   b. At 7 O'clock in the evening of September 23, 1987
   '七点整晚上九月二十三号一九八七年'

The expressions in (32) – (34) above are very good examples for the beginning students to take the first step towards their understanding of the differences between Chinese and English. After that, we could frequently remind them to pay special attention to the head-final structures they encounter during their Chinese studies within the framework of Comparative Grammar. This way, many of the ungrammatical or funny sentences from the students could be avoided.

(35) 到哈尔滨去以前，你应该先了解一下那里的天气情况。
   'You should learn about the weather of Harbin before you go there.'
   Not: *你应该知道哈尔滨的天气以前去那里。

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