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New perspectives on Chinese syntax by Waltraud Paul (review)

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New perspectives on Chinese syntax. By WALTRAUD PAUL. (Trends in linguistics, studies and monographs 271.) Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015. Pp. xvi, 357. ISBN 9783110338683. \$154 (Hb).

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Mandarin Chinese, as an isolating language, presents considerable challenges to the syntactic study of word-order typology, the inventory of lexical categories, sentence-peripheral elements like topic, sentence-final particles (SFPs), and so on. Waltraud Paul's book *New perspectives on Chinese syntax* boldly takes on these controversial and recalcitrant issues and aims to reaccommodate them into a broader linguistic landscape. In short, P has managed to reconcile some noisy facts in Chinese and has cogently falsified some pervasive, long-term conceptions in Chinese syntax.

The book is organized into eight chapters. The first chapter sets the stage for the book and provides a synopsis of the subsequent chapters. In Ch. 2, word order in Chinese is submitted to typological scrutiny from a historical perspective. Chinese is argued to have undergone two major word-order changes: OV > VO > OV (see Li & Thompson 1974). Specifically, pre-Archaic Chinese originated as an SOV language and then changed to SVO between the tenth and the third centuries BC, further followed by a shift back to SOV, which is still in progress in Modern Mandarin. P argues against this and, based on the Shang inscriptions (see Djamouri 1988), shows that even in pre-Archaic Chinese, the dominant word order is SVO instead of SOV. The so-called SOV in pre-Archaic Chinese, involving focalization of the object and object pronouns in negated sentences, turns out to be de facto the head-complement configuration, thus consistent with the SVO order. The core evidence for Li and Thompson's (1974) hypothesis of SOV order in Modern Chinese is

¹ This work is supported by 10BY003 (National Social Science Fund of China).

the *bǎ*-construction. P succeeds in reconciling the *bǎ*-construction with the head-complement configuration. She assumes *bǎ* to be a higher functional head subcategorizing a *v*P or AspP as complement, rather than a preposition. Importantly, P further postulates that the object of V moves to [Spec, *bǎ*P] and *bǎ* head-moves to the higher *v* (leaving aside many details). Consequently, the complement of *bǎ* is now to its right in Modern Mandarin, a compliant VO order. Hence, Chinese is systematically an SVO language.

The following three chapters concern a number of lexical categories in Chinese. It has been claimed that Chinese, an isolating language, lacks these categories. Ch. 3 probes the properties of prepositions and argues that prepositions form an independent category distinct from verbs, rather than the alleged categorially dual V/P hybrid (see Huang et al. 2009). The evidence P provides is as follows. First, a preposition is distinct from a verb in terms of syntactic distribution. Prepositions are incompatible with adverbs and negation, contra typical verbs, regardless of whether there is a homophonous verbal counterpart. Second, prepositions cannot function as predicates. Verbs and prepositions that are homophonous display different selectional restrictions, and only the former is compatible with aspectual affixes, which argues against the conflation of the two. Third, no preposition stranding is allowed, even in the Shang inscriptions, whereas verbs do license null complements. Finally, diachronically, not all prepositions have verbal origins. For instance, exclusive prepositions such as *zì* 'from' and *yú* 'at, to' are attested in the Shang inscriptions; there is no evidence to suggest that they are deverbal. The argument for the preposition as an independent syntactic category is further supported by the observation that PPs pattern with NPs, rather than VPs, given that PPs also show adjunct/argument asymmetry, akin to NPs.

In a similar vein, Ch. 4 primarily argues for postpositions as an independent adpositional category. P first argues against the conflation of postpositions with nouns. Unlike nouns, the postposition requires an overt complement (e.g. **(zhuōzi) shàng* 'on the table'), and no intervention is allowed between them. The existence of deverbal postpositions (e.g. *lái* 'during, over', *qǐ* 'starting from') substantially undermines the nominal analysis of postpositions. The postposition is also distributionally different from the preposition. In contrast with prepositions, argumental spatial postpositions can be the subjects of locative inversion sentences and of adjectival and copular predicates. In this chapter, P also discusses circumpositional phrases (CircPs), a combination of both prepositions and postpositions (e.g. *cóng míngtiān qǐ* 'from tomorrow on'). CircPs instantiate further differences in terms of a PATH vs. PLACE dichotomy, which illustrates that spatial circumpositions take preposition as path and postposition as place, whereas temporal circumpositions do just the opposite.

Ch. 5 presents evidence in support of adjectives as a separate category in Mandarin Chinese, distinct from stative verbs. Chinese adjectives can be predicative or nonpredicative; the reduplication of adjectives is different from that of verbs. Modification without *de* is acceptable for adjectives, but unacceptable for verbs. Moreover, adjectives and stative verbs can be interpreted differently. The above facts argue against the conflation between (simple) adjectives and stative verbs. Modification with *de* and modification without *de* have different interpretations: specifically, in the *de*-less modification structure, the adjectival modifier singles out a subset of objects denoted by the NP, and thus the adjective serves as a defining property in establishing the resulting subcategory. By contrast, the modifier in the *de*-modification structure has no such function. In this chapter, P also argues that Chinese adjectives can be classified into two morphologically distinct classes, that is, simple adjectives and derived adjectives. Different from simple adjectives, derived adjectives cannot appear in verbal compounds or with the *de*-less modification structure.

Ch. 6 examines the conundrum pertaining to Chinese topics. This chapter first shows that there is no default informational value associated with the topic position, given that this position can convey not only given information but new information as well (as exemplified by conditionals in question/answer pairs). Moreover, Chinese topics can convey an aboutness relation and set up the frame for a sentence (see Chafe 1976), neither of which is related to new or given information. In addition, the differences between topic and focus are attended to in terms of contrastiveness, exclusiveness, and the syntactic level (CP periphery or *v*P periphery) they belong to.

In this chapter, P also defends a dual derivation of topic, by base-generation or by movement. Given the syntactic position (namely TP-external or internal Spec, TopP) assumed for topics, the topic position is evidently different from the subject position. One strong piece of evidence for sentence-internal in-situ topic comes from the existence of the hierarchy TopP > *lián* 'even' FocP, both above and below the subject position, invalidating the focus analysis of the internal topic since only one focus is allowed for each proposition. Nevertheless, Chinese fails to instantiate the central tenet of cartography in that the Chinese sentence periphery can only be divided into a relatively rigid hierarchy of subprojections, each of which is interpreted by the interaction of several factors, violating the one-to-one relation between a given syntactic position and the semantics that an element obtains in that position.

Ch. 7 moves on to the thorny issue of SFPs by adopting the split-CP approach. First, based on Zhu (1982), P accommodates root SFPs into a rigid three-layered hierarchy above TP, namely AttitudeP > ForceP > ClowP (comparable to Rizzi's FiniteP) à la Rizzi (1997). SFPs are assumed to be complementizers (Cs), given the selectional restrictions they exert on their complements. P then articulates a fine-grained hierarchy for each of these root SFPs: (i) the innermost ClowP, headed by, for example, *lǎizhe*, *le*, and *ne₁*, interacts with TP-internal elements like Aktionsart and negation in the extended verbal projection; (ii) the immediate ForceP, split into subprojections headed by the interrogative force marker *ma* on the one hand, and the force-modulating markers *ne₂* and *ba* on the other; (iii) the highest AttitudeP, headed by *a*, *ne₃*, *zhene*, *ma_{Att}*, and so forth, encodes properties of the speaker-hearer interaction. Next, the chapter discusses nonroot SFPs instantiated only by ClowPs, in addition to nonroot *C de* in propositional assertion constructions and *dehuà* in conditionals. Given the noncooccurrence of these nonroot Cs, P argues that the nonroot context is a one-layered CP, in contrast to the three-layered CP in root contexts, leading to a root vs. nonroot asymmetry in the Chinese C-system. Finally, given the aforementioned hierarchy TopP > *lián* 'even' FocP > TP, the overall hierarchy of the sentence periphery in Chinese turns out to be AttitudeP > ForceP > ClowP > TopP (recursive) > *lián* 'even' FocP > TP.

Ch. 8 scrutinizes the cross-categorical harmony from a typological perspective, based on Chinese data. P has examined Dryer's (1992 et seq.) correlation pairs in detail and finds a much more complicated situation in Chinese. For instance, the troublesome nominal projections, the head-final CPs (e.g. SFP *ma*), do not comply with the VO pattern at all, but instead comply with the reverse OV pattern. More importantly, large-scale investigation reveals that several solid cross-categorical correlations are only apparent and statistical in nature. Given that cross-categorical harmony is closely related to the HEAD PARAMETER, the grammatical principle assumed in the principles-and-parameters framework to account for crosslinguistic variations in word order by satisfying the uniformity at the D(EEP)-STRUCTURE level, P argues that the disharmony above is sufficient to rule out this principle as part of universal grammar and that this argument is further supported by 'the observation that uniform or non-uniform head directionality was found to have no influence whatsoever on acquisition' (329). Therefore, P radically advocates the disharmonic nature of Chinese syntax and dethrones the head parameter as a universal principle.

The book recasts some traditional issues of Chinese from several new perspectives. It clarifies some preconceived ideas about word order, prepositions, postpositions, and SFPs in Chinese syntax. P argues that although Chinese is an isolating language, it does not 'display a more reduced inventory of categories than inflecting languages such as Indo-European languages' (91). However, some basic facts of Chinese remain to be clarified. For example, TopP is not necessarily always higher than the *lián* 'even' FocP, as exemplified by 1.

- (1) [_{lián FocP} Lián bóshìshēng, [_{TopP} zhè dào shùxué tí, [_{TP} wǒ juéde dōu néng nánzhù le]]]
 even doctoral.student this CL math.problem I think DOU can stuck ASP
 'Even doctoral students, this math problem, I think it might have them stuck.'

Furthermore, Pan (2015) articulates a more fine-grained hierarchy of the core functional projections in Chinese and points out that some SFPs in the root-only ForceP can pass the embeddability test, if keyed to the syntax-discourse interface. For instance, the indirect yes/no question marker *shifǒu* is exclusively an embedded SFP, but the perfective yes/no question marker *méiyǒu* 'have not' can trigger either a ROOT PHENOMENON or vice versa.

Finally, a short remark on methodology in handling complicated crosslinguistic data is in order. Simplicity, as an essential art of science, is a long-pursued aim of generative grammar. Therefore a desirable result would be to reduce complex visibles to simple invisibles, rather than taking the surface disharmonic order to be real. In this light, P's taking the surface position of SFPs at face value seems unsatisfactory. In addition, the head parameter as a crucial grammatical principle might, to a large extent, be preserved. Nevertheless, the book elegantly sheds new light on how to DO syntax for languages with impoverished morphology such as Chinese. Hence, it is a must-read for students and scholars interested in Chinese syntax.

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Evolutionary syntax. By LJILJANA PROGOVAC. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xv, 261. ISBN 9780198736554. \$50.

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This book, published within the series ‘Oxford studies in evolutionary syntax’, is a very valuable contribution to the research on the evolution of language. In broad terms, Progovac takes a gradualist stance (see also Pinker & Bloom 1990, Jackendoff 2002, Newmeyer 2005, Heine & Kuteva 2007, among many others), arguing for well-defined intermediate stages in the evolution of language, positing the existence of proto-language (and outlining its structure), and suggesting a plausible evolutionary path from proto-language to modern languages. This view is a departure from the so-called saltationalist approaches (see, for example, Fitch et al. 2005, Berwick & Chomsky 2016), the proponents of which essentially reject the existence of intermediate evolutionary stages.¹ The idea that language evolved gradually, and that the remnants of earlier stages

¹ [Editor’s note] Berwick & Chomsky 2016 is also reviewed in this issue of *Language*.