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## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WORD ORDER IN CHINESE AND JAPANESE LANGUAGES: PREVAILING PERCEPTIONS AND THE REAL SITUATION**

**Summary.** Among linguists, there is a very widespread view that the Chinese and Japanese languages have a fixed word order. Indeed, in these languages, as in the absolute majority of languages, there is a basic word order that dominates: in Chinese it is SVO (subject→predicate→object), and in Japanese it is SOV (subject→object→predicate). However, over the past half century, when interlingual and intercultural relations grew rapidly in the conditions of globalization of economic and information space, when the mastery of foreign languages in Northeast Asia became a vital need, the norms of using the basic or peripheral word order acquired a certain structural and semantic regulation. The *purpose* of this study is to reveal the originality of solving the issue of basic and peripheral word order in the Chinese and Japanese languages. The *object* of study is the models of a simple sentence in these languages, the *subject* of study is the actual semantic-grammatical and pragmatic irregularity of basic and peripheral word orders in a comparison of the Chinese and Japanese language systems. The *result* of this research is the following *conclusions*. The Chinese and Japanese sentence structures regarding the order of subject, object, and predicate are flexible at three levels: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. Despite the basic SVO order, sentences with the SOV order function in the Chinese colloquial style: “把 (ba) clause”, and “将 (jiāng) sentence”. Passive sentences have OSV order determined by the service words “被 (bei)”, “让 (ràng)”, “叫 (jiào)”, or “给 (gěi)”. SOV and OSV word orders are considered peripheral. In a Japanese sentence, the large number of case paradigm particles allows structural flexibility with respect to word order. In addition to the basic SOV order, there are also three peripheral variants: OSV, SVO, and OVS, which have the effect of highlighting syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. Sentences with peripheral word orders have a special pragmatic load.

**Key words:** the Chinese language, the Japanese language, word order, flexibility of structure, comparative analysis, sentence, system, syntactic, semantic, linguopragmatic.

### **Foreword**

Any language linearly arranges along the time axis and in a specific direction, thus giving rise to inflections. Moreover, different languages have different inflectional restrictions and varying flexibility [4, p. 9], so inflections are an essential vehicle for the study of the world’s languages. J. Greenberg analyzed 30 languages and summarised six types of inflections: SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV [3]. M. Dreyer extended the range of languages to 1377, among which 565 (41 %) languages have SOV word order; 488 (35.5 %) languages have SVO word order; 95 (6.9 %) languages have VSO word order; 25 (1.8 %) languages are VOS word order; 11 (0.8 %) languages have OVS word order; 4 (0.3 %) languages have OSV word order; and the remaining 189 (13.7 %) languages belong to other non-dominant inflections [2]. Japanese belongs to the SOV order, and Chinese belongs to the SVO order, which is the second in terms of number only to SOV but is the most spoken languages in the world. On this basis, this paper makes a comparative study of the inflections of Chinese and Japanese, especially the inflections of the essential components (S — subject, O — object, and V — predicate), which helps to form a deeper understanding of the Chinese and Japanese languages.

### **The Flexibility and Word Order of Chinese**

Chinese lacks morphological changes in the strict sense, and many grammatical meanings and sentence types often have to be expressed through inflections, so inflections are particularly important in Chinese grammar. Zhang Shilu proposed to determine grammatical categories based on word order: “凭语序而建立范畴, 集范畴而构成体系” [5]. It mentions the role of the word order in the study of gram-

mar to a very high position. It is generally believed that the syntactic function of Chinese word order is powerful, the word order is strictly limited, and the mandatory nature of the word order forms a specific and regular type of basic word order [6]. The basic Chinese word order is SVO, and the predicate is usually placed between the subject and the object, which is the most important feature of Chinese word order. As the following example:

- (1) 灰姑娘 (S) 落下了 (V) 水晶鞋 (O)。 [Cinderella fell crystal slippers].
- (2) 女巫 (S) 打碎 (V) 魔镜 (O)。 [Witch breaks the magic mirror].
- (3) 泪水 (S) 浸湿 (V) 枕头 (O)。 [Tears soak the pillow].

Although Chinese word order reflects more syntactic functions, it is also closely related to language expression and comprehension [7], Chinese word order should involve the needs of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics at three levels, which gives rise to some variant word order, making Chinese word order very flexible. In Chinese, variant inflections are usually regulated by markedness [8], becoming marked sentences.

The first one is “Ba (把)” sentences, which is undoubtedly a marked syntactic structure as far as the basic order of modern Chinese is concerned [9]. The above three example sentences of SOV order can be replaced by “Ba” sentences:

- (1' ) 灰姑娘 (S) 把水晶鞋 (O) 落下了 (V)。 [Cinderella ba crystal slipper fell].
- (2' ) 女巫 (S) 把魔镜 (O) 打碎 (V)。 [Witch ba the magic mirror breaks].
- (3' ) 泪水 (S) 把枕头 (O) 浸湿 (V)。 [Tears ba the pillow soak].

In modern Chinese, the most crucial feature of the “Ba” sentences is its order pattern [10]. To emphasize the object, the “Ba” sentences is structured so that the object is put in front of the predicate and inverted into the SOV order. It is a particular linguistic phenomenon [11]. In the above three sentences, the typical subjects 灰姑娘 (cinderella), 女巫 (witch), and 泪水 (tears) are all placed in front of the word “Ba”; the typical objects of 水晶鞋 (crystal slipper), 魔镜 (magic mirror) and 枕头 (pillow) are placed behind the word “Ba”, while the predicates 落下了 (fell), 打碎 (breaks), and 浸湿 (soak) are placed at the end of the sentence. There is a written variant of “把 (Ba)” in the form “将 (Jiāng)”, so the three “Ba” sentences above can also be replaced by “将 (Jiāng) ”:

- (1' ' ) 灰姑娘 (S) 将水晶鞋 (O) 落下了 (V)。 [Cinderella jiāng crystal slipper fell].
- (2' ' ) 女巫 (S) 将魔镜 (O) 打碎 (V)。 [Witch jiāng the magic mirror breaks].
- (3' ' ) 泪水 (S) 将枕头 (O) 浸湿 (V)。 [Tears jiāng the pillow soak].

However, the application of “Ba” sentences is subject to semantic constraints, the verb of “Ba” sentences must be an action verb in a transitive verb [12]:

- (4) 对于这次的考试, 我 (S) 非常有 (V) 信心 (O)。 [I am very confident of this exam].
- (4' ) 对于这次的考试, 我 (S) 把信心 (O) 非常有 (V)。

The predicate “有” in the example sentence (4) indicates existence meaning. It is a non-action verb, which is very common in Chinese SVO order. Still, when it is converted into the SOV order of “Ba” sentences, as in the example sentence (4'), it is very awkward and does not conform to Chinese pragmatic conventions. Secondly, “Ba” sentences is mainly found when the verb is followed by a complement [13], “下” is the tendency complement of the verb “落” in example (1'), “碎” is the resultant complement of the verb “打” in example (2'), and “湿” is also the resultant complement of the verb “浸” in example (3'). All these show that the “Ba” sentences lacks productiveness.

On the other hand, “Ba” sentences is more often used in colloquial expressions, such as “我们把敌人打败了 (we ba the enemy defeated),” “把垃圾倒了 (ba the rubbish took out),” “把窗户打开 (ba the window opened)”. These show that the existence of “Ba” sentences expands the Chinese word order into a marked SOV order, but its scope of application is still limited.

Another kind of marked sentence in modern Chinese is the “Bei (被)” sentences, This is the most typical type of Chinese passive sentence, which belongs to OSV order. The passive marker can distinguish the giver and the receiver, and avoid ambiguity in the sentence [14]. The object before “Bei” is the recipient, and the subject after “Bei” is the giver. The word “Bei” is often used in negative semantics, such as “suffered”, “caused”, “accidental”, or “affected” [15], and the object is placed at the beginning of the sentence to get special emphasis, indicating that it is the affected element of the event. The above three examples of SVO order can also be replaced with the “Bei” sentences:

- (1' ' ' ) 水晶鞋 (O) 被灰姑娘 (S) 落下了 (V)。 [Crystal slipper was fell by Cinderella].
- (2' ' ' ) 魔镜 (O) 被女巫 (S) 打碎 (V)。 [The magic mirror is broken by witch].
- (3' ' ' ) 枕头 (O) 被泪水 (S) 浸湿 (V)。 [The pillow is soaked by tears].

“被” is the most commonly used passive marker in modern Chinese. In terms of stylistic features, “被” is more colloquial. It also has three colloquial variants: “让 (ràng)”, “叫 (jiào)” and “给 (gěi)”, which are semantically different from “被”, and they cannot wholly replace the word “被”. “Example sentences are as follows:

- (5) 那条鱼 (O) 让 (ràng) 猫 (S) 吃了 (V)。 [That fish was eaten by the cat].
- (6) 好好的景致 (O) 叫 (jiào) 人 (S) 打搅了 (V)。 [A good view was disturbed by someone].
- (7) 衣服 (O) 给 (gěi) 风 (S) 吹跑了 (V)。 [Clothes were blown away by the wind].

There also exists a kind of unmarked passive sentence in Chinese, which is also of OSV order, except that the marker “Bei (被)” is omitted. This kind of passive sentence serves as the predicate of SV, which has the same order as the Chinese active sentence, with a relatively strong declarative nature [14]. For example:

(8) 这本书 (O) 我 (S) 看过 (V)。 [This book was read by me].

(9) 孩子 (O) 我 (S) 接走了 (V)。 [I picked up child].

Therefore, in modern Chinese, because of the semantic and pragmatic needs, the language structure of “Ba” sentences and passive sentences appear. “Ba” sentences is in SOV order, and passive sentences are in OSV order. They break the basic word order and reflect the flexibility of Chinese word order. Of course, SOV and OSV are special linguistic structures in Chinese, and their proportion is limited, SVO is still the main language order in modern Chinese.

### The Flexibility and Word Order of Japanese

Japanese word order is generally flexible, and the subject, predicate, and object can interchanged in many cases. For example, the Chinese sentence “猫 (S) 吃了 (V) 那条鱼 (O) (The cat ate that fish)” can be expressed in different ways in Japanese:

(10) 猫が (s) 食べた (v)、その魚を (o)。 [The cat ate that fish].

(11) その魚を (o) 食べた (v) 猫が (s)。 [That fish was eaten by the cat].

(12) その魚を (o) 猫が (s) 食べた (v)。 [That fish was eaten by the cat].

(13) 猫が (s) その魚を (o) 食べた (v)。 [The cat ate that fish].

Although the order of these sentences has changed, they are semantically the same, and the sentences are still valid. This situation is because Japanese belongs to the adhesive language, there are a large number of case particles, subject and object of Japanese are mainly composed of “noun + case particle”, the position of the case particle is much more important than the noun, and it even can be thought that subject and object of Japanese are entirely determined by the case particle, not by their position, so the Japanese word order becomes very various. In the above four examples, it is evident that no matter whether “猫 (cat)” appears in the front, middle, or back of the sentences, as long as the case particle “が” follows it, “猫 (cat)” is the subject of the sentences. Similarly, “魚 (fish)” becomes the object of the sentences because of the case particle “を” behind it.

The flexibility of Japanese inflection also implies the diversity of the essential inflectional components S, V, and O. Japanese belongs to the typical SOV language, and its basic inflectional order is SOV, such as:

(14) 私が (S) 手紙を (O) 出す (V)。 [I post the letter].

(15) 李さんが (S) 良い成績を (O) 取った (V)。 [Li got a good grade.]

Since the subject of Japanese is determined by the auxiliary word “が”, and the object is determined by the auxiliary word “を”, in addition to the basic SOV order, there is also a different order of OSV. For example, the example sentence (12) “その魚を (o) 猫が (s) 食べた (v)”, which switches the position of the subject element “猫が” and the object element “を” in the typical example sentence (13) “猫が (s) その魚を (o) 食べた (v)”, they stay the same semantic meaning, and the sentence (12) is also still valid. Similarly, we can change the above SOV sentences (14) and (15) to OSV:

(14’) 手紙を (O) 私が (S) 出す (V)。 [The letter is posted by me].

(15’) 良い成績を (O) 李さんが (S) 取った (V)。 [A good grade was gotten by Li].

Of course, SOV is more common than the Japanese OSV order, and OSV cannot be a basic order, because OSV order is often used in a particular discourse requirement, placing the object constituent foremost to emphasize the importance of that information [4, p. 73]. In addition, OSV order is also used in long Japanese sentences, for example:

(16) 美味しい魚を食べた (Att) 猫を (O) 女性が (S) 追い出した (V)。 [The woman chased a cat, which ate delicious fish].

In this sentence, “猫(cat)” and “女性(woman)” are both nouns, and “猫(cat) (O)” has a long modifier, while “女性(woman) (S)” has no modifier. Since the Japanese word order tends to mean that long structures are often put before short structures [16], it is reasonable to put “猫(cat) (O)” which has a long definite modifier before “女性 (woman) (S)”. In addition, according to Japanese, if the above sentence is expressed with the basic SOV order, it will become “女性が (S) 美味しい魚を食べた (Att) 猫を (O) 追い出した (V)”, and the linguistic inertia would make people think that “女性” is the subject, “魚” is the object, and “食べた” is the predicate, which is regarded as the SOV order. However, as the sentence continues, it becomes clear that “美味しい魚を食べた” is just an attribute modifying “猫(cat)”, “猫(cat)” is the real object, and “追い出した” is the real predicate, so human has to break up and reorganize the sentence, which adds to the burden of comprehension, and therefore, according to the Principle of Language Economy, in order to express the semantics with concise components as much as possible, “猫(cat) (O)” which has a long modifier is placed in front of “女性(woman) (S)” which has no modifier, it is the requirement of language itself, and the OSV order also come into being.

In addition to the two inflections SOV and OSV, the expressions (10) “猫が (s) 食べた (v)、その魚を (o)” and (11) “その魚を (o) 食べた (v) 猫が (s)” also exist, the predicate is usually preceded from the basic SOV order. Similar expressions include:



- (17) 私が (S) 忘れちゃった (V)、時間を (O)。 [I lost time track].  
 (18) 時間を (O) 忘れちゃった (V)、私が (S)。 [Time is lost track by me].  
 (19) お客様さんが (S) 何度も試着した (V)、着物を (O)。 [The customer tried on the clothes many times].  
 (20) 着物を (O) 何度も試着した (V)、お客様さんが (S)。 [The clothes were tried by the customer many times].

These sentences are often used in spoken language, where the verb is moved forward by one position in order to emphasize it, and where the predicate needs to be marked off from the following subject or object by a comma, with a shorter sentence structure, a firmer tone, and a sense of attaching something new to the sentence when it has finished, and belong to the category of inverted sentences [4, p. 73]. In this sense, the SVO and OVS sequences in Japanese mainly play a role at the pragmatic level.

Although the Japanese word order is relatively free, it has four structures: SOV, OSV, SVO, and OVS, there is also a certain strictness. According to Noda Shoushi, in Japanese, big units have a freer order than small units: “小さな単位より大きな単位の方が語順が自由である” [18]. The large unit order in Japanese includes the order between S, V, and O, the small unit order covers the order of the noun and case particle, and Japanese adopts the order of the noun followed by the case particle, they can not be interchangeable [15]. For example, in the Japanese example sentence (13) “猫が (s) その魚を (o) 食べた (v)”, although “猫 (S)” can appear at any position in the sentence, the subject constituent must be rendered as “猫が” instead of “が猫”, and similarly, the object constituent of the sentence can only be “魚を” instead of “を魚”, which demonstrates the strictness of the Japanese inflection order. In addition, the predicate in written Japanese is fixed at the end of the sentence, which is one of the more typical features of Japanese word order. Example sentence (12) その魚を (o) 猫が (s) 食べた (v), and example sentence (13) 猫が (s) その魚を (o) 食べた (v), are both in written Japanese, and their predicates are both “食べた (eat)”, which must be located at the end of the sentence.

Overall, Japanese has a flexible order, its basic order is SOV, and due to the presence of case particles, the subject, predicate, and object can be switched at will to become heteroglossia OSV, OVS, and SVO structures. However, there is also a strict side of Japanese word order, the noun and case particle order within a sentence is restricted, the order of nouns must be followed by case particles, and predicates often appear at the end of the sentence in the written language.

### Concluding remarks

Analyzing basic Chinese and Japanese constituent utterances, we find that Chinese word order occupies an essential position in grammar and lacks formal changes. However, language itself has flexibility in the process of use. Because of semantic and pragmatic requirements, Chinese also produces some variant word order, which breaks through the constraints of the word order in the syntax, it means the word order of Chinese embodies a certain amount of flexibility in the strictness. In Japanese, due to the large number of case particles, the subject, predicate, and object are mainly determined by the case particles that follow, which provides flexibility. The change of inflections will not cause a semantic contradiction, and this flexibility satisfies different pragmatic demands of the Japanese language. Of course, this paper is limited to essential inflectional components, and there are more considerations for complex sentences, which the author will continue to explore in future research.

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## ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПОРЯДКУ СЛІВ У КИТАЙСЬКІЙ І ЯПОНСЬКІЙ МОВАХ: УЯВЛЕННЯ, ЩО ДОМІНУЄ, ТА РЕАЛЬНИЙ СТАН

**Анотація.** Велими поширеним серед мовознавців є погляд на китайську та японську мови як на мови із фіксованим порядком слів. Дійсно, у цих мовах, як і в абсолютній більшості мов, є базисний порядок слів, що домінує: в китайській мові це SVO (суб'єкт→предикат→об'єкт), а в японській — SOV (суб'єкт→об'єкт→предикат). Однак за останні півстоліття, коли високими темпами зростали межмовні й міжкультурні стосунки в умовах глобалізації економічного та інформаційного простору, коли володіння іноземними мовами у країнах Північно-Східної Азії стало нагальною потребою, норми використання базисного або периферійного порядку слів набули певної структурно-семантичної урегульованості. **Мета** цього дослідження полягає у розкритті своєрідності вираження питання базисного та периферійного порядку слів у китайській і японській мовах. **Об'єктом** вивчення є моделі простого речення в цих мовах, **предметом**

вивчення — фактична семантико-граматична і прагматична унормованість базисних і периферійних порядків слів у зіставленні китайської і японської мовних систем. **Результатом** дослідження є такі **висновки**. Структури китайського та японського речення щодо порядку розташування суб'єкта, об'єкта і предиката на сучасному етапі розвитку мов є гнучкими на трьох рівнях: синтаксичному, семантичному та прагматичному. Незважаючи на базисний порядок SVO, у китайському розмовному стилі функціонують речення із порядком SOV: «把 (ba) речення» і «将 (jiāng) речення». Речення пасивного стану мають порядок OSV. Цей порядок зумовлюють наявні в них службові слова «被 (bei)», «让 (ràng)», «叫 (jiào)», або «给 (gěi)». Порядки слів SOV і OSV вважають периферійними. У японському реченні велика кількість часток відмінкової парадигми забезпечує гнучкість структури щодо порядку слів. Крім базисного порядку SOV, є також три периферійних варіанта: OSV, SVO та OVS, — які мають ефект підсвічування синтаксичних, семантичних і прагматичних аспектів. Речення із периферійними порядками слів мають особливе прагматичне навантаження.

**Ключові слова:** китайська мова, японська мова, порядок слів, гнучкість структури, зіставний аналіз, речення, система, синтаксичний, семантичний, лінгвопрагматичний.

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