ON THE CHANGE FROM SVO TO SOV IN CHINESE

JAMES H-I TAI

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0. INTRODUCTION.

In the recent study of word order and word order change, Chinese presents an interesting case. I have previously (Tai, 1973b) shown that on the basis of synchronic evidence, Chinese can be construed as an underlying SOV language. Recently, Li and Thompson (1974b) have argued that Chinese has changed from SVO to SOV without external influence. Although their observation on the direction of word order change in Chinese is correct, their interpretation of the nature of the change, their explanation of the cause and their conclusion can be questioned. The purpose of this paper is to examine some facts concerning the word order change in Chinese which didn't catch Li and Thompson's attention and to propose an alternative theory of word order changes in Chinese centering around the change from SVO to SOV. It is hoped that the proposed theory can be shown to have higher explanatory value than Li and Thompson's theory and thus contributes a different perspective to the understanding of word order change in general.

The proposed theory can be outlined in the following:

(A) Archaic Chinese started as an SVO language like Thai. Through close and frequent contacts with Altaic languages in the north, it began to adopt the ordering principle of placing the specifier before the specified.

(B) The specifier-specified principle first affected noun phrases to give the word order of modifiers before the head noun. It then affected verb phrases to give the word order of adverbials before the main verb.

(C) When most of the prepositional phrases in archaic Chinese, due to the application of the specifier-specified principle, shifted from the postverbal to the preverbal position, a reanalysis of prepositions as verbs occurred. This reanalysis is viewed as resultant from a compromise of the conflict between the verb-second strategy of a SVO language and the shift of prepositional phrases to the preverbal position.

(D) The shift of prepositional phrases and reanalysis of prepositions with verbs gave the passive construction the new form of O bei S V.

(E) The ba sentences with the form of S ba O V then emerged to serve as active counterparts of the passive bei sentences.

I. DIVERSITIES OF WORD ORDER IN CHINESE DIALECTS.

Hashimoto (1975) has investigated the typological diversities of modern Chinese dialects and proposed that the Chinese has been undergoing a consistent 'Altaiization'
since the very beginning of its history. His proposal is based on the fact that archaic Chinese is typologically much closer to the Thai language than modern Chinese is, and the fact that the typological characteristics of modern Chinese dialects from north to south exhibit a continuum from Altaic to Thai. He has illustrated this continuum with a number of phonological, morphological and syntactic features. Four of these syntactic features have to do with word order. First, while northern dialects consistently put modifiers before the head noun, southern dialects show the order of head-modifier in some nominal compounds. For example, gong-niu (male-cattle) ‘ox’ in northern Chinese is expressed as niu-gong (cattle-male) in southern Chinese. Similarly, mu-ju (female-pig) in northern Chinese is expressed in the south as ju-mu (pig-female). Significantly, the further south one goes, the more compounds one finds with the order of head-modifier. Second, some adverbs which can only precede the verb in northern dialects can be placed either before or after the verb in southern dialects. For example, the adverb xian ‘first’ must precede the verb in Mandarin Chinese.

(1) a. ni xian qu You go ahead.  
   (you) (first) (go)  
*b. ni qu xian

However, in the Amoy dialect, both (1a) and (1b) are acceptable. Further to the south, in Cantonese, only (1b) is acceptable. Third, there are sentences which can have either SVO or SOV in Standard Chinese. For such sentences, the SVO form is preferred in southern dialects, and the SOV form is preferred in the north. For example, both (2a) and (2b) are acceptable in Standard Chinese, but (2a) is preferred by northern speakers and (2b) by southern speakers.

(2) a. ta dao Beijing qu He is going to Peking.  
   (he) (to) (Peking) (go)  
   b. ta qu Beijing

Fourth, while the comparative object must precede the verb in northern dialects, it can follow the verb in southern dialects. Thus, while in Mandarin only (3a) is acceptable, both (4a) and (4b) are acceptable in the Amoy dialect.

(3) a. ni bi ta gao You are taller than him.  
   (you) (than) (he) (tall)  
*b. ni gao bi ta

(4) a. li bi i ka guan You are taller than him.  
   (you) (than) (he) (more) (tall)  
   b. li ke quan i  
   (you) (more) (tall) (he)
Similarly, in Cantonese the comparative object can be placed either before or after the verb.

(5) a. ngox peekaaw nee kou I am taller than you.
(1) (than) (you) (tall)

b. ngox kou kuoh nee
(1) (tall) (exceed) (you)

We can add some observations to Hashimoto’s. First, many ba sentences in Mandarin Chinese can be expressed only in SVO sentences in southern dialects. For example, while in Mandarin both (6a) and (6b) are acceptable, in Amoy only (7b) is acceptable.

(6) a. wo ba neiben shu tuo-le I lost that book.
(1) (O.M.) (that) (book) (lose-asp.)

b. wo tuo-le neiben shu

(7) *a. gwa ka hitben cei panggin I lost that book.
(1) (O.M.) (that) (book) (lose)

b. gwa panggin hitben cei

Second, while the aspect marker le in Mandarin Chinese is a verb suffix, its equivalent in the Cantonese and Min dialects is an auxiliary verb you ‘to have’ preceding the main verb. 4

(8) ta mai-le shu He has bought a book.

(9) ta you mai shu He has bought a book.

Third, in the cases where Mandarin Chinese allows either preverbal or postverbal positions for a locative phrase without clear functional difference, southern dialects allow only postverbal positions. For example, while both (10a) and (10b) are all owed in Mandarin Chinese, only (10b) is allowed in southern dialects.

(10) a. ta zai Shanghai zhu He lives in Shanghai.
(he) (at) (live)

b. ta zhu zai Shanghai

The above facts that the further south one goes, the more SVO characteristics one finds shows that the further south a dialect is located, the more archaic forms it exhibits. Two related questions can be raised. If there is, as suggested by Li and Thompson, an internal reason for the shift from SVO to SOV in Chinese, why should Chinese dialects exhibit different rates of change? Furthermore, why should it be that the further south a dialect is located, the slower the rate of change? It appears to me that these two questions can be answered if and only if we assume that the change started in the north and spread
to the south. Since there is no evidence that northern Chinese and southern Chinese started with different structures, and since we have no reason to assume that a northern dialect should be structurally more innovative than a southern dialect, we have to assume that the northern dialects started to change due to their contacts with Altaic languages. This assumption is consistent with the fact that there were two long periods of occupation in northern China by people speaking Altaic languages: the first period from the 4th century A.D. to the 6th century A.D., the second period from the 10th century A.D. to the 13th century A.D. During these two periods, a large portion of Chinese population moved from the north to the south. At the same time, the north became a 'melting pot' for Chinese and people speaking Altaic-Turkish languages. In addition to these two long periods of occupation by Altaic people in the north, China was ruled by Mongols from 1279 to 1368 A.D. and by Manchus from 1644–1911 A.D.

In the face of the linguistic and historical facts discussed above, it is only reasonable for us to agree with Hashimoto's theory that the Chinese language has undergone 'Altaicization'. It should be noted that although northern China was first occupied by Altaic people during the 4th century A.D., the infusion of Altaic elements must have occurred much earlier. From history, we know that Chou people from the northwestern part of China conquered Shang people in the east during the 11th century B.C. Chou people had contacts with Altaic people before they moved eastward. Thus, while in the Chou documents of 10th and 11th centuries B.C., modifiers are consistently ordered before the head noun, in the oracle bone inscriptions of the later Shang dynasty we can still find the order of the head noun before modifiers. The fact that the Shang language and modern southern dialects allow the head noun to precede the modifier in some constructions suggests the possibility that Chinese was an SVO language like Thai before it began to pick up some SOV characteristics. It appears that the change started with the relative order of modifiers and the head noun, and later the relative order of verbal modifiers and the main verb. In other words, the specifier-specified principle adopted from the Altaic languages applied to noun phrases first and later applied to verbal phrases. Furthermore, when it applied to verbal phrases, adverbs were affected first, and then prepositional phrases of adverbial function. Thus, if we examine the Chinese written by northern Chinese during the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., we find that the noun phrase has already completed the change, that is, relative clauses, adjectives and genitives all consistently precede the head noun. We also find that while several types of adverbs are placed before the main verb, most of the prepositional phrases are placed after the main verb. For examples,
(11) wangwang-ran qu zhi Disdainfully he dismissed him.
    (disdainfully) (dismiss) (him)

(12) lu zeng yu ren He was hated by man frequently.
    (frequently) (hate) (by) (man)

(13) Zhou Zheng jiao e Zhou and Zheng hated each other.
    (reciprocally)

(14) sheng ren fu qi A sage arises again.
    (sage) (man) (again) (arise)

(15) dang Yao zhi shi tianxia you wei ping
    (during) (of) (time) (heaven-under) (still) (not settled)
    The world was still unsettled in the days of the Emperor Yao.

II. THE SHIFT OF PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES.

As Li and Thompson have observed, prepositional phrases have shifted from the
postverbal position in archaic Chinese to the preverbal position in modern Chinese. To see
the nature of this change more clearly, let us examine the development of yu phrases
carefully, since yu is the most important preposition in archaic Chinese. In each of the
following pairs of sentences, the (a) form represents the Chinese of the 4th and 3rd centuries
B.C., and the (b) form represents modern Chinese (Mandarin).9

(16) a. chu yu you gu
    (emerge) (dark) (valley)
    emerged from dark valley.

    b. cong you gu chulai
    (from) (dark) (valley) (emerge)
    played music here.

(17) a. gu yue yu ci
    (play) (music) (here)
    played music here.

    b. zai zher yanzou yinyue
    (at) (here) (play) (music)

(18) a. yi yu Zigong
    (bow)
    bowed to Zigong.

    b. dui Zigong zuo yi
    (toward) (make) (bow)
(19) a. fang mu yu wei
   (just) (be friendly)
   were at that moment on friendly terms with the Wei state.

   b. zheng gen Weiguo yaohao
   (just) (with (be friendly)

(20) a. yi yu qinshou
   (differ) (animals)
   different from animals

   b. gen qinshou bu tong
   (with) (animals) (not) (same)

(21) a. duo yu lin guo
   (more) (neighbor) (state)
   more than the neighboring state.

   b. bi lin guo duo
   (compare) (neighbor) (state) (more)

(22) a. she yu jiao
   (build a shed) (suburbs)
   built a mat shed in the suburbs.

   b. ba caoshe gai zai jiaowai
   (0. marker) (shed) (build) (at) (suburbs)

(23) a. jian yu mian
   (appear) (face)
   appeared on his face.

   b. chuxian zai lianshang
   (appear) (at) (face-on)

(24) a. zhi yu jing
   (arrive) (frontier)
   arrived at the frontier.

   b. lai dao bianjing
   (come) (to) (frontier)

The data in sentences (16)—(24) show that while yu phrases were consistently ordered after the main verb in archaic Chinese, their equivalents in modern Chinese are ordered in most cases before the main verb, and in some cases after the main verb. One might be tempted to suggest that (22b), (23b) and (24b) are remnants of the on-going process of shifting prepositional phrases from the postverbal position to the preverbal position.
However, there is a good reason to believe that those prepositional phrases which have not shifted to the preverbal position do not have the function of modifying verbs. It can be observed that (22), (23) and (24) all involve locative phrases. I have elsewhere (Tai, 1976) shown that there is a semantic principle governing the placement of locative phrases in modern Chinese. This principle can be stated to the effect that while preverbal locative phrases denote the location of an action, postverbal locative phrases denote the location of a concrete object as the result of an action. Thus, while the locative phrase in (17), as a verbal modifier, has shifted to the preverbal position, the locative phrases in (22), (23) and (24), being without a genuine function of verbal modifiers, have remained unchanged.

Our explanation for the development of word order in place adverbials can be applied to other adverbial constructions. In describing the word order of various adverbial constructions in modern Chinese, Chao (1968) makes a distinction between 'modifier' and 'complement'. When an adverbial construction is placed before the main verb, it is referred to as a 'modifier'. When it is placed after the main verb, it is referred to as a 'complement'. Thus, while the underlined parts in the (b) sentences from (16)–(21) are modifiers, those from (22)–(24) are complements. I have elsewhere (Tai, 1973a) shown that there is in fact a semantic justification for this kind of distinction. While a preverbal adverbial in modern Chinese expresses a qualification of the occurrence of an event or the circumstance or manner in which the actor performs the action, a postverbal adverbial expresses the result of an action or the extent to which an action has been performed. This functional difference between preverbal and postverbal adverbials accounts for the fact that while the word order in (16)–(21) have changed, it has not in (22)–(24). Thus, if we adopt Chao's narrow definition of modification, we can assume that all adverbial constructions with a genuine function of modifying verbs have completed the shift from the postverbal position in archaic Chinese to the preverbal position in modern Chinese.

It is significant to observe that prior to the word order change involving prepositional phrases and other adverbial constructions, archaic Chinese had already exhibited the modifier-head order consistently in noun phrases, that is, relative clauses, adjectives and genitives all preceded the head noun as they do in modern Chinese. This fact clearly suggests that the ordering principle of the specifier before the specified adopted from Altaic languages first affected noun phrases in archaic Chinese and later spread to verbal phrases.

III. REANALYSIS OF PREPOSITIONS WITH VERB FORMS.

Sentences (16)–(24) also show that the preposition yu has been replaced by many
equivalents, regardless of whether or not the word order change has occurred. This phenomenon calls for an explanation.

According to Chao's (1968) analysis of modern Chinese, while (16b)--(21b) have the structure of (25), (22b)--(24b) have the structure of (26).

(25) NP V NP V NP
(26) NP V V NP

More specifically, while the underlined part in (25) is a verbal modifier, that in (26) is a verbal complement. Thus, Chao conceives sentences (16b)--(24b) as consisting of a series of verbal phrases. The words we have translated into English prepositions in sentences (16b)--(24b), that is, cong 'from', dao 'to', dui 'toward', zai 'at', gen 'with' and bi 'than' are considered to be verbs. In fact, they can occur alone as main verbs.

(27) wo cong-le ta
I followed him.
(28) wo dao-le Meiguo
I have arrived in U.S.A.
(29) wo zai xuexiao-le
I am in the school.
(30) wo dui-zhe ta
I am facing him.
(31) wo gen-zhe ta
I followed him.
(32) women bi yi bi
Let's compare.

When they co-occur with other verbs, they can be considered either as verbs or as prepositions, depending on the criteria we use. Regardless of how they are classified in modern Chinese, the fact remains that they were verbs in archaic Chinese.

On the other hand, the morpheme yu was always a preposition in archaic Chinese, and never occurred as a verb. The question should then be raised why it was replaced by verbal forms. Chao's analysis of (16b)--(24b) as consisting of series of verbal phrases may or may not be justified, depending on what kind of grammatical theory we appeal to. Nevertheless, it provides us with an insight to the understanding of the correlation between the shift of prepositional phrases and the development of yu into its multiple modern equivalents, which are homophonous with verbs. This correlation can be explained, if we assume that while the yu phrases were shifting to the preverbal position to conform with the specifier-specified order, the principle of putting the verb after the first NP in
SVO languages requires that the preposition yu must be replaced by a verb which semantically is compatible with the main verb and able to state the relationship between two nominals participating the action expressed by the main verb.13 We can hypothesize the developmental stages as

\[(33) \quad \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP}) \ \text{Prep} + \text{NP} \longrightarrow \text{NP} \ \text{Prep} + \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP})\]

\[(34) \quad \text{NP} \ \text{Prep} + \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP}) \longrightarrow \text{NP} \ V \ \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP})\]

(34) represents the reanalysis of prepositions as verbs after prepositional phrases have been shifted to the preverbal position. As to the replacement of the preposition yu by verbs zai 'to be located at' and dao 'to arrive' in cases where word order has not changed, we can assume that the reanalysis took place to be consistent with reanalysis in preverbal position. Perhaps, this reanalysis in postverbal position was reinforced by the general patterning of action-result verb compounds which seem to have emerged prior to the reordering and reanalysis. (34) can thus be revised as (35)

\[(35) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. NP} \ \text{Prep} + \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP}) & \longrightarrow \text{NP} \ V \ \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP}) \\
\text{b. NP} & \ V \ (\text{NP}) \ \text{Prep} + \text{NP} \longrightarrow \text{NP} \ V \ (\text{NP}) \ V \ \text{NP}
\end{align*}\]

There is some evidence to support the hypothesis that the reordering took place before reanalysis. In addition to the preposition yu, we also have yi 'with (instrumental)' and zi 'from'. Unlike yu phrases, both yi and zi phrases in archaic Chinese can appear either before or after the main verb. This is illustrated in the (a) forms of sentences (36)—(39).

\[(36) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. Wen-wang yi minli wei tai} & \quad \text{(Mencius)} \\
\text{King Wen with people's labor built a tower}
\end{align*}\]

b. Wen-wang yong renmin de laoli gai-le tai \quad \text{(Modern Chinese)}

\[(37) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. sha ren yi ting yu ren} & \quad \text{(Mencius)} \\
\text{killed people with a cudgel or a knife}
\end{align*}\]

b. yong ting he dao sha ren \quad \text{(Modern Chinese)}

\[(38) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. Zheng-bo gui zi Jin} & \quad \text{(Tso Chuan)} \\
\text{The earl of Zheng returned from the state of Jin}
\end{align*}\]

b. Zheng-bo cong Jin-guo huilai \quad \text{(Modern Chinese)}

\[(39) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. Shi-zi zi Chu fan} & \quad \text{(Mencius)} \\
\text{The crown Prince returned from the state of Chu}
\end{align*}\]

b. Shi-zi cong Chu-guo huilai \quad \text{(Modern Chinese)}
From the above sentences, we can also observe that modern Chinese uses *yong* to replace *yi* and *cong* 'from (to follow)' to replace *zi*, and that both *yong* and *cong* phrases are placed before the main verb. The fact that in archaic Chinese they were used only as main verbs is consistent with the proposed theory of reanalysis.

IV. BEI AND BA SENTENCES.

The emergence of Bei and Ba constructions during the course of Chinese history has provided modern Chinese with another essential characteristic of a SOV language. In both constructions, the verb is in the final position.

(40) \[\text{wo sha-le Zhangsan}\]
\[\text{(I) (kill-asp.) (John)}\]
\[\text{S V O}\]
\[\text{I killed John.}\]

(41) \[\text{wo ba Zhangsan sha-le}\]
\[\text{S (O.M.) O V}\]
\[\text{I killed John.}\]

(42) \[\text{Zhangsan bei wo sha-le}\]
\[\text{O (passive M.) S V}\]
\[\text{John was killed by me.}\]

As Li and Thompson have noted, the word order of the passive construction in the Chinese of the fourth and third centuries B.C. is identical to that in modern English, that is, O-V-prep-S. For example,

(43) \[\text{lao \# zhe zhi yu ren (Mencius)}\]
\[\text{(apply) (labor) (people) (govern) (by) (people)}\]
\[\text{Those who do manual labor are governed by others.}\]

Notice that the preposition *yu* is used for the passive construction. In addition to the full passive, we also find truncated passives with the verb *jian* 'to see' before the main verb. For example,

(44) \[\text{Pen Cheng-kuo jian sha (Mencius)}\]
\[\text{(see) (kill)}\]
\[\text{Pen Cheng-kuo was killed.}\]

In the Chinese of the second and first centuries B.C., we begin to see a large number of passive sentences using *bei* in both full and truncated passives.
(45) guo yi ri bei gong
(state) (one) (day) (receive) (attack) (Chan-kuo Ts’e)
If one day your state were attacked.

(46) wan sheng zhi guo bei wei yu Chao
(ten-thousands) (horse-chariots) (R. marker) (state) (receive) (surrounded)
(by) (Chao)
We, a major state, have been surrounded by Chao.

Bei was a verb meaning ‘to receive’ in archaic Chinese. On the basis of the fact that when
the truncated bei passive became productive, jian truncated passive had disappeared, we can
assume that bei as a verb replaced jian in truncated passives and then spread to full passives
with the by phrase still following the verb. It can be seen that (46) has the structure of

(47) NP V-V Preposition NP
O bei-wei yu S

As yu prepositional phrases began to shift to the preverbal position and underwent re-
analysis, bei as a verb became the most natural substitute for the preposition yu. Thus, (47)
developed into (48).

(48) NP V NP V
O bei S

The developmental history of the Chinese passive construction clearly shows that it started
with a postverbal prepositional phrase and developed into serial verbal phrases through an
intermediate stage of verb-compound with the prepositional phrase placed after the verb-
compound.

The ba construction didn’t exist in archaic Chinese. Ba was a verb meaning ‘to hold’
or ‘to take’. The ba construction developed much later than the bei construction. Most
scholars agree that it began to emerge sometime in the T’ang dynasty (7th-9th centuries
A.D.). The emergence of the ba construction can be viewed as the development of the
active counterpart for the new passive construction. In other words, (49) is patterned after
(48).

(49) NP V NP V
S ba O

This view can be substantiated by the grammatical relation between the ba construction
and the bei construction in modern Chinese. These two constructions share many similar
semantic and syntactic conditions. More significantly, the \textit{ba} construction has tighter constraints than the \textit{bei} construction and the set of grammatical \textit{ba} sentences almost constitutes a subset of grammatical \textit{bei} sentences.$^{14}$

V. AN EXPLANATION FOR GRAMMATICALIZATION.

Li and Thompson claim that the word order change in Chinese did not involve the reordering of constituents. They contend that the new order is a result of the development of complex sentences into simple sentences, and then the new order gradually replaces the older order. Their view of the emergence of the new order can be summarized by

\[(50) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad S \ V \ O \quad V \rightarrow \ S \quad \text{case-marker} \quad O \ V \\
\text{b.} & \quad O \ V \ S \quad V \rightarrow \ O \quad \text{case-marker} \quad S \ V \\
\text{c.} & \quad S \ V \ NP \quad V \ (NP) \rightarrow \ S \quad \text{prep} \quad NP \ V \ (NP)
\end{align*}\]

It is clear that (50) assumes that archaic Chinese has changed from a language type of serial verb phrases into a prepositional language. However, we have seen that archaic Chinese had prepositional phrases rather than serial verb phrases. Particularly, there were no source sentences available in archaic Chinese to serve as inputs to the process of grammaticalization as represented in (50). It is then necessary to ask why these sources, with serial verbs emerged in the course of history. We have earlier suggested that serial verb phrases first emerged as a result of shifting prepositional phrases from postverbal to preverbal position. The process of grammaticalization (50) must have occurred after the word order shift and subsequent verb serialization.

More importantly, if modern Chinese has undergone the process of grammaticalization as represented in (50), we want to explain why it occurred at all, and why it applied only to the first verb and only to certain types of verbs. I don’t see how any explanation can be derived from Li and Thompson’s theory. The present proposed theory, however, is able to provide an explanation. Since these verbs which have undergone grammaticalization were originally adopted to replace prepositions to reconcile the conflict between the fronting of prepositional phrases and the preservation of the verb-second principle in a SVO language, they need not be adopted with complete semantic features to function as main verbs. The adoption of their forms with certain necessary semantic features is sufficient enough to serve the purpose. If we further assume that the adoption in general doesn’t involve the semantic feature [+ action], we can explain why these verbs have become prepositions or case markers.
VI. CONCLUSION.

To my knowledge, Munda and Chinese are the two clear cases of change from SVO to SOV. According to Lehmann (1973), Munda borrowed the OV order from Dravidian. We have seen that the word order change in Chinese can be best understood as due to contacts with Altaic languages. It borrowed the natural serialization principle of specifier-specified, which first applied to the relative order of the nominal modifier and the head noun and later to that of the verbal modifier and the verb. The SOV order in simple sentences was developed much later. Chinese thus presents a case of word order change involving specifier and specified which has been independent of the relative order of the verb and the object, and which, though due to contacts, does not confirm Lehmann's (1972, 1973) proposal that the relative order of verbs and objects governs other orders of syntactic arrangement, particularly, those involving modifier and modified.¹⁵

In his recent investigation of directions of word order change, Vennemann (1973a) has first proposed a schema which doesn't allow the change from SVO to SOV, but later (1973b, 1975) revised his theory to allow this direction of change. Vennemann is concerned only with the directions of change without external influence. If both Munda and Chinese have changed from SVO to SOV through contacts with OV languages rather than due to internal structural development, Vennemann's earlier proposal of no shift from SVO to SOV deserves reconsideration. For it appears that while so many languages have shifted from SOV to SVO, almost no language has shifted from SVO to SOV.

Vennemann's explanation for the change from SOV to SVO is that the loss of case markings in SOV languages caused by reductive phonological change leads to the change into SVO as a compensation to distinguish the subject from the object. If a language is to change from SVO to SOV, it must first develop case markings. Li and Thompson have attempted to show that Chinese word order has developed in that sequence. It has been shown, however, that Chinese did not follow this sequence of change. It is implied in Vennemann's explanation that while the word order is secondary to case markings in SOV languages, it is the only means in SVO languages without case markings to separate the subject from the object. If a language has to use the SVO order as the only means to separate the subject from the object, there is no good reason for it to develop case markings. What we have shown in Chinese is that case markings were developed as a result of word order change from SVO to SOV through contacts. Thus, pending for further evidence, it is appropriate to maintain that without external influence, the change from SVO to SOV is much less likely than that from SOV to SVO.
NOTES

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1. More precisely, (lb) is grammatical in Amoy with the form: li (you) gia (go) tauxing (ahead).

2. Hashimoto's original example is replaced by the present one in order to better illustrate the point.

3. This example is adopted from Chao (1974).


5. Intermarriage between Chinese and non-Chinese must have occurred to a great extent. Chinese historians reported that the founding family of the T'ang dynasty, the Li family, was only half Chinese. Many historians believe that Li Po, the greatest Chinese poet, was only half Chinese.

6. See also Wang Li's (1958) history of the Chinese language.

7. Lehmann (1973) has speculated that Thai could be a SOV language before its present SVO stage. Li and Thompson (1974b) have suggested that Chinese was a SOV long before the archaic Chinese of 11th century B.C. The only clear evidence to support the hypothesis that both Thai and Chinese were SOV languages before their SVO stage is the fact that they both have final question particles. Thus, because of lack of clear evidence, I will not be concerned with the question of whether or not both Thai and Chinese started as SQV languages in the very beginning.

8. Most of the examples of archaic Chinese with their translations are adopted from Dobson (1959, 1962 and 1974).

9. Examples (11)—(24) of archaic Chinese are all from Mencius' texts.

10. As Li and Thompson (1974b) have suggested.

11. The term 'co-verb' has been used by many Chinese grammarians to refer to this class of verbs when they occur before the main verb as represented in (25). Li and Thompson (1974a) have argued that these 'co-verbs' are prepositions. Their logic is that since these 'co-verbs' do not behave exactly like verbs, they must be prepositions. I believe that one can also argue that since they do not behave exactly like prepositions, they must be verbs. In fact, if we take English prepositions as what we mean by preposición, Chinese 'co-verbs' can hardly be qualified as prepositions.
12. It is referred to as ‘particle’ by Dobson and other scholars of archaic Chinese.

13. For the role of the verb-second rule in SVO languages, see Bach (1971) and Ven­nemann (1973b) for detailed discussions.


15. Konneker (1975) has reported that in Italic languages, changes in the order of relative clause and noun phrase can occur independently of alternations in the order of object and verb.

REFERENCES


