

## Some remarks on the word order constraint: View from Chinese NP

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This commentary addresses aspects of Chinese syntax regarding the word order constraint, Final-over-final Constraint (FOFC) (Biberauer, Holmberg & Roberts 2014 et seq.). It has been noted that sentence-final particles (SFP) in Chinese may represent exceptions for FOFC if SFPs are head-final functional heads that take head-initial phrases as complements (Paul 2014; Pan & Paul 2016). However, it is not clear whether these particles are indeed independent heads. Especially, Tang and Cheng (2014) and Tang (2015) have observed that SFP in Cantonese can often be accompanied by a head-initial element (i.e. the discontinuous nested structure). The same holds in Mandarin. Consider the sentence-final *le*:

- (1) Ta **yijing** chi fan le.  
he already eat rice SFP  
'He has already eaten.'

There is a dependency between the head-initial *yijing* and the head-final *le*, and in fact, it is the head-initial element *yijing* that is more prominent in the grammatical structure. For example, while the morpho-phonological structures of the SFPs are bleached (bound elements with the reduced tone), those of the head-initial elements are well preserved, and it is the position of the head-initial element *yijing* that determines the scope of the SFP *le*:

- (2) a. Yijing mei-you renhe ren yong-guo daziji le.  
already not.have any people use typewriter SFP  
'It has become that no one ever used a typewriter.' (Already > No)  
b. Mei-you renhe ren yijing yong-guo daziji le.  
not.have any people already use typewriter SFP  
'(So far) no one has used a typewriter yet.' (No > Already)

On the other hand, more severe challenges for FOFC may come from Chinese NP structure, especially from the plural particle *-men* and the complement structure of NP (Huang 2016). With respect to the former, it has been observed that *-men* is not a suffix, but it is merged in the highest position of NP/DP (see Lin et al. *in preparation*). Unlike SFP, there is no corresponding head-initial element:

- (3) [[zheli de laoshi gen xuesheng] men]  
Here DE teacher and student PL  
'the teachers and students here'

Huang (2016) has recently shown that nouns in Chinese can take left-ward complement, which results in a head-final configuration, while other functional categories like CLP and DemP remains head-initial. If the approach is on the right track, it poses challenges to FOFC. Finally, I will address the representational approach in Williams (2002), which may derive similar effects of FOFC, and how it might help solve the problems faced by FOFC.