

Assignment of semantic roles by discourse and by syntax: Chinese and English

English	Chinese
<p>John keeps his car inside.</p> <p>S V O Adv</p> <p>Agent Patient</p> <p>Normal SVO word order</p>	<p>张把车放在里面。</p> <p>Zhang ba che fangzai limian.</p> <p>Topic Comment</p> <p>Agent Patient</p>
<p>His car John keeps inside.</p> <p>Topic S V Adv</p> <p>Topic fronting</p>	<p>车张放在里面。</p> <p>Che Zhang fangzai limian.</p> <p>Topic Comment</p>
<p>*His car keeps inside.</p> <p>Pseudo-passive</p> <p>Transfer of topic-comment word order from Chinese</p>	<p>车放在里面。</p> <p>Che fangzai limian.</p> <p>Topic Comment</p>
<p>His car is kept inside.</p> <p>S be V-en Adv</p> <p>Passivization allows agentless topic-fronting</p>	<p>车放在里面。</p> <p>Che fangzai limian.</p> <p>Topic Comment</p>

In Chinese, the discourse determines the focus of the sentence (i.e., the topic). But in English, the semantic roles of constituents are determined syntactically.

(Han, 2000) claims that Chinese learners of English first transfer discourse word order into English, which in many cases corresponds to English SVO word order, but when an object is fronted, transfer of discourse word order results in pseudo-passives such as “His car keeps inside.” Only when Chinese learners realize that English syntax determines the semantic roles of constituents do they produce passives.

Reference

Han, Z. (2000). Persistence of the implicit influence of NL: The case of the pseudo-passive. Applied Linguistics, 21(1), 78-105.

TRANSFER OF TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURE:
THE CASE OF THE PSEUDO-PASSIVE

From Han, Z. (2000). Persistence of the implicit influence of NL: The case of the pseudo-passive. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(1), 78-105. The following sentences were written by two very advanced Chinese speakers of English L2. Both were engineers living in London. Identify first the pseudo-passive structures like “New cars must keep inside.” Then identify the target-like passives like “New cars must be kept inside.” Han claims that both structures result from the transfer of Chinese topic-comment word order.

Topic	Comment
New cars	must keep inside
[27]	They told me that <u>the attractive offer will be sent</u> to me a bit later since <u>what I sent to them have not received.</u>
[28]	Thank you for your paper which you sent me on 22/02/96. Since you did not address the postcode (SW7 2BY), and so it arrived just this morning. The letter about graphics file has not received.
[29]	Hello, Dear X, Your letter of 17/04/96 has just received. Thank you very much. I guess that the letter may be enough for the visa use. This letter will be delivered to Australia Embassy tomorrow.
[30]	After two months's study, I feel that the structural analyses of composite material (polymer (pure or fiber-reinforced)) is a very difficult challenging field for computational mechanics worker. The correct modelling will be involved with anisotropic, finite strain plasticity and strain-rate and temperature effect. Furthermore, the material properties is coupled with processing. Fanta's software can use to model processing procedure properly for injection moulding components.
[31]	Though I have not learnt much about it, Bates' suggestions (May 1995) about enhancement on this issue impressed me deeply. His viewpoints are absolutely right and should be stressed again (I do not know whether these problems have solved in the newest release)
[32]	Generally the reference line or surface of elements is set at the central line or surface. But sometimes the structural geometrical shape poses some problems of element compatibility if the reference keeps at the central surface.
[33]	I think mathematics is not a big problem, but chinese is, as one can not learn chinese in a few days. I will make her mathematics but chinese should keep continuously.
[34]	Now, we start to work on the polarization again. I remember before I left you said you would send me something, but up to now I did not receive anything from you.

- The long paper is still there, have not finished yet, especially waiting for your version.
- [35] Then I went to my bank, transfereing money to check account, and then went to another bank, but they find that my money has not trasfered yet, hope it will be tomorrow, whole morning did not do anything.
- [36] I find all the mail can not send out even from Norway. I send this same mail this morning but you said that you did not receive it.
- [41] X immediately expressed his interests in my application and graded me as 'very appropriate' and then sent me a pack of material about M by urgent mail. After an interview on 13/02/96, he gave me oral offer of this post. The formal offer will be sent to me soon. The offer conditions have been unknown so far.
- [42] I received a mail from Australia yesterday. They told me that 'the attractive offer will be sent to me a bit later since what I sent to them have not received. They also ask me about the earliest date of my joining them. My reply will be sent to you following this mail.
- [43] Hello, Dear X, Your e-mail message was received. I am happy to know that the offer will be sent to me today.
- [44] I wonder whether the first package which you sent to my home was wrongly addressed. I received the second package yesterday, which was sent to my department, but I have not received the first one.
- [45] I would like to mirror one quarter deformed shell into the full deformed shell using MYSTRO so that some beautiful deformed figures can be plotted for the use in publications.
- [46] What I can do for you is to give you a list of professors or lecturers who are active in academic circles. You can contact them directly. The list will be sent to you later (next week or slightly later).
- [47] I guess that the letter may be enough for the visa use. This letter will be delivered to Australia Embassy tomorrow.
- [48] Sorry to hear that Neil got an ulcer just because of the medicine! wish the problem will soon be solved.
- [49] I have figured out all details of rewriting the paper. Most of the contents in the paper can still be used..., we will discuss more in Vienna.
- [50] Recently we have so many bad news, anyway, the work itself seems interesting. The referee is probably correct, but examples of publishing details and more cases after a short paper are seen everywhere.