

ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ, ПРИКЛАДНАЯ И СРАВНИТЕЛЬНО-СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ  
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REPRESENTATION OF NON-STANDARD WORD ORDER IN CHINESE JOURNALISTIC STYLE

Research article

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**Abstract**

This article is devoted to the study of the issue of word order in the Chinese language, namely the manifestation of non-standard word order in the journalistic style. The relevance of this work is due to the status of Chinese as a language with an analytical structure, where, despite the amorphousness of syntactic and grammatical relations, there is a certain flexibility of word order in a sentence, which is formed depending on the context and language situation. The material for the study was articles, documentary chronicles and news reports from the newspapers People's Daily (人民日报, rénmin rìbào), Xinhua (新华, xīnhuá), CCTV and China News Service (中国新闻社, zhōngguó xīnwén shè) obtained using the continuous sampling method. During the analysis, it was found that the topic structure, as well as sentences with direct word order (SVO), are not the only means of syntactic organization of a sentence; sentences constructed with the help of auxiliary elements and frame constructions are also very widespread.

**Keywords:** Chinese language, word order, non-standard word order, journalistic style.

РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ НЕСТАНДАРТНОГО ПОРЯДКА СЛОВ В КИТАЙСКОМ ПУБЛИЦИСТИЧЕСКОМ  
СТИЛЕ

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

Настоящая статья посвящена исследованию вопроса порядка слов в китайском языке, а именно проявлению нестандартного порядка слов в публицистическом стиле. Актуальность настоящей работы обусловлена статусом китайского как языка с аналитическим строем, где, несмотря на аморфность синтаксических и грамматических отношений, наблюдается определённая гибкость порядка слов в предложении, формирующаяся в зависимости от контекста и языковой ситуации. Материалом для исследования послужили статьи, документальные хроники и новостные репортажи из газет Жэньминь жибао (人民日报, rénmin rìbào), Синьхуа (新华, xīnhuá), CCTV и China News Service (中国新闻社, zhōngguó xīnwén shè), полученные методом сплошной выборки. В ходе анализа было выяснено, что топиковая структура, равно как и предложения с прямым порядком слов (SVO), не являются единственными средствами синтаксической организации предложения, очень широко распространены предложения, строившиеся с помощью служебных элементов и рамочных конструкций.

**Ключевые слова:** китайский язык, порядок слов, нестандартный порядок слов, публицистический стиль.

**Introduction**

Chinese is an isolating language. According to T.V. Zhrebilo's Dictionary of Linguistic Terms, isolating languages are "languages in which grammatical meanings are expressed using function words that have not yet lost their connection with notional words, word order, stress (musical), and intonation" [2, P. 117]. Since the morphological level of this language is amorphous, the syntactic level plays a decisive role in it, namely, the fact that grammatical relations in a Chinese sentence are expressed through word order.

For a long time, the scientific community lacked a unified view on how to classify the parts of a sentence in Chinese: thus, V.I. Gorelov in his "Grammar of the Chinese Language" identified five parts:

- 1) subject;
- 2) predicate;
- 3) object;
- 4) definition;
- 5) adverbial modifier [1, P. 61-77].

The author of the work "Syntax of the Modern Chinese Language" E.I. Shutova proposed a more complex classification:

- 1) main parts (subject + predicate);
- 2) secondary parts of a sentence (object + definition + adjuncts);
- 3) determinative parts (situational adverbial modifier + isolated object) [7, P. 311].

A similar classification of sentence parts is also present among Chinese linguists. So, if we turn to the second volume of the work "Modern Chinese Language" (现代汉语, 2017) authored by Huang Bozhong (黄伯荣) and Liao Xudong (廖序东), then it contains the following parts of the sentence (句子成分, jùzi chéngfēn) [11, P. 59-80]:

1. 主语 [zhǔyǔ], 谓语 [wèiyǔ] (subject and group of the subject).
2. 动词 [dòngyǔ], 宾语 [bīnyǔ] (predicate-verb and complement).
3. 定语 [dìngyǔ] (definition).
4. 状语 [zhuàngyǔ] (circumstance).
5. 补语 [bǔyǔ] (complement).
6. 中心语 [zhōngxīn yǔ] (the word being defined).
7. 独立语 [dúlì yǔ] (isolated member of a sentence).

The Chinese sentence is characterized by a direct word order, built according to the SVO model (when the subject comes first, then the predicate and object) [8].

Although sentence parts play a major role in Chinese grammar, it would still be a mistake to consider the syntax of this language only from the standpoint of formal division.

It should be noted that word order in a sentence is often influenced by context. The French scholar A. Weil was the first who noticed the dependence of word order on context [3, P. 282]. However, the most precise explanation of this grammatical phenomenon was given by the Czech linguist V. Matesius, who developed the theory of "actual segmentation of a sentence," which was based on two key concepts: theme (information already known from the context) and rheme (information introduced into the context for the first time) [5, P. 15].

The thematic-rhematic approach has proven successful in explaining the syntactic features of sentences, but this applies primarily to Indo-European languages. For Chinese syntax, an explanation from the perspective of predication theory is more typical, which divides the Chinese sentence not into "theme" and "rheme," but into "topic" and "comment" [3, P. 88-90].

According to one of the leading Russian sinologists, V.A. Kurdyumov, a topic is what is subject to characterization, and a commentary is what characterizes the topic [4, P. 482, 489]. For clarity, we will give an example where a vertical line | will separate the topic (on the left) from the commentary (on the right):

你 | 好吗? [Nǐ | hǎo ma?] — You | are fine?

这部电影 | 我还没看过。[Zhè bù diànyǐng | wǒ hái méi kànguò] — This film | I haven't seen yet.

下次开会 | 在老黄家里。[Xià cì kāihuì | zài lǎo huáng jiā lǐ] — Next meeting | will be at Lao Huang's house.

In the first part of the sentence, the object of characterization (topic) was introduced, and in the second, characterization (commentary) occurs.

According to the American linguist Zhao Yuanren, the "topic" model is so widespread in Chinese that approximately 50% of sentences are constructed in the "topic-comment" order [10, P. 567]. Thus, it can be said that topic and comment play a significant role in Chinese. The purpose of this study is to examine cases in which word order in Chinese sentences takes on a non-standard form, using the journalistic style of language.

This work is of scientific significance, since there is very little material in the academic literature that would provide sufficient information regarding the features of word order in a Chinese sentence.

### Research methods and principles

"Topic sentences" are not the only instance of non-standard word order in Chinese. The material provided below demonstrates that deviations from SVO order are quite common. Based on a number of articles and textbooks [3], [5], [6], [8], the following classification of such instances can be proposed [9], [11]:

1. Simple cases of inversion in a Chinese sentence:

- Word order in the SOV form — 你这两件衣服穿哪一件? *Which of these two things will you wear?*
- Word order in the OVS form — 房间里走出来一个人。 *A man came out of the room.*
- Word order in the OSV form — 那本画报你看完了吗? *Have you read that magazine?*
- The word order in VO and OV forms is 下雪。 *It's snowing*. 火车票买好了。 *The train ticket was bought.*
- Word order in the VS form — 来了谁? *Who came?*

2. Complex cases of inversion in a Chinese sentence:

- Inversions using auxiliary words (把/将, 对, 被, 连) — 我把他的衣服洗了。 *I washed his clothes.*
- Inversions using frame constructions (以……为, 从……出发, 由……组成) — 美国由 50 个州组成。 *The United States is composed of 50 states.*

Since word order is influenced not only by meaning and context, but also by the stylistic coloring of the text, in this paper we will discuss in detail the manifestation of non-standard word order in journalistic style of language.

According to the definition of T.V. Zhrebilo, the journalistic style is "one of the functional styles serving the sphere of social relations: political, economic, cultural, sports, etc. The journalistic style is used in political literature, it is represented by the mass media (media): newspapers, magazines, radio, television, documentaries" [2, P. 293]. There are many resources on the Internet that can provide us with rich material for research, these include articles, documentaries and news reports from People's Daily (人民日报, rénmin rìbào), Xinhua (新华, xīnhuá), CCTV and China News Service (中国新闻社, zhōngguó xīnwén shè).

## Discussion

Based on the analysis of materials, which included ten sources, the following statistics were obtained (see Table 1):

Table 1 - The proportion of cases of non-standard word order (inversions) in Chinese journalistic style

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No.	Model	Absolute indicator	Relative indicator (%)
<i>Simple cases of inversion in a Chinese sentence</i>			
1.	SOV	0	0
2.	OVS	0	0
3.	OSV	32	33.7
4.	VO and OV	15	15.8
5.	VS	4	4.2
<i>Complex cases of inversion in Chinese sentences</i>			
1.	Auxiliary words	24	25.3
2.	Frame constructions	20	21.1
Total:		95	100

According to V.I. Gorelov, the journalistic style is “one of the written book styles; the use of full sentences is characteristic of works of modern Chinese journalism. In the journalistic style, truncated turns of speech and elliptical sentences are almost never encountered...” [1, P. 128-129].

It's also worth adding to Gorelov's definition that, from a syntactic standpoint, direct word order (SVO) is widely used in journalistic styles. However, as Gorelov immediately pointed out, journalistic works are often emotionally charged [8, P. 129], which is why authors inevitably have to construct sentences in such a way as to convey their thoughts to the reader figuratively and clearly.

In all the sources we analyzed, standard word order (SVO) predominated. However, there were also frequent instances where word order deviated from the standard form. The table above shows which instances were most prevalent in the analyzed sources. Thus, based on the data obtained, we can conclude that:

1. The relative majority of cases of non-standard word order are topic structures (they account for a third of the total). For example:

**十年前行业起步阶段，| 中国企业主动布局底层技术研发...** [Shí nián qián hángyè qǐbù jiēduàn, | Zhōngguó qǐyè zhǔdòng bùjú dīcéng jìshù yánfā] *Ten years ago, in the early stages of the industry's development, Chinese companies were actively investing in research and development of core technologies. (hereinafter the author's translation)*

**中国 | 也因此成为今年参会的 APEC 成员伙伴中的最大经济体。** [Zhōngguó | yě yīncǐ chéngwéi jīnnián cān huì de APEC chéngyuán huǒbàn zhōng de zuìdà jīngjì tǐ] *This also made China the largest economy among the APEC countries participating in the current meeting.*

2. A significant proportion of the analyzed sources were sentences in which the word order was altered by the presence of auxiliary elements (对、将、把、, etc.), as well as by the use of frame constructions that influenced syntactic structure. Collectively, these sentences accounted for 46.4% — more than the percentage of the sentences we mentioned with topical structure.

An explanation for the prevalence of auxiliary elements and framework constructions in the journalistic style can be found in the work of V.I. Gorelov, who wrote that “since journalistic works must possess internal logic and a coherent system of evidence, the extensive use of complex sentences is very characteristic of the journalistic style. In works of Chinese journalism, practically all structural and semantic types and varieties of complex sentences can be used. A consequence of this is the widespread use of auxiliary words of both the baihua language (白话) and wenyan language (文言), which together form a ramified system of means and techniques of syntactic connection” [1, P. 129]. Thus, the widespread presence of auxiliary elements and framework constructions is caused, first of all, by the need to convey a thought to the reader in a logical and argumentative manner. For example:

**从 2024 年中国对外直接投资的流量看，中国对包括新加坡、泰国、美国等 APEC20 个伙伴的投资占到中国对外直接投资的 85%。** [Cóng 2024 nián zhōngguó duìwài zhíjiē tóuzī de liúliàng kàn, zhōngguó duì bāokuò xīnjiāpō, tàiguó, měiguó děng APEC20 gè huǒbàn de tóuzī zhàn dào zhōngguó duìwài zhíjiē tóuzī de 85%] *In terms of China's foreign direct investment in 2024, investments in 20 APEC partner economies, including Singapore, Thailand and the United States, accounted for 85% of China's total foreign direct investment.*

**全国智能监管改革试点地区至少将 50 种重点监测易倒卖回流医保药品纳入智能监管覆盖范围。** [Quánguó zhìnéng jiānguǎn gǎigé shìdiǎn dìqū zhì shǎo jiàng 50 zhǒng zhòngdiǎn jiāncè yì dǎomài huílú yībǎo yàopǐn nà rù zhìnéng jiānguǎn fùgài fànwéi] *[As of December 2025], in regions implementing this pilot system, at least 50 key drugs that can be resold and returned to the health insurance system will be included in the intelligent control reform.*

**地形以沙漠高原为主。** [Dìxíng yǐ shāmò gāoyuán wéi zhǔ] (frame construction 以...为) *The terrain of the territory is mainly represented by deserts and plateaus.*

德国的联邦议院由通过普遍选举产生的议员组成。[Déguó de liánbāng yìyuàn yóu tōngguò pǔbiàn xuǎnjǔ chǎnshēng de yìyuán zǔchéng] (рамочная конструкция 由...组成) *The German Federal Assembly consists of members elected by universal suffrage.*

3. Regarding the remaining syntactic structures (VO/OV and VS), compared to those already mentioned, they constituted a relative minority: the total share was exactly 20% (or a quarter of all cases). Sentences constructed by omitting certain parts of the sentence (ellipses), as well as subject-predicate inversion, are most characteristic of colloquial speech. From our analysis, we can see that sentences constructed in this manner are also not uncommon in the journalistic style of Chinese:

有一组作为对照组不作处理。[Yǒuyī zǔ zuòwéi duìzhào zǔ bùzuò chǔlǐ] *One group served as a control and was not exposed to the treatment.*

然后邀请了 10 个人对各组进行感官评价。[Ránhòu yāoqǐng 10 gè rén duì gè zǔ jìnxíng gǎnguān píngjià] *Then, 10 more people were invited to conduct a sensory evaluation of each group.*

4. Particular attention should be paid to the complete absence of sentences constructed using the word order SOV (subject + object + predicate) and OVS (object + predicate + subject) in the analyzed sources. This state of affairs is explained by the fact that, firstly, these structures sound ungrammatical or are characteristic only of fluent, hurried oral speech, provided that all participants in the dialogue are aware of the context.

### Conclusion

Thus, summing up the analysis of word order in the journalistic style of the Chinese language, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The relative majority was the topical word order — a third of all cases.

2. The next word order patterns after the topical pattern were sentences constructed using auxiliary words and frame constructions. These sentences accounted for 46.4% of the total, significantly exceeding the number of cases with topical structures.

3. A quarter of the total share of cases was occupied by the sentences OV / VO and VS; from a statistical point of view, such sentences could be found in every fifth sentence from all ten analyzed sources.

4. During the analysis, we never encountered OVS and SOV sentences — they are not typical for this style, in which sentence structures, as V.I. Gorelov wrote, “must have internal logic and a coherent system of evidence” [1, P. 129].

In conclusion, it should be noted that the conducted analysis is not only a dry statistical material and a set of conclusions drawn from it, but also provides an opportunity to better understand the syntactic features of the Chinese language and make the speech of Chinese language learners more lively and natural. Further research into the non-standard word order of Chinese using various stylistically charged texts will help better understand the syntactic structure of this language.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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