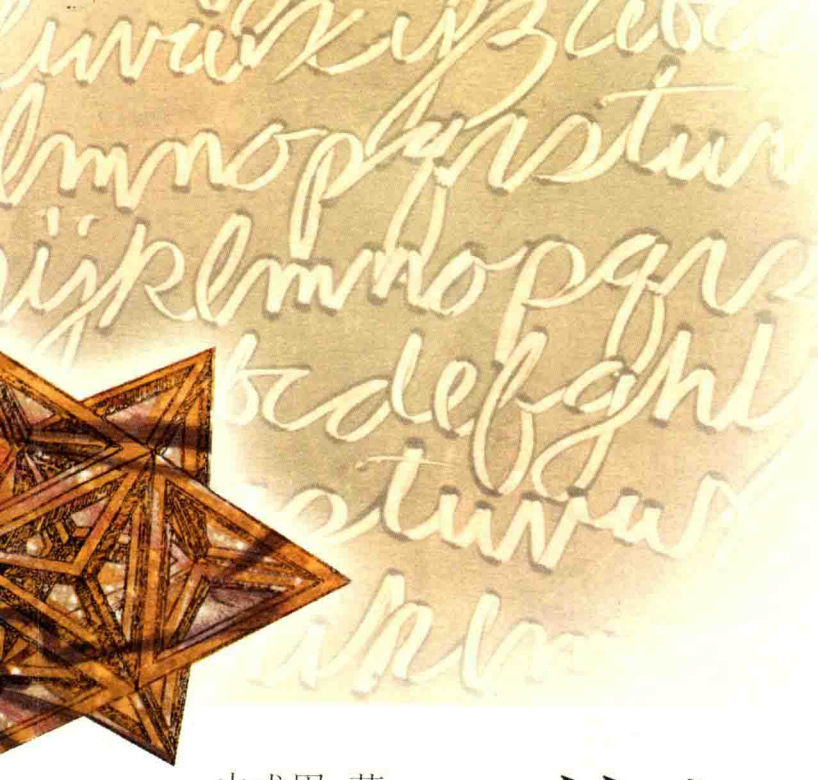

史成周 著

英汉语信息包装研究

Information Packaging in English and Chinese

山东大学出版社

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To my parents

Preface

> In an Olympic event for World's Greatest Language, English might scrape the silver, but Chinese would be unchallenged for the gold.
>
> (Sampson, 1989, p. 229)

> A great deal more research is needed to identify the typological correlations that may exist between a language's canonical word order, its canonical information structure, and the information structure of noncanonical-word-order constructions in that language.
>
> (Birner & Ward, 1998, p. 283)

It is universally held that languages, including English and Chinese, show the given-before-new tendency. Obvious questions emerge: What is meant by "given/new" and are there similarities and differences between English and Chinese in terms of information packaging?

Drawing on previous linguistic theories on information packaging, it is suggested that a comprehensive pragmatic account of information packaging in discourse will require reference to relationally new (focus)/old (presupposition), hearer-new/old, discourse-new/old, lexically new/old and high/low informativity. None of these approaches alone is able to account for all naturally-occurring linguistic data. Still, it is believed that in some cases one can not investigate information packaging without at the same time taking grammar into account.

To capture the underlying nature of the give-before-new tendency, this book concentrates on how addressers package linguistic messages for their intended addressees in terms of old/new. Since the study of information packaging in discourse opens up many areas, my investigation has necessarily had to be restricted to a few aspects of discourse organization like argument ordering, the Preferred Argument Structure, the ordering of focus and

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presupposition, and behavior of discourse unit-initial and -internal elements.

It is shown that both English and Chinese follow the given-before-new tendency partially in that clause-initial arguments tend to be old whereas new arguments tend to occur clause-finally and partially in that presupposition tends to occur before focus. It is further shown that the subject of a transitive verb prefers old entities to new ones and that new entities prefer the object of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb to the subject of a transitive verb in English and Chinese. Moreover, it is argued that clause-initial arguments, including the subject and the object of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb are more sensitive to hearer-status than discourse-status in Chinese; that is, they are subject to the constraint to represent hearer-old entities.

It is shown that there is a correlation between informativity and discourse unit-initial and -internal elements in Chinese and English in that roughly speaking, discourse unit-initial elements tend to be realized by expressions of high informativity and expressions of high informativity tend to occur unit-initially, whereas discourse unit-internal elements tend to be realized by expressions of low informativity and expressions of low informativity tend to occur unit-internally. It is further shown that there is a correlation between old/new and unit-initial and -internal elements in that roughly speaking, discourse unit-initial elements tend to be new, and new elements tend to occur unit-initially but discourse unit-internal elements tend to be old, and old elements tend to occur unit-internally. The tendencies, however, are language-, genre- and register-specific. Additionally, it is shown that discourse-initial topical themes tend to be hearer-old although they are always discourse-new in Chinese.

This work is based on my Shandong University Ph. D. dissertation. For the sake of clarity and precision, portions of the thesis have been revised or deleted.

I hope that the work would shed light on such issues as whether some ways of information packaging hold cross-linguistically. The book can be read by anyone interested in English and Chinese, the most common native languages in the world. Since worldwide interest in Chinese grows, as a native speaker of Chinese, I do hope that the book would play a role in stimulating

further the study of Chinese. I hope that readers would find the book satisfactory.

From all readers, I welcome comments and suggestions at shicheng zhousd@163.com.

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List of Abbreviations

A	transitive subject
ADV	adverb
ASP	aspect marker
BA	*ba* in the *ba* construction
BEI	*bei* in the *bei* construction
CL	classifier
DEM	demonstrative
D-old	discourse-old
D-new	discourse-new
DUR	durative aspect (*zhe*, *zai*)
EMP	emphatic particle
EXP	experiential aspect (*-guo*)
$[_F]$	focus domain
FM	focus marker (*shi*)
H-old	hearer-old
H-new	hearer-new
M	move (spatial discourse unit)
MM	modifier marker (*de*)
NOM	nominaliser (*de*)
NP	noun phrase
O	transitive object
OP	open proposition
PRT	particle
PF	pause filler
PFV	perfective aspect (*le*)
Q	question (*ma/ne*)
R	receiver of a ditransitive verb
RF	reduce forcefulness (*a/ya*)
S	intransitive subject

Transcription Conventions

Adapted from Du Bois and Schuetze-Coburn (1993)

{carriage return}	Intonation unit
{space}	Word
:	Speaker identity
[ ]	Speech overlap
.	Final
,	Continuing
?	Question
!	Exclamation
=	Lengthening
(.)	Short pause of less than 0.1 seconds
(..N)	Measured long pause of more than 0.1 seconds
(H)	Inhalation
(Hx)	Exhalation
@	Laughter
<F F>	Fast tempo
<MRC MRC>	Each word distinct and emphasized
<L2 L2>	Code switching
<X X>	Uncertain hearing

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