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The Ordering of Multiple Premodifiers in English and Chinese Nominal Constructions: A Cognitive-F Exploration

四川大学出版社

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序

语序是语言表义的一个重要手段。当一个名词短语中的名词中心语受多个前置修饰语修饰时，这几个前置修饰语之间的相对位置次序虽然有时似乎具有一定的灵活性，但在大多数情况下却较为固定，呈现出一定的规律性。有时，位置的不同可能带来意义上的不同。例如，Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1341)指出，在英语中，dirty English books 是指弄脏的英语书，而 English dirty books 更有可能指的是英语淫秽书籍。

那么，在英汉两种语言中，多项前置修饰语的惯用句法位置次序究竟有哪些相似和不同之处？次序的异同表达了哪些语义和语用功能？其背后的认知理据又是什么？这些都是值得深入探讨的问题，毛薇博士在本书中所要研究的正是这些问题。在总结和归纳前人研究的基础上，作者通过对自己收集的大量带有多项前置修饰语的英汉描述性名词短语实例语料的分析，从认知功能的角度深入分析和研究了多项前置修饰语排序的认知过程和一般排序原则。

作者首先根据前置修饰语与名词中心语之间的修饰和被修饰关系，将前置修饰语在整个名词短语中所承担的功能区分为如下三大类别：1）限制性前置修饰语；2）描述性前置修饰语；3）分类性前置修饰语。根据常规认知机制，作者提出了如下一个前置修饰语排列顺序的一般原则：在其他条件相同的情况下，限制性前置修饰语用于限定名词短语的所指对象，因而通常处

于首位；描述性前置修饰语用于表述说话者对名词中心语所指实体的内在或外在属性的判断或态度，因而倾向于处于中位；分类性前置修饰语用于表述名词中心语所指实体固有的、可以据此将其与其他实体相区别的特征，因而一般处于后位，紧邻名词中心语。该一般原则的认知理据是邻近（或距离）象似性，即两个语言成分所表达的概念之间的关系越密切，这两个语言成分之间的句法位置越邻近。同时，这一原则实际上将前置修饰语的句法位置划分为三大功能区域，为分析各类前置修饰语的具体分布提供了一个整体描述框架。

接着，作者选取有代表性的英汉对应语料，对语料中出现的含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语进行了穷尽性的分析，以验证上述前置修饰语排列顺序的一般原则，并探讨英汉两种语言在前置修饰语排列顺序上的异同。为此，她根据英汉两种语言各自的语法形式特点，将英语前置修饰语细分为 6 个语法类别，将汉语前置修饰语细分为 8 个语法类别。同时，又根据原型理论和前置修饰语表达的认知领域，将英汉两种语言中的前置修饰语细分为 15 个语义类别。并建立了一个语料数据库，全面统计分析了英汉各类前置修饰语在三大功能区域中的分布，总结和归纳了它们在实际使用中的基本规律及其异同。

最后，作者详细分析了含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语在英译汉和汉译英时的翻译对应情况以及所采用的翻译策略。她的语料分析显示，在英译汉过程中，65.3%的汉语译文保留了英语原文中多项前置修饰语的基本排列顺序模式，24.9%的汉语译文调整了多项前置修饰语的基本排列顺序模式，9.7%的汉

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语译文采用了其他结构来翻译。在汉译英过程中，27.9%的英语译文保留了汉语原文中多项前置修饰语的基本排列顺序模式，17.2%的英语译文调整了多项前置修饰语的基本排列顺序模式，47.4%的英语译文采用了后置修饰语来翻译，7.5%的英语译文采用了其他结构来翻译。这一分析更为直观地揭示了英汉两种语言在前置修饰语基本排列顺序方面的异同。

我觉得，在本书写作过程中，作者在如下几个方面下了不小的工夫。

第一，在整体思路和理论建构方面，作者选用和建立了一个较为合理的理论框架，用于观察、描述和解释英汉多项前置修饰语的基本排序模式及其异同。

语言的使用反映了人的认知；使用一个带有多项前置修饰语的名词短语来指称某一实体，更是一个典型的认知行为。作者在本书中综合应用了认知语言学关于概念和概念结构心理表征的研究成果，将多项前置修饰语的排序视为一个认知过程的产物，其中包含如下三个阶段：1）输入阶段。在此阶段，说话者受到某个刺激，在头脑中形成关于某个实体的概念以及与其相关的其他一些概念。2）加工阶段。在此阶段，名词中心语及其前置修饰语所表征的概念，从完形整体到个体特征，根据激活的先后顺序形成一个概念结构。3）输出阶段。在此阶段，说话者将多维的概念结构转换为线性排列的语言表达式，产生出一个含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语。基于这一理论假设，作者将名词短语的前置修饰语位置划分为三大功能区域，为具体分析和研究各种语法和语义类别的前置修饰语的分布建立了一

个具有可操作性的描述框架。

第二，在语料的选择方面，作者选用了典型的、足够大的、具有可比性的语料，保证了研究结果的可信性。

根据 Biber *et al.* (2000: 597)对大型语料库的分析统计，总的来说，前置修饰语在口语会话中用得很少，而在书面说明体文章中用得最为普遍。因此，本书采用如下两类英汉书面语语料：1）风景描述；2）人物描写。而且语料包括英汉原文及其在另一种语言中的译文，也就是说，作者采用的是双向翻译对应的语料。这样做的好处是：一方面由于译文语言毕竟不是直接自然产出的语言，在形式上可能会或多或少受原文的影响，因此分析两种语言在使用含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语时的异同，可以主要采用英汉原文语料；另一方面，由于译文致力于表达相同的原文语义内容，因此从理论上来说，原文和译文中出现的所有名词短语在语义上是一一对应的，从而可以利用英汉翻译对应语料来分析在一种语言中用含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语表达的实体在另一种语言中是如何表达的，用以佐证英汉原文对比分析所得出的结论，并可凸现英汉之间的异同。

第三，在语料分析和数据统计方面，作者从整体数据统计展示到分类描述，再到配对分析，最后进行翻译对应分析，在整个过程中，采用的统计方法规范得当，分析的内容深入细致。

为此，作者首先建立了一个语料数据库，将英汉语料中出现的 4 万多个含有多项前置修饰语的名词短语逐个录入数据库，每个名词短语一条记录。每条记录主要含有如下信息：1）每个名词短语的出处和含有前置修饰语的数量；2）所含各个前

置修饰语的功能、语法和语义类别及其排序位置；3）前置修饰语之间是否有标点符号隔开；4）汉语前置修饰语是否带有"的"字；5）英语前置修饰语的形态特征。如果是译文中的名词短语，数据库还记录了两条额外的信息，即所采用的翻译策略和前置修饰语在原文中的排序编号。然后，作者利用这一语料数据库，对英汉各种语法和语义类别的前置修饰语之间的相互位置关系及其翻译对应情况进行统计分析，这样确保了统计数据的准确无误和前后一致，进一步保证了研究结果的可信性。

最后，在对语言的形式和功能的处理方面，虽然本书采用的整体理论视角是语言的认知功能观，但是作者并未完全忽视语言的形式对多项前置修饰语排序的影响，同时一再强调并以实例证明，某一语法或语义类别的前置修饰语，在不同的名词短语中可以具有不同的功能。

例如，在汉语中，单音节的前置修饰语倾向于放在靠近名词中心语的位置。因此，虽然语料数据统计表明，当汉语中表示度量和材料类的前置修饰语同时用于修饰一个名词中心语时，度量类修饰语出现在材料类修饰语前的实例有 6 例，而材料类修饰语出现在度量类修饰语前的实例有 9 例（如"一张乌木小方桌"），但是作者并未简单下结论认为，汉语倾向于将材料类修饰语放在度量类修饰语的前面，而是指出，这种情况主要是由于汉语中的度量类修饰语大多是单音节形容词造成的，如果材料类修饰语也是一个单音节词，那么更有可能出现在度量类修饰语的前面（如"一张小木方桌"）。

再如，同样是一个所有格词语，作者将 John's favorite book

中的 John's 认定为一个限制性前置修饰语，而将 the unusual children's school reader 中的 children's 认定为一个分类性前置修饰语，从而解释了这两个词语在各自名词短语中的不同排序位置。而且作者认为，有些英汉前置修饰语的排序差异，是由于英汉本族语使用者对前置修饰语的认知功能归类不同而产生的。其中较为典型的是对时间和地点词的归类：在英语中，时间和地点词倾向于被视为分类性前置修饰语，因而离名词中心语较近（如英语原文 the State's 17th-century treasury coffer）；而在汉语中，时间和地点词更倾向于被视为限制性前置修饰语，因而离名词中心语较远（如汉语译文"17世纪时国家的金库"，又如汉语原文"夏天早晨花瓣上的露水"）。

综上所述，本书研究设计规范合理，定性研究与定量分析相结合，结构严谨，语料翔实，数据充分，分析细致，结论可信。我相信，读者是可以从中获益的。

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

As language is characteristic of a syntagmatic organization of linguistic elements rather than a random gathering, word order is a universal linguistic phenomenon and a long-standing topic in language study as well. In general, word order can be understood in two ways. In the narrow sense, it refers to the ordering of morphemes and words, while in the broad sense it includes the ordering of linguistic elements at various ranks and in different lengths ranging from morphemes to sentential groups[1]. Liu Miqing（刘宓庆）(1991) regards the ordering of linguistic elements below the rank of phrases as the micro word order and those above the rank of sentences the macro word order. Admittedly, as far as language typology is concerned, word order is a significant mechanism for analytic languages, such as Chinese, which lack inflectional variations, and also for English, an analytic-synthetic language with only a few inflectional markers left. However, owing to their language traditions, English and Chinese differ in the choice of word order though they share a considerable amount

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[1] For detailed information, see Wu Yuzhang (吴玉章)（1995）. Wen Lian (文炼) & Hu Fu (胡附)（1984）, observing Chinese language facts, suggest that the study of word order be done in three interrelated aspects: grammatical, semantic and pragmatic.

of similarities. With its focus on word order in the narrow sense, the current study attempts to examine the orderings of multiple premodifiers in English and Chinese nominal constructions, which are based on the data we collected in the contexts of description.

1.1 Scope of the Present Study

Modification is an important grammatical means widely employed to enlarge the basic clause pattern and to help to express complicated meaning so as to facilitate linguistic communication. Without it, expressions would be very short and plain. Robert Valentine, the British grammarian, points out the role that modification plays in a sentence by saying that "Attributives are to a sentence what feathers are to a peacock. As fine feathers make a fine bird, so graceful attributives make a graceful sentence." (Huang Long (黄龙) 1986:189) Chao (1968:274) defines modification as: "An expression X is said to modify another expression Y when XY is an endocentric construction and Y, but not X, is the center. X is called the attribute or modifier, and Y the head or the modified part."

Before we take up the main theme, it is necessary to clarify three related but confusable terms, i.e., adjective, attributive and modifier. Although they all serve to modify or subcategorize certain constituents of a construction, these terms belong to different categories. In fact, there are mainly two ways of labeling a linguistic unit, either by class or by function[2]. According to Halliday (2000), class labels indicate the grammatical potential of

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[2] For detailed discussion, see Halliday (2000: 24-30).

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a linguistic item while functional labels specify the role a linguistic item plays in a particular structure. Adjective is a class label of a grammatical category differentiated from other categories such as noun, verb and adverb according to its grammatical potential. Adjectives typically modify nouns. Attributive, a term that is adopted in traditional grammar, is assigned to one type of constituent based on its syntactic function in a grammatical structure, in contrast with other constituents like subject, predicate, object, adverbial and complement. Many Chinese grammarians prefer to render it as *dingyu*. Attributives serve to describe subjects and objects. Modifier is also a functional label but is used more widely to qualify a head in a grammatical construction. It can perform the same functions that attributives and adverbials do in traditional grammar.

As a grammatical category may perform several functions, so a function may be realized by several grammatical categories. For example, an adjective may function as a modifier of a head noun in a nominal construction and also as a head in an adjectival construction in which it can be modified by an adjective, adverb or noun. As we adopt a cognitive-functional approach, the functional term modifier is used in the present study to refer to those constituents qualifying head nouns in both English and Chinese nominal constructions for the sake of consistency in our discussion.

1.1.1 Premodifiers vs. Postmodifiers

As an additive element in a nominal construction, a modifier generally functions to narrow down the scope or extension of the

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head noun and to enrich its connotation by means of description and classification. The positions of modifiers in English are more flexible than those in Chinese in that modifiers in an English nominal construction realized by words such as adjectives, nouns, participles, quantifiers, possessives, demonstratives and certain long compound words are usually, if not always, placed before the head noun as premodifers, while an embedded phrase or clause is typically placed after the head as postmodifiers. By contrast, modifiers in Chinese realized either by words or by phrases and clauses generally precede the head noun[3].

In theory, it is convenient to use postmodifiers with a view to lessening the burden on our short memory. Accordingly, such an order should appear more frequently in human languages, but it does not tally with the reality that premodifiers still exist in a great number of languages like Chinese and English. One of the possible reasons may be the distance between the head noun and the predicate verb. If there are too many elements like modifiers inserted between the head noun as the subject and the predicate verb, great pressure will be imposed on the faculty of memory. By contrast, the use of premodifiers in order to bring the subject closer to the predicate verb may avoid an awkward-sounding and

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[3] A controversy remains among a few scholars like Wang Li (王力), Li Jinxi (黎锦熙), Chen Wangdao (陈望道) who assert that premodifiers in Chinese may be moved to the position behind the head noun. Zhang Zhigong (张志公) and Liu Miqing (刘宓庆) hold that Chinese modifiers must be preposed and that once they are postponed, they are no longer modifiers but form other structural relations. See the discussions by Pan Xiaodong (潘晓东) （1981）, Lu Jianming (陆俭明) （1982）, Li Fangjie (李芳杰) （1983）and Zhang Yisheng (张宜生) & Zhang Aiming (张爱民) （1996）. However, whether premodifiers are movable is beyond the scope of the present research.

incomprehensible structure. In accordance with the cognitive principle of economy, people are liable to adopt the same strategy to reduce the burden on memory imposed by adopting another set of rules. In this way, modifiers are also put before the head noun serving as the object, which may, however, increase the distance between the object and the verb and may interfere with the understanding. A reasonable solution is to set the long string of modifiers apart from the object and to put them to the end of the sentence to achieve balance. The same is true with the case in which a long relative clause postmodifying the subject is often moved to the back of the verb to shorten the distance. That may, to a certain extent, account for one of the tendencies in the development of modern English, that is, an increase in using premodifiers instead of postmodifiers, which results in the simplification of the language structure. As a result, more and more phrases and even finite or non-finite clauses originally functioning as postmodifiers are preposed. Since this thesis aims to study the ordering of premodifiers, postmodification does not fall within the province of the present analysis.

1.1.2 A Classification of Nominal Constructions with Premodifiers

1) Paratactic Constructions

Premodifiers are paratactically related if they modify a head noun together or separately in a nominal construction. In such coordinating structures, they usually indicate similar properties and share an equal status instead of making a distinction between the primary and the secondary. Typically, they are involved in syndetic

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