

Right Dislocation in Chinese: Consequences of Comp-to-Spec Movement*

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1. Overview

Chinese is a typical SVO and head-initial language. RDs have been noted to appear in several Chinese dialects and variants, including Mandarin Chinese (Chao, 1986; L. Y.-L. Cheung, 2009; L. Y. Cheung, 2005; Packard & Shi, 1986), Cantonese (L. Y. Cheung, 2005; T. M. Lee, 2017), Classical Chinese (Yang & Yang, 2002), etc. Commonly found in colloquial and informal speech, certain information is linearly postponed and dislocated sentence-finally. Holding the attested word order and head-directionality parameter setting, one may find that right dislocation (RD) is unexpectedly challenging the assumed structure. Not going beyond the SVO setting, previous accounts have attempted to interpret the apparently rightward movement through many approaches (L. Y.-L. Cheung, 2009; L. Y. Cheung, 2005; T. M. Lee, 2017); however, no account can decently capture all the patterns in Chinese RDs.

Cross-linguistically, RD is the result of certain kinds of movement, rather than a specific syntactic operation. The motivations for RD across languages are thus different. Therefore, it would be harder to draw a unified account by simply referring to proposals for RDs in other languages. In the paper, I will, first of all, scrutinize the problems of word orders in Chinese, with the examination of canonical orders and non-canonical ones from cases with Sentence-final Particles (SFPs) and RDs. The analysis will then be used to examine previous proposals for Chinese RD, also coming with insights from other languages. I will offer a unified account under copy theory, considering Chinese mono-clausal RDs to be the Pronounced Low Copy (PLC). The present account should have contributions to the puzzling word orders involving SFPs and RDs in Chinese.

2. The puzzling word orders in Chinese

2.1. Canonical word order

In non-RD cases, the canonical word order of Chinese is attested to be SVO as in (1a). The OSV order is also observable, while it is analyzed that such an OSV order undergoes object shift, as shown in (1b). Chinese is a topic-prominent language, the surface OSV order is attributed to object topicalization (Ernst & Wang, 1995; Huang, 1998; Shyu, 1995; among others). The fronted object is realized after an A-bar movement from the Object position to an A-bar position, mostly to the Topic position (=Spec, TopP). In some cases, focalization is also the reason for object-fronting. An object will then be moved to Focus (Spec, FocP). The

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major difference between these two A-bar movements is the final landing site in the A-bar movement, either Topic (Spec, TopP) or Focus (Spec, FocP). The former is regarded as old information, while the latter is considered to be new or emphasized information, in the syntax-discourse interface. As Chinese is an underlyingly SVO language, the word orders different from SVO are assumed to be the outcomes for some kinds of movement or fronting.

(1) Canonical order

a. S+V+O

Ta chi wan-can

He eat dinner

'He ate dinner'

a. O+S+V (object topicalization)

yu wo hen shi-huan chi

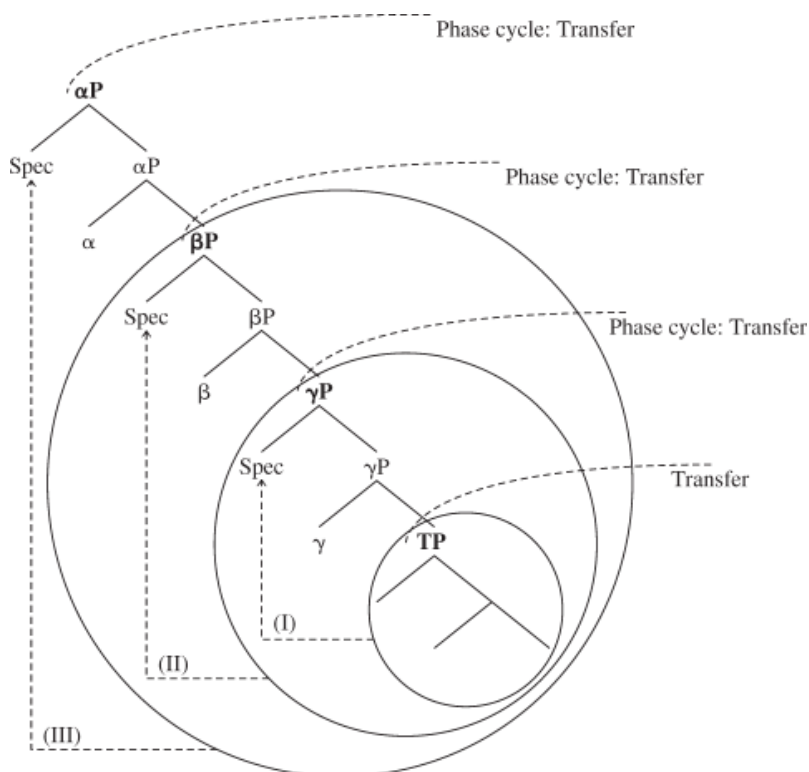
fish I very like eat

'I like to eat fish very much'

2.2. C-elements in sentence-final: SFP

In attested canonical word orders (either SVO or OSV), a challenging issue is the insertion of SFPs. Under the split CP hypothesis, a CP is broken down into many minor layers. As a discourse-oriented language (Huang, 1984), Chinese left peripheries are rather complex. Aside from projections for information structures (e.g., TopP, FocP), SFPs are also proved to be C-elements as well. The linear position of SFPs has been a headache for syntacticians for several decades, since they are unexpectedly found at the end of sentences. A high projection (CP) is assumed to be found linearly in front of a lower projection (TP/VP), if the word order of the language is SVO. Why can a C-element appear at the right edge of a sentence?

(2) Cyclic Comp-to-Spec movement (Pan, 2021, 2022)



Some argue for head-final parameter settings in some split CPs like SFP, while this kind of analysis will lead to a consequence that Chinese becomes a language with mix-headed parameter settings, which is not preferable but rare. In the consistently head-initial setting, the apparent head-final linear order is thought to be the result of cyclic Comp-to-Spec (C2S) movements (Hsieh & Sybesma, 2011; Julien, 2002; Pan, 2021, 2022; Simpson & Wu, 2002; Sybesma, 2013; Takita, 2009; Tang, 1998), as in (2). SFPs are C-heads, where Comp, CP (=TP) will be fronted to Spec, CP to derive a canonical word order. Pan (2022) further proposes that each SFP has an EPP feature to satisfy, so the C2S movement as well as the linear S+V+O+SFP order are derived to meet the requirement of linearization, with the Internal Merge of TP with CP. In his proposal, each split CP with an SFP is a phase and will be sent to Spell-out respectively, after they meet the requirement of linearization. There can be not only one SFP in a sentence, so it is possible to have cyclic C2S movements and cyclic linearization as well as multiple Spell-out in Chinese left peripheries.

2.3. Non-canonical word order: RD cases

Aside from SFPs, non-canonical word orders in Chinese are also found in RD cases. We discover several patterns of word orders, as in (3). Interestingly, a mono-clausal RD must come with at least one SFP. The relative position of RD should be in the back of all the SFPs in the sentence.

(3) Non-canonical word orders in RD cases

a. subject RD: V + O + SFP + S

chi fan le ma ta

eat meal SFP SFP he

‘Has he had a meal (already)?’

b. object RD: S + V + SFP + O

chi fan le ma ta

eat meal SFP SFP he

‘Has he had that meal?’

c. adverbial RD: S + V + O + SFP + Adverbial

ta chi fan le ma jin-tian

he eat meal SFP SFP today

‘Has he had a meal today?’

d. adverb RD: S + V + O + SFP + Adverb

ta chi fan le ba chi-shi

he eat meal SFP SFP actually

‘Actually, he should have had a meal already’

In (3a), the subject is right dislocated, which contributes to a non-canonical V+O+SFP+S order seemingly from the canonical S+V+O+SFP order (=1a). In (3b), the non-canonical V+O+SFP+S order in subject RD appears to come from the canonical S+V+O+SFP, with the object right-dislocated at the sentence-final, even behind SFPs.

In (3c), the temporal adverbial jin-tian ‘today’ is right-dislocated from a position in the front to a position at the sentence-final. The temporal adverbial in Chinese can be located

between Subject and Verb or between Topic and Subject. Temporal adverbials have been assumed to be a canonical projection at Spec of Finite Phrase (Spec, FinP), of which projections are higher than TP but lower than A-bar positions in CPs (e.g., TopP, FocP). The possible occurrence of temporal adverbials at sentence finals may again offer an insight that RD is tied to the operation of left peripheries.

In (3d), we see the adverb *chi-shi* ‘actually’ can be right-dislocated. To discuss adverb RDs requires the combination of semantics and syntax. Accounts of adverb distribution usually, as seen in Ernst (2001), do not prescribe specific positions for adverbs. Instead, these theories propose that any adverb can be linked to any projection, as long as its specific semantic conditions match and are fulfilled. Overall, at least some adverbs in non-sentence-final positions are possible to be right-dislocated at sentence-finals.

Among these possibilities of RDs in Chinese, the idea of object RDs can be problematic. If Chinese mono-clausal RD is a left-peripheral phenomenon, how can a right-peripheral element, namely an object within VP, be placed there? The potential way to validate the possibility is that the apparent object RD is actually not a real object. Topic prominence in Chinese triggers the topicalization of objects, from Comp, VP to Spec, TopP. Before the object has been right-dislocated, topicalization may have been applied. Therefore, the non-canonical word order for object RD (S+V+SFP+O) originated from not S+V+O+SFP but O+S+V+SFP. In short, an A-bar dependency should have been established before a sentence has undergone RD.

In addition, evidence in favor of the analysis can also come from the absolute definite reading of object RD. The so-called object RD in (3b) can never have an indefinite reading. It is limited to be definite in any case. Such a behavior is paralleled to Topic, which can only have definite or type reading as well. The common ground of object RD and topic further offers a sharp point of view that the apparent object RD is, in fact, a topicalized object RD.

2.4. Doubling: Non-canonical & canonical order

RD is not just a one-way ticket to set an item at a non-canonical, sentence-final position. In RD cases, RD items can have two copies in the same sentence. One is the non-RD copy in the front part of a sentence, while the other is the RD copy at the end of the sentence. The co-occurrence of RD and non-RD copies is termed doubling (cf. Cann, Kempson, & Otsuka, 2002; Cheng & Vicente, 2013; T. T.-M. Lee, 2021).

(4) Doubling in Chinese RD

a. Subject RD: S + V + O + SFP + S

ta chi fan le ma ta
he eat meal SFP SFP he
‘Has he had a meal (already)?’

b. Object RD: S + V + O + SFP + O*

ta chi fan le ma fan
ta eat meal SFP SFP meal
‘Has he had that meal?’

c. Topicalized object RD: O + S + V + SFP + O

fan ta chi le ma fan
meal he eat SFP SFP meal

'Has he had that meal?'

In (4a), the subject RD can have a non-RD copy, which demonstrates a non-canonical S+V+O+SFP+S order of subject doubling. The object RD can have two copies in a sentence, but the licensed condition of a non-RD object is limited. In (4b), object doubling in S+V+O+SFP+O is always ill-formed, where O represents an unmoved object in its base-generated site. On the contrary, O+S+V+SFP+O is grammatical (=4c). The positional identification of the non-RD copy in object RD cases gives a similar insight into the re-interpretation of the so-called object RD; this is, an object RD is actually topicalized object RD. Only the non-RD copy of a topicalized object can co-occur with the RD copy. An real object copy is certainly incompatible with doubling.

In (5), the grammatically of temporal adverbial doubling can rely on some pragmatic conditions with contexts. To appear temporal information twice can be weird, if it is not of importance in an utterance. It would be acceptable when the temporal concept is necessary to give precise information about time. In (5a), the doubling of the temporal adverbial jin-tian 'today' is not as good as only one of them appears. Unless it is important to convey the information that it is today that he is annoying, (5a) would not be considered good enough. On the other hand, (5b) is, on many occasions, acceptable and appropriate. It can be used to, for example, double-check whether or not the listener has had some food before the utterance time. Temporal information, such as jin-tian 'today,' is of paramount importance to show a clear statement that what the speaker is asking is about today.

(5) Doubling of temporal adverbial RD

a. #jin-tian ta hen fan ei jin-tian
 today he very annoying SFP today
 Intended: 'he is very annoying'

b. jin-tian ni eat fan le ma jin-tian
 today you eat meal SFP SFP today
 'Have you had a meal for today?'

Similar to the doubling of temporal adverbials, the doubling of adverbs is also context-sensitive. In (6a), the manner adverb chi-shi 'actually' is legal for doubling, in a scenario where the speaker originally thought she was not smart enough before the speaking time, while the fact the speaker is aware of is unexpectedly better than his imagination. A decent context can license the doubling of 'actually' so as to emphasize the twist of his image of her. By contrast, the epistemic adverb huo-shyu 'maybe' is not so good for doubling. It is not decent to state the possibility of guessing through the epistemic modal adverb again and again. Doubling, as in (6b), ends up being redundant.

(6) Doubling of adverb RDs

a. Ta chi-shi shi yi-ge can-ming ren ei chi-shi
 He actually is one-CL smart person SFP actually
 'What a smart person he actually is!'

b. #Huo-shyu ta-de chia hen you-qian ba huo-shyu
 Maybe her family very rich SFP maybe

Intended: ‘Maybe her family is rich (I guess)!’

Cases of doubling with RD and non-RD items illustrate a crucial comparison between the canonical orders and the derived non-canonical orders. (Un-)grammaticality of NP/DPs in doubling shed light on the original non-RD positions of Chinese RD items. Object RD is again proved to be topicalized object RD instead.

3. Interpretations of RD

Intimate relations between RD and left peripheries have sparked several accounts to explain how RD works in Chinese. Cheung (2009) proposed that RD is the result of phrasal focalization. Lee (2017, 2020) argues that the cooccurrence of defocalization and focalization contributes to Chinese RD. An insight from Dutch RD offers insight into PF deletion in the coordinate structure. In spite of several proposals to derive Chinese RD, none of them can explain all the data well. I will overview two major proposals and point out their problems in this section.

3.1. Cheung’s (2009) focalization analysis

C2S movements, at some points, are similar to object topicalization/focalization. An A-bar movement could raise the sentential object from Comp, VP to Spec, TopP or to Spec, FocP. Cheung (2009) combines two ideas together, proposing that RDs are attributed to focalization. The canonical chunk (i.e., non-RD part) undergoes similar C2S fronting, while RD is left. Such fronting as focalization goes around C2S.

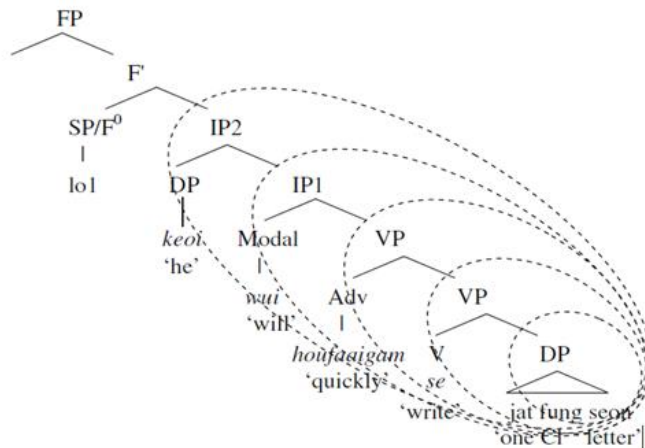
To be more specific, three parts are identified in Chinese mono-clausal RDs, including the pre-SFP part, SFPs, and the post-SFP part. In canonical derivations for the [S+V+O]+SFP order, [S+V+O] is moved from the back of the SFPs to the front, like [S+V+O]+SFP+[S+V+O]. In RD cases, S+V+O is considered to be incompletely fronted. In subject RD cases, only V+O is fronted, creating a derivation like [V+O]+SFP+S+[V+O], so the subject is left behind SFPs and right-dislocated, after the fronting of V+O.

Cheung’s (2009) proposal relies on the focalization of different chunks, as in (7). He stabilizes the focalization analysis based on the prosodic divergence between pre-SFP and post-SFP parts. It is found that the post-SFP part (i.e., RD) is usually unstressed and less focused prosodically. Therefore, by contrast, the pre-SFP part can be assumed to be focalized and relatively receive more stress and focus.

In subject RD cases, focalization applies to the part lower than the subject. The focalization analysis can have some problems: First, it cannot well capture object RD cases. It is hard to leave objects right-dislocated, as objects are the last item in the S+V+O order. Though we have discussed in Section 2 that object RDs are actually topicalized object RDs. This cannot remedy the analysis, since the landing position of the fronting is Focus (Spec, FocP), which is lower than Topic (Spec, Topic).

Aside from the unpredictability of object RD, doubling cannot be captured as well. RD is considered to be left after the focalizing fronting. The remaining item will become the RD. However, there can be non-RD and RD copies co-occurring in the same sentence. The focalizing analysis simply moves some chunks away to become pre-SFP parts, but does not deal with the possibility of co-occurrence.

(7) Focalization in the Comp-to-Spec movement (Cheung, 2009)



Last, the structural height of the fronting and the distribution of SFP go beyond Pan's (2021, 2022) analysis. As the landing site of the C2S fronting, FocP is considered to be intimately incorporated with SFPs. SFPs are thus analyzed to be the head of FocP, so the occurrence of C2S movement and focalization can occur together. However, Focus (Spec, FocP) is proved to be located not above all SFPs. In Pan (2021, 2022), FocP is only above low SFPs, such as S.Aspp and OnlyP, while high SFPs, like the ones in Attitude Phrase (AttP) and Force Phrase (ForceP), are above Focus. Therefore, the generally assumed hierarchy in Cheung (2009) should be revised. What's more, if we consider the motivation of the C2S fronting in RD is focalization, we need to explain why RD can be derived with many different kinds of SFP, either lower or higher than FocP.

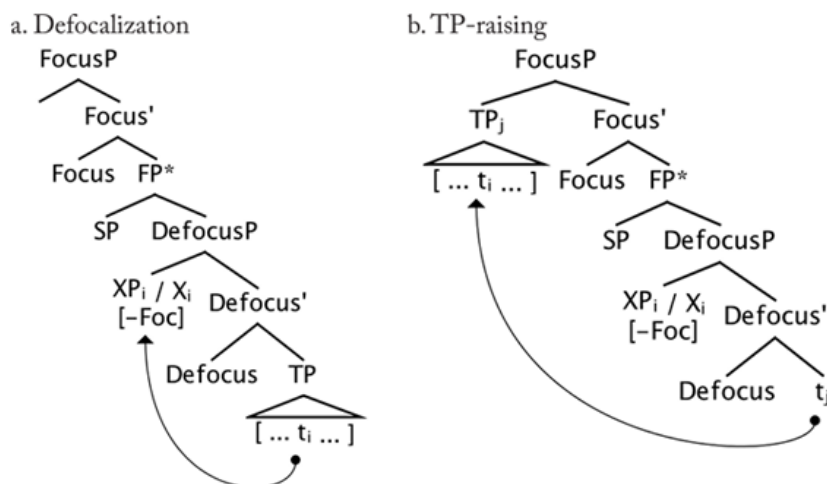
3.2. Lee's (2017) analysis: Defocalization & Focalization

Cheung (2009) notes that the post-SFP part as RD is prosodically less focused. Lee (2017, 2020) follows the idea, analyzing the non-focused part (i.e., RD) undergoes defocalization before the pre-SFP part (i.e., TP) has been fronted to the Spec of FocP to receive a focus; this is to say, not only pre-SFP parts but also post-SFP parts is considered to be moved as well. The assumed structural height is FocP > SFP > DefocP > TP.

Defocalization applies and the RD item can be moved out. The analysis solves the unpredictability of object RDs in Cheung (2009). Like subject RDs, an object can be moved out from a position within TP/VP to Defocus (Spec, DefocP). The remaining part after defocalization is then required to move to Focus (Spec, FocP), forming a prosodic contrast to Defocus.

The adaption of defocalization solves the above-mentioned problem of object RD derivations, while there are three major problems still left: First, doubling can't be predicted. No matter whether the post-SFP part has been delocalized or not, the landing site remains behind SFPs. The derivation of a non-RD copy in the pre-SFP part is not possible. The appearance of two copies altogether is not well explained. Second, faced with the similar problem to Cheung (2009), the structural height of SFPs is not well explained. Lee (2017) argues that SFPs can be iterated so as to derive multiple SFPs, which is incompatible with Pan's (2022) argument of Chinese split CPs.

(8) Delocalization & TP-raising (Lee, 2017)



Last, the semantic formulation of Defocus can be problematic. The idea of Defocus does not seem to be universal, even though T. T.-M. Lee (2020) attempts to defend the idea of defocalization by considering RDs to bear [-Foc] or [-Noteworthiness] features. Since they are not prosodically focused, they are not of importance in the discourse. Overall, the semantic foundation of defocalization/Defocus is not widely understood or acceptable. At least, we may say that even though prosodically non-focused, RD may not be a real defocalized item.

3.3. An insight from other languages: PF Deletion

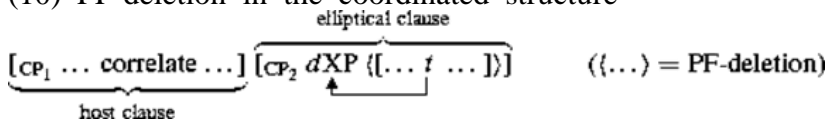
By taking data from Dutch, Ott and De Vries (2016) assume there are two copies of CP, as in (9). Economy considerations allow one copy to be left. In non-RD sentences, the entire set of the first CP is preserved; for RD sentences, α -part is realized in PF at the second CP. Ott and De Vries (2016) consider that two copies are likely to be in a coordinated structure.

(9) Derivation of RD in a coordinated structure



There are assumed to be two CP conjuncts. First, a leftward movement makes the RD item to be in the front within CP2. This is to capture the island sensitivity and avoid an incomplete ellipsis. Second, the remaining part within CP2 undergoes ellipsis by identifying an anaphoric link between the two conjuncts. The correlated part is PF-deleted, which is similar to copy deletion, as in (10).

(10) PF-deletion in the coordinated structure



The analysis Ott and De Vries (2016) assume involves PF-deletion of the repeated parts. I

consider that the Chinese C2S movement triggers a similar licensing environment. The copy at Comp, CP, and the copy at Spec, CP (after the C2S movement) are paralleled to two conjuncts in a coordinate structure. I will explain more in the next section, by proposing an alternative perspective in viewing Chinese RDs.

4. Copying in cyclic Linearization: the proposal

Taking a view of PF-deletion from RDs in other languages, I am developing an alternative proposal to capture the choice of PF-deletion in Chinese RDs. The obligatory co-occurrence of SFP and RD gives an insight into copy preservation/deletion. I will assume the Chinese mono-clausal RD to be a PLC after the C2S movement.

4.1. SFP & Copy preservation

The obligatoriness of the appearance of SFP in Chinese RDs is not a coincidence. For a head-initial language, Chinese SFPs as C-heads trigger Comp-to-Spec (C2S) movement to derive SVO+SFP order from SFP+SVO order, as in (11a). Comp, YP (i.e., XP) is moved to Spec, YP. Pan (2022) argues each SFP has an EPP feature to satisfy, and that one of the approaches is Internal Merge. As EPP features on SFPs are satisfied, we can derive a sentence in a canonical order like (11b). Comp, CP (i.e., TP) is fronted to Spec, CP, to satisfy the EPP feature on the SFP. After Internal Merge (i.e., Move), there will be two chunks of copies: one is the high copy of the moved TP; the other is the unmoved TP as the low copy. Adopting the concept of moving as copying, the consequence of the C2S movement leads us to a problem of copy preservation, alternatively, copy deletion. In the canonical cases, the low copy at Comp, CP is deleted while the high copy (Spec, CP) is pronounced, so as to derive the S+V+O+SFP order.

Such C2S movement offers us an important insight into the derivation of RD. RD can be the consequence of the movement and copy preservation, which we assume to be like (11c). In (11c), the subject RD may be thought to be the residue of C2S movement, where the pronounced subject is left after SFP. The observation is similar to previous analyses (Cheung 2009, Lee 2017); however, recall the cases of doubling. Such a view can be problematic because RD and the non-RD constituent can co-occur. In solving the availability of doubling with RD, we argue that doubling actually implies that RD is not the residue of C2S movement like what those who support RD as (de-)focalization are arguing. Instead, we can consider that there are two copies that speakers can choose to pronounce. In canonical use, the high copy at Spec, CP is typically pronounced, while in RD cases, the low copy at Comp, CP is partially pronounced instead. Under doubling, it is possible to pronounce both the high copy (non-RD constituent) and the low copy (RD) altogether.

Under Copy theory (Chomsky, 1993; see also Boskovic & Nunes, 2007), I consider Chinese RD to be a PLC in the paper. It is assumed that the preservation or deletion of copies after the C2S movement gives rise to Chinese RD. Chinese SFPs are the heads of split CPs. To derive the linearly sentence-final position, the Internal Merge of XP (which means Comp, CP here) with one of the split CPs (=YP) (in which an SFP is headed) is necessary (Pan 2022). When deriving such order in (4c), we see the subject (Spec, TP) in the unmoved chunk of Comp, CP is apparently left.

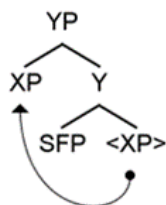
One may consider only projections lower than TP to be fronted under the C2S movement (Cheung 2009), thus the subject is left; however, I argue that what we copy remains the whole TP, rather than just certain projections lower than TP. From cases of doubling, we can figure out what we are actually doing with Chinese RD is the choice of

pronounced copies. Doubling can be well captured as we consider the co-occurrence of the high and low copies. RD is not purely the residue but the PLC after C2S movement.

(11) C2S movement & RD

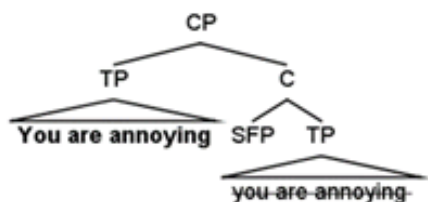
a. Internal Merge of XP to YP

XP moves from Comp, YP to Spec, YP



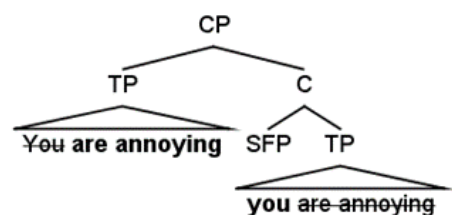
b. Canonical order: S+V+O+SFP

Ni hen fan ei
 you very annoying SFP
 ‘You are annoying!’



c. Subject RD: V+O+SFP+S

Hen fan ei ni
 very annoying SFP you
 ‘You are annoying!’



4.2. Violation of Linearization.

The most important condition yielding the accessibility of RD elements from phasing is the violation of linearization. C2S movement is triggered by the EPP feature and is implemented to fulfill the requirements of linearization. As there can be multiple SFPs in Chinese, there will be cyclic C2S movements involving a series of copying, deletion of copies, phasing, and spell-out. Derivation of SFP is actually the successive process of linearization and preparation for spell-out, in which low copies may survive. T. T.-M. Lee (2021) notes that a low copy may be suspended if it violates linearization requirements imposed by Cyclic

Linearization (cf. Fox & Pesetsky, 2005). The base-generation of Chinese SFPs violates linearization before EPP features have been satisfied by the C2S movement. Accordingly, the derivation of SFP fits the PLC analysis, explaining why SFP is necessary for Chinese RD: without SFP, there is no such C2S movement, hence not licensing the emergence of RD as PLC.

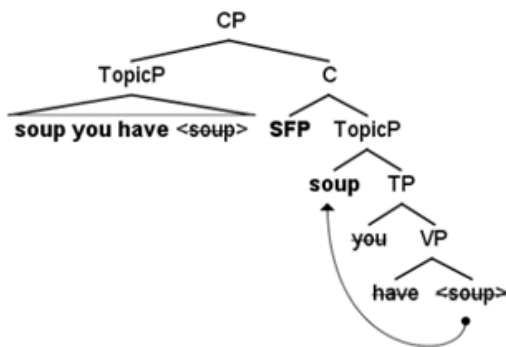
It should be noted that the choice of RD is not arbitrary. Only the remaining accessible constituent, outside the already phased phases, can be suspended for choice of pronunciation, not to violate the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) (Chomsky, 2008). To be accessible, the item needs to be moved to the Specifier of the ongoing phased phase. The conditions of each type of mono-clausal RD can be subtly different. (a) Subject (Spec, TP) can be right-dislocated since it escapes at least from v*P phase. (b) Object RD is not allowed, because of the situation of object (Comp, VP) within v*P phase, unless it is moved outside v*P, escaping from the phase. We see that (3b) and (4c) are grammatical since an A-bar movement for object NP (i.e., object topicalization) applies. (c) RDs of adverbial (specifier or adjunct) or adverbs (adjunct), like RD of a subject (specifier), are not ruled out by the PIC.

4.3. Deriving complex RDs

To right-dislocate object NP like (3b) or (4c), topicalization should apply before C2S movement, helping object NP escape from v*P phase; thus, the apparent O+S+V order is surfaced, with TopicP derived. Consider SFP with C2S movement. TopP is moved to Spec, CP, with a set of low copies at Comp, CP. RD occurs when speakers make a choice of PLC. We will end up getting the surface order like (O)+S+V+SFP+(O). Note here again that O represents a topicalized object, which should be definite.

(12) Doubling of topicalized object RD: S+V+SFP+O

Tang ni he ma tang?
 Soup you drink SFP soup
 ‘Do you (want to) have that soup?’



5. Conclusion

The paper re-examines the non-canonical word orders in Chinese which involves the derivation of Chinese SFPs and RDs. By considering a detailed interaction between the operation of head-initial SFPs and RD, we argue that the mono-clausal RD is the PLC, which is the by-product of cyclic C2S movement when deriving SFPs. By considering SFPs within Chinese split CPs and A-bar dependency of topicalized objects, the paper accounts for the derivation of Chinese RD as well as some undiscovered consequences of C2S movement in

cyclic linearization. In compliance with PIC, constituents escaping from the inaccessibility after phasing (mostly in Specifier or Adjunct) may become RDs.

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