

Abstract

The word order of locative prepositional phrases (PPs) in Chinese is an intriguing and significant issue, typologically and diachronically. Locative PPs occur predominantly in preverbal position in Modern Chinese, which is typologically rare for VO languages. This synchronic puzzle of typological peculiarity could be better comprehended from a diachronic perspective, as relying solely on the study of Modern Chinese is insufficient for understanding the characteristics of Chinese. Previous studies generally suggest that a change of locative PP word order took place around the Eastern Han - Six Dynasties period (25 – 589 CE), from predominantly postverbal to predominantly preverbal. However, at the methodological level, they are either not aided by corpus tools or based on small sample sizes. With advances in corpus technology, revisiting the linguistic materials could yield a potentially more accurate picture of the data. There is hence a need to re-evaluate massive volumes of linguistic materials in a reliable manner. Adopting a computer-aided diachronic corpus-based approach, this study traces the historical development of locative PP word order at different time periods of Old Chinese, Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin Chinese, based on data from the most representative historical texts. By investigating the motivation and mechanism behind the diachronic development of locative PP word order, this study aims to shed light on other categories of PPs and explore the broader implications of the proposed theoretical analyses to diachronic typology.

Keywords: locative prepositional phrases, word order change, diachronic corpus, typology, Chinese

<p>I will accept either format (a talk or a poster) and I would prefer my submission to be considered for the following workshop: Consequences of the OV-to-VO change on different levels of clause structure. Thank you!</p>
