

XIV. SENTENCE WORD ORDER IN SUMMARY AND SPECIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

1. Verb phrase word order:

Non-interrogative sentences:

(MA) Subj. (MA) VP

VP: a. A SV

b. A AV CV-O (...) V-O

c. A AV CV-O (...) (V-O)V-PV-O

d. A AV CV-O (...) (V-O)V-得 complement

e. A AV CV-O (...) RV

f. A AV CV-O (...) (V-O)V 了 +time-span/occurrences

MA includes: T-when and specific occurrences, as well as words like 好像、虽然、可是 (...) indicates that there may be more than one of the preceding element

Example sentences for the above patterns:

- a. 今天他好像很忙。
- b. (因为他那么忙,) 我总是想替他做点儿事。
- c. 我们明天就可以把你买的家具送到你家。
他常常开车开往西安,(所以肯定不会走错路,您放心吧!)
- d. 我真希望在离开 IUP 之前能说中文说得很流利。
- e. 我希望在离开 IUP 之前能把《两岸对话》学完。
- f. (要学好中文,两个月是不够的,) 你至少得学三、四年。
来 IUP 学习的学生,中文都已经学了至少两年,他们预备再学一年。

Interrogative sentences: follow the patterns listed in Lesson II.

2. Noun phrase with one or more modifiers:

Modifiers always precede the noun being modified. The following elements may be noun modifiers: SV's (贵、便宜、漂亮), N or PN (often - but not necessarily - indicating possession), time expressions (T-when as well as T-span), location phrases, verb phrases, embedded sentences. In short, just about anything can be a noun modifier.

The modifier is "usually" linked to the modified noun by 的. But there are exceptions (a.b.c. below):

- a. The modifier is "agglutinated" to the N. "Agglutinated" modifiers are usually single-syllables:

男学生 / 男的服务员	女朋友 / 女的婴儿	我家 / 我的家园
红大衣 / 白衬衫 / 蓝色的领带	乌云 / 蓝天 / 黄色的河水	
黄鱼 / 白鹅 / 白色的狗	我母亲 / 人类的救星	

This is similar to "blackbird" vs. "yellow sparrow," "blackboard" vs. "yellow board," and "mankind" vs. "new kind" in English.

- b. The modified noun has a special fixed meaning (i.e. the modifier is not "selective")

白领阶层 卖国贼 国父 流行歌曲

- c. The modified noun is used in a formal, literary way, as in titles of books, brand names, etc.

《红衣少女》 蓝带啤酒 (Blue Ribbon Beer) 《红色黄昏》

- d. The following types of noun modifiers are always marked by 的 at the end:

- ① Noun and pronoun modifiers indicating possession (except with single-syllable pronoun modifiers indicating relationships, in which 的 is optional)

他的母亲 or 他母亲 我的朋友 or 我朋友

but not: 他们母亲(他们 is not a single-syllable pronoun) ✓他们的母亲

老王的妻子 or 他妻子, but not: 老王妻子 (老王 is not a pronoun)

王老师的教室 or 他的教室, but not: 他教室 (phrase does not indicate relationship)

我们家的洗衣机 学校的电脑 学生的信箱 北京的交通

国家的企业 (but 国营企业 is OK, because it falls into category b above)

- ② Verb phrases and embedded sentences:

开公共汽车的司机

卖保险的公司

吸毒的大学生

学汉语的留学生

他在这两个月内认识的朋友

我朋友昨天给我买的红大衣

李老师教过我们的课本

- e. Most single syllable SV's may modify a N without 的, and most two-syllable SV's may not, but there are exceptions in both cases:

好人 新衣服 笨孩子 大苹果

but not: 贵书 (✓贵的书) nor 对答案 (✓对的答案)

努力的学生 舒服的环境 有意思的问题

便宜的东西 but 便宜货 (便宜的货 is acceptable though a bit "wordy")

When in doubt about when 的 is omissible, it is generally safe not to omit it. In other words, it's usually acceptable to use 的 when it is not necessary (e.g. 新的衣服、笨的孩子、大的苹果、便宜的货 are acceptable though they may sound odd). But omitting 的 when it shouldn't be omitted is unacceptable (e.g. *客气朋友、*聪明学生、*有意思题目、*贵书、*对答案 are simply unacceptable).

Sometimes, including 的 makes a difference in meaning:

中国朋友 / 中国的朋友 老朋友 / 老的朋友 美国人 / 美国的人口

妇女医生 / 妇女的医生 大熊猫 / 大的熊猫

3. Ordering of multiple modifiers:

- a. When a noun is modified by two or more SV's, the ordering of the modifiers may differ from English. Generally, the longer modifying phrases precede the shorter ones, or at least the single-syllable modifiers come at the end.

有意思的、好看的美国电影不多。

棕色的大房子 (big brown house) not *大的、棕色的房子

那只黑白两色的、可爱的小狗 那只可爱的、黑白两色的小狗 (acceptable)

but not: 那只小的、可爱的、黑白两色的狗

- b. When a noun is modified by various types of modifiers, they follow the word order below:

possessive N or PN 的 + (Subj.+) time or location phrases + VP 的 + SV's (adjectives) N

老王的挂在客厅里的山水国画怎么不见了？

我们晚上常看的电视节目被取消了。

我刚刚学会的漂亮的生词很快就用上了。

4. Adding specifiers and numbers to noun phrases. Whenever a specifier and/or number precedes a N, the insertion of a M is needed (cf. Lesson II). As for the ordering of the "SP Nu M" cluster vis-a-vis the modifying phrase, there are two equally acceptable orderings:

Modifying phrase 的 + SP Nu M N or SP Nu M + Modifying phrase 的 N

挂在客厅里的那两幅山水画是他自己画的。 那两幅挂在客厅里的山水画是他自己画的。

我昨天刚学会的那五个生词已经被我忘了。 那五个我昨天刚学会的生词已经被我忘了。

教过我的四位 IUP 老师都非常好。 四位教过我的 IUP 老师都非常好。

5. General and specific nouns modified by clauses. Compare the following sets of sentences:

美国学生很有钱吧？(ambiguous)

美国学生都很有钱吧？(all-inclusive, general)

那些美国学生都很有钱吧？(specific)

来 IUP 学习的美国学生都很有钱吧？(specific)

超市卖的东西可靠吗？ (ambiguous) 【超市：supermarket】

超市卖的东西都可靠吗？ (all-inclusive, general)

超市卖的那台电视可靠吗？(specific)

听说在美国当律师的常常被别人骂。(ambiguous) 【律师：lawyer】

在美国当律师的都常常被别人骂吗？ (all-inclusive, general)

常常被别人骂的那些律师怎么受得了呢？(specific)

下了海的知识份子做什么？(ambiguous)

【下海：leave a government job and go into the private sector】

那几个下了海的知识份子做生意去了。 (all-inclusive, general)

下了海的知识份子都做生意吗？ (specific)

下了海的知识份子不都做生意，有的还是在教育这个行业里工作。

研究中国文学的外国人不一定能说一口流利的中文。 (ambiguous)

研究中国文学的外国人不一定都能说一口流利的中文。 (negative: all-inclusive, general)

研究中国文学的那个外国人真了不起，她不但能说一口流利的中文，还能写一手漂亮的毛笔字。 (specific)

Because nouns in Chinese have no singular/plural distinction, a noun modified by a clause may refer to all entities within the category in question, a particular one, or particular ones within the category. If the sentence contains the adverb 都, then it is clear that all entities within the category in question are intended. If the noun phrase contains a specifier (那、这、有的、…), then it is clear that only specific ones are intended. A specified modified noun may be singular or plural, but an unspecified modified noun - as well as the noun in a sentence containing the adverb 都 - is plural.

6. The remainder of this lesson introduces several most commonly used sentences patterns that lack direct equivalents in English, and therefore tend to be bypassed by students. In order to speak Chinese fluently and colloquially, it behooves the students to learn to use these patterns actively.

The "topic-comment construction": The most common use of this pattern is to prestate the object as the topic of the sentence, either to give it greater prominence or contrast, or to "get it out of the way" (when the object is unusually complex). Other elements of a sentence - such as a coverbial phrase - may also be prestate as the topic for emphasis.

人家的事，你别去管。

那么久以前的事情，谁还会记得呢？

第十课以前的生词，我都学会了。可是第十课以后的，我完全没有把握。

【把握：grasp, confidence】

对系主任的为人，系里的同事们各有各的看法。【为人 wéirén: moral conduct】

一个人的性格，也许可以从她的长相看出来一点，但是从她的行为能了解得更多。

【长相：physical appearance；行为：behavior】

The closest thing to the "topic-comment construction" in English is the "As for..., ..." pattern. But the "topic-comment construction" is used much more frequently in Chinese, especially in colloquial speech.

7. Omission of subject, object, and understood head noun (after modifying phrase …的)

下雨了，去不了了。 (understood subject omitted: 天、我们)

扔了吧！我不要了！ (understood object omitted)

我从来不买进口的。 (understood head noun)

你说的完全正确。

「拥有你所爱的，爱你所拥有的」就是人生最大的快乐。 【拥有：to possess】

(what noun fits logically after 所爱的 and 所拥有的?)

干我们这行的要早起晚睡，辛苦极了。【行：line of work】
我的汉语很差，如果我有说错的，请多多指教。【指教：to point out and instruct】
修理皮鞋的、卖豆腐的、打扫街道的，这些都算是零工。【零工：odd jobs】

8. The "是…" pattern: used for concession, emphasis (often on some aspect other than the main verb), contrasting two or more items, or contradicting an assumption. The "是…的" pattern (see #9) applies to completed action, whereas the "是…" pattern (without 的 at the end) applies to the present and future.

他是很用功，可是记性太差了，怎么学也学不会。(是…可是…: granted..., but...)
(emphasis; notice that 是 is used before a SV here)

初级的课本是没有意思，可是没办法。(concession)

我是要帮助你，不是要批评你。(contrast, contradict)

他们不是明天到，是后天才到。(contrast)

But not: 我是昨天到。 ✓我是昨天到的。

(The "是…的" pattern is appropriate here because it indicates completed action.)

我是想告诉你我们公司的最新产品，不是一定要你买这个产品。(contrast, contradict)
警察局要找那个犯人，不是要派警察去找，是要派警犬去找。

【派：dispatch；警犬：police dog】

To achieve the same effect in a sentence that already has 是 as its main verb, simply stress the word 是.

他是美籍华人啊，你怎么说他不是呢？(contradict)

台湾是中国的一部份，没有人能否认这一点。【否认：to deny】(emphasis)

9. 是…的 (with completed action only).

- a. This pattern is used to assert a fact or to focus on a particular aspect -- time, place, means, etc. -- of an event. It may be used to convey an *established fact* or a *fait accompli*, but not for an event that is only *in prospect*.

他原来是打算明年才来的，可是后来决定今年就来了。 but not: 他是明年才来的。
他是在美国出生的，所以我们可以说他是个美籍华人。

【美籍华人：ethnic Chinese with U.S. citizenship】

她是因为怀了孕而离开学校的。【怀孕：to get pregnant】(established fact)

她打算这个学期末离开学校是因为怀了孕。(use "是…" pattern for event in prospect)

But not: 她打算这个学期末离开学校是因为怀了孕的。

美国人对狗的感情跟对别的动物是不一样的。

在中国吃狗肉只能说是不人道，可是在法律上是没有罪的。

(second clause indicates an established fact)

- b. In this pattern, the "是" may be understood and omitted, especially if the "enclosure" between the would-be "是" and the "的" is long. This seems ironic because the word "是" conveys the idea of assertion whereas "的" simply "brings up the rear." But that's the way this crazy language works.

Principal of a prep school to a concerned parent:

您放心吧！您的孩子不会在我们这个学校染上毒瘾的。(established fact)

当时我以为她两年以后就会回来的，结果她一去就再也没回来了。

(Where would you insert the optional 「是」 in the above two sentences?)

- c. When the VP of the sentence consists of a V-O, the "的" part of the "是…的" pattern may come either before or after the object.

他是两个月以前到北京的。 他是两个月以前到的北京。

我是上个星期才买这部自行车的，怎么已经坏了？

我是上个星期才买的这部自行车，……

Another alternative: 这部自行车，我是上个星期才买的，……

10. Causative use of intransitive FV's or SV's: This is quite idiomatic and colloquial, there are no equivalents in English. Aside from 来-O, which is commonly used in everyday life, it is sufficient for students at the beginning and intermediate levels to learn this pattern for comprehension only.

(Subj.) FV/SV-O

(the FV/SV is normally not transitive, but in this causative pattern it takes on an object)

再来两瓶啤酒！ 我们来个披萨饼，怎么样？

吃过饭以后，我们大家来个团体游戏，好不好？

【来：to engage in；团体游戏：group game】

那么做会坏了那件事的！(Why is 「的」 used at the end?)(colloquial)

Standard: 那么做会把那件事搞坏的！

11. Inverted subject with 来/去 as the verb: Like the last pattern, this one is also quite colloquial.

那个问题不容易解决，得去几个最能干的人才行。(causative pattern)

来人啦！那个歹徒把我的皮包抢走了！【歹徒：bad guy】

(alternative: 我的皮包被抢走了！)

我们这个治安很好的小地方忽然来了几个卖毒品的。

全国的学生会，我们学校就去了五个代表。

明天开会要去十八个人。

这一带最近又搬来了两家亚洲的移民。【亚洲的移民：Asian immigrants】