

The Word Order and Prosody of Attributives

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The syntactic category is where the phonetic rhythmic elements of speech come into play. In this paper, we analyze and describe the situation of the attributives with or without de (的), multiplicity, and expression, and consider that the change of order is related to the phonological factors. Chinese grammar is extremely flexible, and the rhythmic effect on the pragmatic plane is an important pursuit.

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What is the relationship between prosody and grammar (morphology and syntax)? We can see that prosody, like semantics, cannot completely deprive grammar of its position in the whole system of linguistic combinations and form an independent system of its own, but it is true that in many cases, the explanation of specific phenomena can only be made with the help of it. Here, we will analyze the internal and external use of prosody in this component, taking only the attributive as an example, in an attempt to show that Chinese syntax is extremely flexible, and the binding force of strict formal rules is usually relatively small. The pursuit of prosody also plays a role at many levels and units.

Attributive With or Without De (的)

1. The attributive followed by de (的) or not presents two extremes; the attributive that must be brought is a combinatory and the attributive that must not be brought is an adherent attributive and the intermediate one is in a state of progressive excess. If we consider the presence or absence of de (的) or the implicit freedom as a sequential factor, we can see that there are times when a particular syntactic combination is the result of a combination of factors, including the need for prosody. For example, the following two sentences:

我的叔叔不来了。 我的书包忘带了。

Their structure seems to be the same. If the word “的” is removed, it will become such a form:

我叔叔不来了。 我书包忘带了。

The former is still a general subject-predicate sentence, but the latter has changed into a subject-predicate statement.

The reason for this is that “我” is a non-absolute affiliation to “叔叔”, while “书包” is an absolute affiliation. In terms of semantic description, the distinguishing feature is [\pm transferability]. For this reason, “我叔叔” is a self-contained unit of meaning, and “我书包” is a non-self-contained unit of meaning. However, the

need for simplicity in the spoken language makes the latter analogy omit the word “的” without affecting the understanding of the meaning.

It is necessary to make discernment in this regard. The *de* (的) is usually a structural auxiliary, but at the same time, it is also a marker of a specific semantic relation. Of course, it also has value in terms of emotional color and its tone of emphasis. Some of the words with *de* (的) are obligatory. For example, in the movie *Shaolin Temple*, the young monk Jue Yuan says sincerely to the shepherdess after making up with her, “我还欠你一条狗命呢”. Every time the screening to this, the audience will burst into laughter. Here, one is associated with the previous unintentional killing of the dog episode of the funny, and then I am afraid that the word “狗命” seems to be vaguely inappropriate: It and the “狗的命” are not the same thing. The same type of words such as “老婆儿嘴” is not the same as “老婆儿的嘴” and “孩子脾气” is not the same as “孩子的脾气”. The meaning of “狗命” tends to be abstract and monolithic, referring to the “坏人的身价性命”. The movie sets up a plot involving exactly this aspect. If the word “的” is added, it will be much more accurate and distinct. In contrast, some of them, usually without the word “的”, show a special meaning: The form lengthens the distance between it and the central phrase, and it is naturally emphasized when it is read. Look at the specific sentences:

Example 1. 她坐在一张橱子的旁边，这样的红的木橱，是她旧的家所没有的，她眼睛白晃晃地瞧着它。（柔石《为奴隶的母亲》）

The usual expressions for “红的木橱” and “旧的家” are definitely “红木橱” and “旧家”; there is no pause in between. Here, the pause between syllables becomes clear and naturally strengthens the contrast in meaning. According to Fan Jiyan (1958), “的” is a syntactic relationship, while without “的” is a lexical relationship. According to Lu Bingfu (1988), with is either extensible or connotative and without is denotative. If we look at it from a prosodic point of view, it is another situation: There is, obviously, a pause between the two beats, that is “红的/木橱” and “旧的/家”, and if there is not, the pause disappears. In terms of semantic relations, I am afraid it is Lu Zhiwei (1951) who has it right: “大狗” is very different from “大的狗” in meaning. ... says “大的狗” to focus on the “大” of the dog. Not only is the pause after the “的” at this point, but accordingly, the preceding attributive also has an intonation accent. So, it can be said: In the case of *de* (的) it can be brought or not, with *de* (的) focusing on reflecting its pragmatic emphasis.

2. Lu Bingfu and Duan Musan (1991) began their description of the prosodic features of Chinese prosody relatively early and came to a regular conclusion that can be referred to. To reflect the importance of prosodic factors in Chinese, the modifier-head combination without the word *de* (的) has been contrasted with the predicate-object relationship, and it is argued that they can form exactly different limits on the number of syllables in the combination: If the rhythmic features are reflected by numbers, the pattern formed by the attributive and central word is “2+1”, such as “技术工”, instead of “1+2”, as in “*技工人”. The latter corresponds to the opposite: The “2+1” pattern is bad, such as “*种植蒜”; the “1+2” pattern is good, such as “*种大蒜”. Wang Hongjun (2001) questions this, arguing that this may be the case when the attributive is a noun, but not necessarily when it is an adjective. For example, “软头发” can be said, but “柔软发” cannot; “大房间” is the most natural, but “高大房” is rarely seen. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that “2+1” is not the regular pattern of adjective-noun speech combinations.

Purely from the perspective of a specific range of rhythmic pauses, the conclusions drawn by Lu and Duan (1991) are not wrong. The problem is that it is not necessarily accurate to pause the three-syllable units to illustrate the obvious opposition between the modifier-head combination and the predicate-object combination.

The former is mostly a lexical category, such as the “工” of “技术工”, which can hardly be described as a free unit. There are many similar cases, such as “劳动法、剪刀差、拦河坝、钉齿耙、研究所、避风港、减震器、香云纱、金刚砂、瘰赘痧、倒轮闸、渗透压、活动家、穿山甲、化合价、脚手架、机械化、开场白”. The latter monosyllabic morpheme, as Lv Shuxiang pointed out in *Issues on Chinese Grammatical Analyses* (《汉语语法分析问题》), it is difficult to confirm whether “院” and “楼” are words. Most of the monosyllabic morphemes that are central in a three-syllable compound have such a problem. Therefore, it seems that such a structural combination is not typical enough to compare with the real syntactic verb-object relationship. Wang Hongjun's complement is justified. Taking the three-syllable words beginning with “老” as an example, *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》) contains 57 cases, but 43 of them are “1+2”, such as “老百姓”, “老半天”, “老搭档”, “老大娘”, “老豆腐”, accounting for 75% of the total; the others are in the “2+1” form, such as “老板娘”, “老虎钳”, “老年斑”, which account for a rather limited number and proportion. This is only the situation in the word formation, but it must also be seen that the adhesive attributive is not the typical combination of attributives; the real attributive is in the syntax.

3. Even if the modifier-head construction is made up of monosyllabic words, there are certain rules of order: “大红花”, “小白花”; people usually do not say “*红大花”, “*小白花”. Some may be more complicated: “大青涩柿子”, “大老紫茄子”, etc. No matter how many, the distribution of the position inside is clear. This is so, and various explanations can be given. For example, a very fine example cited by Zhu Dexi (1956):

Example 2. 祥子心中一活便, 看那个顶小的小绿夜壶非常有趣, 绿汪汪的, 也撅着小嘴。(《骆驼祥子》)

Zhu (1956, p. 89) gave the following explanation: “The author used two ‘小’ words in a row, which shows that he considered the ‘小绿夜壶’ to be a stable whole”. In this sense, the different determinations of Fan Jiyan (1958) and Lu Bingfu (1988) have some validity. Ma Qingzhu (1995) went on to also depict the rules of speech order inside as A_1 (size) > (read: before) A_2 (old or new) > A_3 (sweet or sour) > A_4 (length) > A_5 (black or white) > A_6 (square or round). In any case, if the central word is more often identified as a word, there is a clearer pause and accent in it. For example, “大红花” can be compared to “清洁工”, and the pause after “大” is more obvious than the pause after “清洁”.

The problem arises again: “大” and “红” are semantically equal to “花”, and they form a modifying relationship to “花” respectively. The pause after “大” is a distortion of the internal organization of the relationship to some extent. If this is not typical enough, Example 2 may be more illustrative: The pause in “小绿夜壶” is definitely after “小绿” and not after “小”. Because the head noun is disyllabic, this forces the two modifying components before it to form a natural beat. In this sense, the pause in Chinese does not exactly match the structural relationship; for the sake of syllabic coherence, it is possible to disregard the exact reflection of meaning and structural relationship. Look at specific examples again:

Example 3. 华大妈忙看他儿子和别人的坟, 却只有不怕冷的几点青白小花, 零星开着; 便觉得心里忽然感到一种不足和空虚, 不愿意根究。(鲁迅《药》)

Example 4. 胡萝卜: 一年生或二年生草本植物, 羽状复叶, 开白色小花, 果实长圆形。(《现代汉语词典》)

The attributive in these two examples is another scenario. The words that should follow the volumetric attributive have moved to the front, in a reverse order similar to that of “小白花”. The reading is natural, with emphasis and pause focusing on the forward movement of the color word above and after it.

Example 5. 这间14平米的小破木屋竟价值上亿！（理财中国网2015-12-15）

Example 6. 报道称，只是这座十分破烂的木造小屋，竟然价值高达90万英镑，连当地居民都不敢置信，直说这个看起来风吹就倒的烂屋子，竟然是全英国最贵的小木屋。（参考消息网2015-08-27）

In Example 5, “小破木屋” is still in the regular order. In Example 6, the order of the words is completely disordered: The word that still reflects the meaning of “破” becomes a four-syllable structure “十分破烂” and is placed in the forefront; the word “木”, which indicates the material, is also replaced by the two-syllable “木制”, so it is also ranked second; the word “小”, which has always been in the front, is next to the central word at this time! Accordingly, the tone stress also decreases in order.

In explaining the order rules of Chinese adhesive attributives, Japanese scholar Yoshihiko Takahashi (1997) further specifies the idea of “Essential Meaning Postposition” based on the theory of distance-iconic motivation. Taking “大红花” as an example, he analyzed,

When the flower first opens, the color is red. But the shape generally changes from small to large over time. After a long time, the flower will always fall, and some flowers wither and then shed. No matter how the flower withers and how the shape of the flower changes, the color is always the same. Even if it falls to the ground, it is still red. In other words, the word order of “大红花” is by the principles of nature. According to the principles of nature, we can say that the more of anything that remains to the end, the more essential it is. Therefore, in an attributive formed by two monosyllabic adjectives, the closer the word to the essence is to the latter. (p. 376)

This cognitive explanation should be good, but it only illustrates the general rules of grammar. If we look at the practical application of Chinese, the situation is quite different from a pragmatic point of view: As long as the order of words changes, the lexical form also changes, often from monosyllabic words to polysyllabic words, some of which are followed by the marked *de* (的). The emphasis on meaning is brought out, and the loud rhythm of the passage can be demonstrated. Accents, pauses, and other prosodic means will follow accordingly, the emphasis of meaning is brought out, and the loud rhythm of the passage can be distinctly displayed.

There are many more such cases. Look at the naming of these dictionaries below:

牛津英汉双解小词典	英汉小词典	牛津英汉汉英小词典
新英汉小词典	外研社新英汉小词典	英汉·汉英小词典

The word “小” is right next to the central word. Once the word synonymous with “小” is disyllabic, the situation is quite different:

小小外研社英汉词典	袖珍英汉词典	袖珍英汉汉英词典
袖珍英汉双解词典	袖珍汉英英汉旅游词典	袖珍英汉汉英船舶机电词典

Of course, someplace “袖珍” is close to the headword, but only if the other attributives are also disyllabic. Even so, the chances of being placed in the front are high from an overall perspective.

Multiple Modifiers

Example 6 already deals with such a phenomenon. The so-called multiple modifiers refer to the complex and diverse attributives co-occurring in a unified structure to qualify or modify a headword. Huang and Liao's *Modern Chinese* (《现代汉语》) and Liu Yuehua's *Practical Modern Chinese Grammar* (《实用现代汉语语法》) both describe the rules of their order in some detail. Taking the former as an example, it gives the general order rule as follows:

(1) Words that express the possessive relationship.

- (2) Words that express time and place.
- (3) Demonstrative pronouns or quantifiers.
- (4) Verbal words or subject-predicate phrases.
- (5) Adjective words.
- (6) Nouns and verbs that show the nature, category, or scope-headwords.

This is a more generalized pattern of word order rules. The relationships seem to be more complex because of the number of words that appear. We will only touch on two aspects here in terms of its more prominent phenomena involving phonetic issues.

1. The 39th article in Lv Shuxiang's *Language Miscellany* (《语文杂记》) is entitled “重复‘一个’、‘这个’、‘那个’”, which is about the fact that the above-mentioned demonstrative-classifier co-occurs in multiple attributives, such as:

Example 7. 当时便叫身边一个知心腹的一个道人, 唤做清一。(《清平堂话本》)

Example 8. 摇身说变, 竟变了一个最标致美貌的一位小姐。(《红楼梦》)

Example 9. 王庆接了卦钱, 对着那炎炎的那轮红日, 弯腰唱喏。(《水浒传》)

In the article, Mr. Lv cites nine examples of “一个” and four examples of “这个” and “那个” in one go. What do you think of this phenomenon? Mr. Lv explains:

For the sake of meaning, such repetition is not necessary, so although there are so many precedents, it is not taken as authoritative. But it is also because there are so many examples that the author's carelessness cannot be entirely blamed; there is a more fundamental reason behind it - the psychological conflict caused by the two possible word orders. (2008, p. 91)

Lv Shuxiang's approach to the understanding of the phenomenon is very worthy of recognition, that is, instead of simply classifying them as redundant or superfluous sentences on the principle of majority rule, he tries to explore the deeper grounds that lie beneath the words as much as possible. Yes, the repetition of the same words is uneconomical; yet it is a real objective presence. If we pay attention to it, we will find that the 13 examples cited by Lv Shuxiang are all phrases in literary works. The language of literary works is the closest to spoken expression. The most convenient and effective way to observe the spoken language is to use the subtitles under the television interviews as direct evidence. If you pay attention, you can see that the most natural and original spoken language is often preceded by “一个” and followed by “一个” when encountering relatively long attributives. There are two reasons for this; one is the most flexible position of the demonstrative classifier when it appears in multiple modifiers. For example:

Example 10. 这一台410马力的推土机, 是黄色的, 刚从美国进口的最好的家伙。(刘真《一片叶子》)

Example 11. 在中共开掘分局党委的一页正式文件上, 印着他的名字, 任命他担任410马力的一台推土机的车长。(刘真《一片叶子》)

This is a typical example. In the same article, the attributive “410马力” can be placed either in the front position or in the back position.

Because of the existence of such objective reasons, it also provides the conditions and basis for conscious and unconscious exploitation. The problem is seen from the conservative factor: The timeliness of oral communication and the operation of thinking are often difficult to achieve complete synchronization. Otherwise, we would not need to constantly revise the expression of literary words in texts. Because of this, the spoken language is inevitably filled with redundancies. The tone of voice, the mantra, and so on are all easily heard as

redundancies that have nothing to do with expression. However, there are also some tolerable ones, which slow down the time to facilitate people's thinking, highlight the value of certain information, or reflect the lively and unrestrained nature of the spoken language, and so on, so that some superfluous words are added or repeated in a rational sense. For example, the “上” and “说” after “因此上” and “所以说” should be regarded as suffix words. Some of them even have the following functions. For example, a phenomenon in the history of Chinese lexicalization: “synonymous parallelism words”, undoubtedly played a role in the transformation of monosyllabic words to disyllabic words. Some of the redundancy is due to habits, which we seem not to notice anymore. This is the case with “全都”, which is often used together. This fact tells us that language itself is not as superfluous as one might think. If that were true, both the subject of speech would struggle to convert its deep structure into a surface structure, and the object of speech would struggle to convert its surface structure into a deep structure.

One is that multiple modifiers have specific internal rhyme rules. In particular, when multiple attributives of different functional types occur simultaneously, it is not only governed by the number of central syllables, but also by the number of syllables of the preceding verb if the whole modifier-head structure is following the verb as a conjoined element. See specific examples:

Example 12. 几个世纪以来, 那些当年被迫走投无路的破产的中国农民, 飘流到海外去谋生的当儿, 身上就常常怀着一撮家乡的泥土。(秦牧《土地》)

Example 13. 1888年古老的春节前后, 宋查理正式加入了上海一个势力不小的秘密会社, 开始从传教士向革命者过渡。(程广、叶思《宋氏家族全传》)

Example 14. 今日洞庭, 诗意盎然, 彩笔难绘, 简直是一个用珍珠缀成的崭新世界。(谢璞《珍珠赋》)

Example 15. 这一荣誉不仅属于他个人, 更属于他的祖国和他那些在平凡岗位上为保护中国环境作出贡献的全体同事们。(新华网2003年11月20日)

Given the space, no more examples will be given. If the order of multiple modifiers in the past was mostly described in terms of functional properties of word order rules, few people had made the necessary understanding from the perspective of prosody. As we can see from the above examples alone, it is not strictly prescribed, but the general tendency is that the overall phonetic appearance of multiple modifiers is date shaped, that is, the number of syllables is small at the two ends and large at the middle. The summary of past rules has carried this aspect. As above, Huang and Liao's *Modern Chinese* says that the attributive furthest away from the central word is a proper noun or pronoun of the leading attribute, followed by temporal-locative nouns, demonstrative pronouns, and numeral quantifier expressions, which usually tend to be less numerous in terms of syllable count. The words next to the central word are, however, the words without the word de (的) and with a small number of syllables. The middle part is often a predicative word, which focuses on describing and portraying the characteristics of the following central language, and is mostly a verb or adjective phrase, so its phonetic fragments are often four or more syllable units. This should be the basic situation of multiple attributive sequences in terms of phonetic rhythm. The reason for this is that the additional component of the attributive, whose dominant function tends to be quasi-predicative, is mostly interchangeable with the predicate in the utterance.

白胡子老头在唱着歌——唱着歌的老头白胡子

The referential words before and after often serve this attribute expression. In other words, the presence of

“一个” or “这(个)” or “那(个)” in multiple modifiers does not simply refer to the central thing in isolation, but to a large extent also refers to the feature. The following example illustrates this point well.

Example 16. 我们希望印度独立, 因为一个独立的民主的印度, 不但是印度人民的需要, 也是世界和平的需要。(毛泽东《论联合政府》)

A proper noun refers to a unique noun of a person or thing in the world, so it is not qualified by a numeral quantifier. With it, there must be another meaning referring to it, that is, an object of nature. Therefore, the demonstrative classifier at this point does not refer to proper nouns alone, but to a considerable extent serves as a reminder of the meaning expressed by the subsequent predictive words. The word “一个” may seem to be the most insignificant numeral quantifier, but it appears very frequently. While many specific things have their specific quantifiers, at the same time, they can often be referred to by it. That's why “个” has the description of a universal quantifier. But then again, this generality should not be taken to mean that it is an ambiguous expression. It also implies a rich and complex meaning. Look at the following examples:

Example 17. 宝钗笑道: “又混闹了。一个药也是混吃的?” (《红楼梦·第八回》)

Generic nouns often have their specific properties. For example, “药” obviously cannot be discussed with “个”; the removal of “一个” does not affect the meaning of the expression. The reason why it is used is that one of the important factors is to highlight the fact that “药这种东西” has its specificity and should not be taken indiscriminately. The following sentence can further illustrate this point.

Example 18. 我们老太太最是惜老怜贫的, 比不得那个狂三诈四的那些人。(《红楼梦·第三十九回》)

And then it is important to note that, in addition to the role of this emphasis on the meaning of features, the word “一个”, and so on, whether it is placed before the multiple modifiers or placed in the position immediately adjacent to the head language, but also to see whether the “date nucleus” feature can be reflected in a proportionate and adequate. If the middle part is too large and the syllables of the central word are too short, the reading will not be smooth. For example:

Example 19. 这是虽在北方风雪的压迫下却保持着倔强挺立的一种树。(茅盾《白杨礼赞》)

The central word “树” is monosyllabic, and the preceding predictive word is a complex sentence phrase, without “一种” to give support, it will form a huge contrast between too long and too short sound segment, and there is to make up for this defect.

Wang Hongjun (2001) has noticed such a phenomenon in her article, and she discusses that some two-syllable adjectives cannot be used as attributives directly, but must be followed by *de* (的). For example, instead of “老王家那明亮堂屋”, we can only say “老王家那明亮的堂屋”. What is more noteworthy is that some two-syllable adjectives are unnatural when said alone, but become natural when preceded by other stylistic markers. For example, “稀薄空气” is not usually said, but “喜马拉雅山顶上的稀薄空气使得队员们喘不上气来” is very natural. Why is it such a situation? She did not explain. Now we know: Now we know: It is to keep the rhythm of the smooth in multiple attributives that matching that is not easily achieved in simple combinations is accomplished. The more complex the preceding attributive in multiple modifiers, the more the central word tends to be polysyllabic. The centralizer words are ideally phonologically fragmented with four syllables, as seen in Examples 12 to 15. There is a positive relationship between the attributive and the central word.

Similarly, multiple modifiers are more often preceded by phonological fragments that require fewer

syllables, especially if the preceding verb is monosyllabic. This is illustrated by the above examples. In Example 14, where the predicate is the judgment word “是”, the monosyllabic word is often the most unstable unit in the flow of speech, and it often needs to be combined with other syllabic units to form a larger phonological fragment to be suitable for a staccato rhythm. As mentioned earlier, this combination often comes at the expense of structural-semantic relations, but the reward is, of course, a coherent and loud phonetic flow. Thus, the “是” is a synthetic phonetic unit with the “一个” immediately below it. In Example 15, without a longer modifying attributive in the middle, simply saying “他那些全体同事们” or even “他全体同事们” would not be valid, because “他” is qualitative and needs to be followed by *de* (的). However, if multiple modifiers are added to every single component, it is too complicated. The date shape of the whole paragraph cannot be reflected, so it is necessary to make the necessary deletion. The reduction of the two ends of the date shape naturally bears the brunt. On the other hand, if the pointy part of the date pits is missing, it will also be incoherent. To be honest, Example 19 is not a natural form of a spoken sentence, the key is that there is no transition after “是”, and it is a long compound phrase, which is abrupt from the point of view of listening and understanding.

2. Many grammatical books use lexical types to identify their inflectional position in multiple modifiers, as in the forms we have listed above. However, lexical properties only tell one side of the problem. It is the semantic properties that tell the true story of their role and their character in the utterance. The attributive has specific properties of the attribute, and the semantic view is to regard it as a quasi-declarative component. Precisely because it is less declarative than a full sentence predicate, the words that embody its verbal properties often seem irrelevant. For example:

Example 20. 我读到此处, 在晶莹的泪光中, 又看见那肥胖的、青布棉袍黑布马褂的背影。(朱自清《背影》)

There is a “穿(着)” in front of “青布棉袍黑布马褂”, but not only the tense of the attributive but also the presence or absence of the verb is irrelevant, because it is the definitive characterization of the phenomenon that is the main reflection of the content. For this reason, even in the case of some predicative words as attributive, the main implication is not in the verb, but in its conjunctive component.

Example 21. 卫兵们……只拦住了气喘吁吁的从后面追来的一个身穿深蓝土布袍子, 手抱孩子的妇女。(鲁迅《理水》)

Example 22. 他对霍乱分布的研究指向了疾病的来源——一个位于霍乱疫情爆发中心区域百老汇街的一个被污染的公共水泵。(纪晓峰《地理信息系统概论》)

Example 23. 那是白鹿原刚刚进入三伏的一个褥热难熬的夜晚。(陈忠实《白鹿原》)

In the three cases, although the headwords of the phrases in the foremost position of the multiple modifiers are all verbs, they are irrelevant in the distribution of this grammatical constituent aggregation relation of the attributive. Their typical grammatical meaning is mostly reflected by additional or conjoined components: The first two cases focus on highlighting the location of the person or thing, while the latter focuses on its time. Because of this, they appear to be the predication rather than predication, that is, they have the form of predication but focus on the external connection of the central things, which is qualitative. In contrast, there is another verbal word that follows as an attributive, which often expresses the own characteristics of the object of the central thing. This phrase is predicative, but still atypical, as in Example 20, which fully expresses the most important grammatical meaning of the attributive: It mainly reflects the characteristic features of the relative stability of the thing. Because there is such a big difference in the properties of the two verbs, it is not

appropriate to reverse the position between them. At the same time, it should be noted that although this type of attributive seems to be contrary to the usual multiple modifier order rules, its deeper semantic combination is still the same, that is, the rules of prequalification followed by modification.

Thus, we can understand why “一个” is placed in a seemingly intermediate position at this point (please note that Example 22 is still an example of the co-occurrence of “一个”. This is a good example of the freedom of the word to appear in multiple modifiers): It serves as a transition between two attributives. Further, from the point of view of phonological rhythm, this form of multiple modifiers seems to be the opposite of the attributives described in 1, where it is generally date-like, but here it is saddle-like. How to understand the opposition between the two? We recognize it in this way:

(1) The former is universal. However, the latter is also quite numerous and can serve to break the singularity of the former. This shows that the structural patterns of language are complex, diverse, and colorful with phonological involvement.

(2) The two can complement each other. On the whole, the flow of speech is wavelike. It is inappropriate to form a cliff-like articulation between large voice fragments and small syllables. To make up for this deficiency, it is often repaired with small beats, and the transition is realized in an arc.

(3) Language rhythm also has its own relatively independent system of rules. The most obvious manifestation is the different levels of speech flow units, and also has its own relatively independent rules of association and combination.

Attributive With Different Distributions in the Syntax

If the first two cases are mainly focused on the internal aspects of the attributive, here is a look at the prosodic aspect of the attributive on a larger level, that is, from the syntactic point of view.

1. The above statement is only a broad statement, and the boundary between morphology and syntax is sometimes not very clear. To borrow from Feng Shengli (2000, p. 38), it has long been found that typical English compound words are generally left-weighted, while phrases are right-weighted. It is difficult to confirm whether the phrase is lexical or syntactic. For the Chinese, there is also a transition problem. One phenomenon is typical in Chinese, and that is the subordination of the word *de* (的). Zhu Dexi (1961) pointed out that the Chinese language system has the format “ S_1 的, S_2 的, …… S_n 的 M ”, and such syntactic structure can only be analyzed as follows: “{ [S_1 的], [S_2 的] …… [S_n 的] } { M }”, and cannot be analyzed as: “{ S_1 } 的, { [S_2] 的, …… [(S_n) 的 (M)] }”.

In other words, the *de* (的) as the attributive marker is postpositional, not conjunctive. Zhu’s analysis is supported by a solid syntactic prosodic pause. In this phenomenon, prosody and syntax are very well matched.

It is interesting to note, however, that Zhao Yuanren (1968/1979) was the first to notice that the word “的” is also used in the preceding example:

Example 24. 因为从那里面, 看见了被压迫者的善良的靈魂, 的酸辛, 的挣扎…… (鲁迅《祝中俄文字之交》)

And he made this comment,

This is certainly not usual speech, but this example, besides being an example of *de* (的) making adjectives and verbs nominalization, also shows Lu Xun’s feeling about the bound morpheme *de* (的) trying to get freedom—not only the back end (which has already been achieved) but also the front end. (pp. 150-151)

Zhao makes it very clear: I am afraid that such an expression can only be found in writing, but certainly not in the spoken language, that is, it can only be seen but not spoken. Why would it be like that? Theoretically speaking, if multiple attributives share a central component and can be disassembled into a one-to-one modifying relationship, naturally the word *de* (的) can be attached to each unit separately. Accordingly, if the central component is a juxtaposition of units that do not fit together, it should be feasible for the word *de* (的) to be attached to each of them. However, the actual linguistic situation is “head sinking” and does not provide the latter with free space, which is purely a function of prosodic requirements. For one of the most basic phonetic segments of Chinese, the phonetic step, the beginning syllable of a word or a phrase, cannot be a soft tone. This is demonstrated in the case of disyllabic words: There are few prefixes and all have tones, and many suffixes, and all are soft tones. Phrase types are no exception. The fact that the word *de* (的) is only suffixed in spoken language, but not prefixed, illustrates this rule. Therefore, if we look at grammar from the perspective of prosody, the situation in Chinese is that the phonetic units involved in syntactic combinations are generally front-heavy and back-light.

2. On this basis, if we look at the prosodic features in syntactic combinations, it seems to be a different scenario. Zhu Dexi (1956), in distinguishing the distinction between the qualitative adjective and state adjectives, says that the former often cannot be directly used as predicates and needs to be contrasted, such as, “今儿冷, 昨儿暖和”, while the latter is possible: “今儿怪冷的”. In addition to semantic factors, I’m afraid that prosody is also involved in its combination. In terms of the simplest subject predicate, the predicate is the focus of expression, and new information, so the rhyme also requires the number of syllables to be more than the subject. Most qualitative adjectives are monosyllabic; state adjectives are mostly polysyllabic. The number of syllables also affects the ability to form sentences to a certain extent. The imbalance in the number of syllables between the subject and the predicate can be explained in many ways: A subject-predicate phrase as a predicate can form a rich and specific sentence type, while a phrase as a subject can hardly become a specific sentence pattern. The reason why the verb-centered theory can be accepted is that it is always at the center of the predicate, hanging from the top and connecting the bottom, which directly determines the basic combination of sentence building. The focus of valence grammar is the verb. The action element is not only for the subject, but even so, the number of components co-occurring with it must not usually exceed three; the state element is syntactically only a component of the predicate, often distributed before and after the central verb, but theoretically, its number is unlimited. Because of this, the number of syllables between the subject and the predicate tends to be too unbalanced. To compensate for this unbalanced situation, Chinese syntax has adopted the practice of breaking the close connection between the original direct components and intercepting the utterance into relatively balanced phonological fragments for the convenience of speech. Since ancient times, the typical and universal appearance of this practice is that the subject and the adverbial are combined to form a phonological unit that is also considered to be a cross-level combination. For example, the familiar example of the use of ancient Chinese: “寡人之于国也, 尽心焉耳矣” (《孟子·梁惠王上》). The pauses in the sentences are very interesting. It cannot accurately reflect syntactic relationships, but it is very effective for prosodic balance and speech convenience. Ma Jianzhong’s (1898/1983) explanation is also very much to the point when he says: “盖读句相续而成文, 患其冗也, 助以‘也’字, 则辞气为之舒展矣” (p. 335). The ancient people paid attention to sentence reading, which in a certain sense coincides with the Chinese language’s focus on the staccato and rhythmic harmony of sound and gas. Look at other examples:

Example 25. 沛公居山东时，贪于财货，好美姬。（《史记·项羽本纪》）

Example 26. 无忌自在大梁时，常闻此两人贤。（《史记·魏公子列传》）

Example 27. 吾作此书时，尚是世中一人。（林觉民《与妻书》）

Example 28. 我们在思想过程上，语言学的研究过程中，完成了从具体到抽象，从抽象回到具体的循环。（陆志韦《汉语的构词法》，第1页）

If we say that ancient Chinese to modern Chinese has undergone a lot of changes; whether grammaticalization or lexicalization, they all reflect a process of continuous integration, development, and improvement of the language system. It is interesting to note that only the two syntactic components of the subject and adverbial are combined into a phonetic fragment, so as not to make the subject too small and fragmentary in syllables, and the way taken has not changed much in general. Of course, in addition to the types embodied in the four examples above, maybe the following subclasses were added later.

Example 29. 自足下谪江陵，至于今，凡枉赠答诗仅百余篇。（白居易《与元九书》）

Example 30. 仆自谪过以来，益少志虑。（柳宗元《答韦中立论师道书》）

Example 31. 自吾氏三世居是乡，积于今六十岁矣。（柳宗元《捕蛇者说》）

The adverbial combined with the subject in this kind of sentence still expresses time. But it is slightly different from the former: The time in it does not focus only on the time point, but on the segment starting from what time, so there is a preposition. The subject of Example 30 is still an independent single constituent, and the subject of Example 31 is then submerged in the propositional structure. In the past, people were concerned about the grammaticality of such a combination, and named it “the subject in the proposition”. It is clear from Example 30 that the subject is still on the periphery of the prepositional phrase, while in the other two cases the subject enters the interior of the prepositional phrase. We can only judge that this type of structure is a variation of the above type.

As we have noticed, the predication of the predicate is actually at the two poles of description and judgment. The former is dominated by the verb with a variety of state expressions; in the middle, there is a transition to the existential clause; and then it reaches the nature-attributive statement. The verb at the end of this situation no longer seems important. In English grammar, the most typical judgment word is called a copula, which reflects a certain extent the slightness of its role. Even if such statements are of the simplest type “N₁ + 是 + N₂”, where both N₁ and N₂ are words, or even if they are tautological, the latter is always stronger than the former in terms of prediction. Correspondingly, the former is stronger than the latter in terms of referentiality. This constitutes expressions such as: “他是学生”, and “今天是礼拜天”. And it is not possible to have the inverse form: **“学生是他”*, **“礼拜天是今天”*. If N₂ is not enough to provide satisfactory information, the real focus of the prediction shifts to the attributive before N₂. This feature is best reflected in definitional judgment statements. In this case, the usual structure of the object is “species difference + genus concept”. For example, “分子” and “原子” are, in general, both “particles”. The distinction between the two is reflected in the attributive position; one “maintains the chemical properties of the substance”, and the other “cannot be divided in a chemical reaction”. Because of the difference in subject-predicate and subject-object predicative, the overall pattern of Chinese utterances in terms of the number of syllables is light in the front and heavy in the back. We have counted the number of attributives in front of the subject and object in a total of 2,484 utterances in *Li Youcai Banhua* (《李有才板话》), and the ratio is 291/565 (Cui, 2002, p. 81). In other words, the attributives in the object position are used almost twice as often as those in front of the subject. This is still a literary genre, and if it were an expository genre, this proportional value would be much higher. In this regard,

we again count the attributive in different positions (only before the subject and object) in Mao Zedong's *Contradiction* (《矛盾论》), and the ratio is 214/436. The reason for this is the thoroughness and rigor of the logic. A sentence like this:

Example 32. 感性的认识是属于事物之片面的、现象的、外部联系的东西, 论理的认识则推进了一大步, 到达了事物的全体的、本质的、内部联系的东西, 到达了暴露周围世界的内在的矛盾, 因而能在周围世界的总体上, 在周围世界一切方面的内部联系上去把握周围世界的发展。

The similarity principle of cognitive linguistics suggests that the formal complexity of language is consistent with the amount of meaning. Prosody is an important part of the language form, and it is consistent with the embodiment of structural semantics in terms of the usual organization of utterances.

3. Not only does the information meaning of the entire statement focus on the subsequent but the more the subjective emotion of the speech subject is expressed, the more the tone intensifies. Several specific methods can be seen clearly. First of all, the more common method of expression is the augmentation method. See specific examples:

Example 33. 真正的铜墙铁壁是什么? 是群众, 是千百万真心实意拥护革命的群众。(毛泽东《关心群众生活, 注意工作方法》)

Example 34. 这一切像是在提醒那位有名的声学专家, 不能用任何简单的方式对待一个人——一个有生命有思想有感情的人。(何为《第二次考试》)

Such expressions often embody the repetition of the original paratactic relation to reinforce its specific meaning-emotion by adding the attributive. It seems to be uneconomical; yet the expression is quite full and adequate in tone. Moderate repetition of specific words can achieve the same phonetic effect as rhyming, that is, seek the same resonance, and also achieve the purpose of repeatedly reinforcing and deepening the understanding in terms of meaning. As Confucius said, "The book is repetitive and the diction is repeated over and over again. Woo-hoo! We have to be clear about this! There must be a beautiful meaning in it" (Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu Fanlu—Jiyi Chapter*). Then there is parallelism. For example:

Example 35. 一个梦, 一个伴随着春光的梦, 一个少年时的梦。(于建《人生价值的思索——读〈晚霞消失的时候〉》)

Example 36. 她坐在灯光昏暗、烟气腾腾的火车上, 暗自庆幸方兢刚才那个告别的方式给了她一个机会, 一个漂亮的拒绝他的机会, 一个“脸儿”了他的机会, 这可是他自找。(铁凝《大浴女》)

This method can be said to add to the augmentation method by expanding its juxtaposition of sub-descriptions to more than three items. The extreme of parallelism is the incremental method. The incremental method can be divided into two kinds; one is the meaning of expansion. For example:

Example 37. 他们, 古代的优秀艺术匠师们, 石窟艺术的创造者, 将当时千百万人所关心的主题, 千百万人的社会生活, 现实和理想, 表现为一个人, 几个人, 几百人的, 大小不同的画面。(徐迟《祈连山上》)

The joint phrase attributive “一个人, 几个人, 几百人” obviously reflects the increasing meaning, and the more it is said, the more it reflects the richness of the subject matter. At the same time, the tone of the pronunciation will also gradually strengthen the accent. Another is the increase in the number of syllables. For example:

Example 38. 一个人能力有大小, 但只要有这点精神, 就是一个高尚的人, 一个纯粹的人, 一个有道德的人, 一个脱离了低级趣味的人, 一个有益于人民的人。(毛泽东《纪念白求恩》)

The ideological pursuit embodied in this paragraph is what people later summarized as the so-called “five

realms of man". Because each descriptive attributive word in this paragraph is the identification of the noble character, there is no comparison between the meanings, and what remains is the arrangement of the rhythmic values. What is clear is that “高尚”, “纯粹”, “有道德”, “脱离了低级趣味”, “有益于人民”, the successful distribution of which roughly presents a gradual increase in the appearance of the voice fragment. It is indeed very useful to “broaden the meaning of the text and strengthen the momentum of the text”.

Conclusions

The modifier-head relation is a very complex and subtle combination of the whole syntactic relation, which involved many factors in rhythm and prosody. There are even some adjustments in the order of speech that arise from phonological factors. The content of the front has been involved, such as the post-attributive. One of the important reasons is that the content of the multiple modifiers is too long, and the reading is not natural and smooth enough, so the method of partial postposition is adopted to resolve it. For example:

Example 39. 我午餐本没有饱, 又没有可以消遣的事情, 便很自然的想到先前的一家很熟识的小酒楼, 叫一石居的, 算来离旅馆并不远。(鲁迅《在酒楼上》)

Example 40. 那个腰似桶粗、浑身都是粗线条结构的壮实女人, 被人唤作粗桂香的, 瞪着一双粗眉大眼问。(义夫《花花牛》)

The phrase “叫一石居的” in Example 39 and the phrase “被人唤作粗桂香的” in Example 40 can be moved to the original position in front, but then it becomes more difficult to read. By decomposing the original complex multiple modifiers, part of which is in the original position, and part of which is moved back, the segment distribution of the entire sentence will be in a symmetrical state.

From the analysis of the internal order and the rhythm of the attributive, it can be seen that Chinese syntax is not as strict as other morphological languages in adhering to the formal rules; it is more based on semantics as its deeper combination, and is more flexible according to the requirements of expression, including the need to do flexible processing for phonological rhythm. It is well known that most of the conventional pauses in language correspond to structural relations. However, the number of unit syllables involved in the sentence organization is often uneven, which may not be a problem in written language, but in spoken language, whether the reading is smooth and whether the reception by the ear is effective become a prominent issue. In a certain sense, classical Chinese is perhaps a little better than modern Chinese in terms of its situation: One is that it is dominated by monosyllabic words, one is that the syntactic structure is relatively simple, and one is that there is a certain amount of explicit sentence reading markers. The situation in modern Chinese is that the literature is close to the spoken language and is still relatively less cumbersome. In addition, some more explicit pause marks are truly spoken. Zhao Yuanren (1968/1979) called such markers “pause auxiliaries”. In the written language, especially in scientific and political texts, the traces of the spoken language have almost been cleared away. Most modern Chinese grammatical regulations focus on the written language, and the issue of prosody in syntax has been intentionally or unintentionally neglected. *Mashi Wentong* (《马氏文通》) (Ma's Grammar of the Chinese Language) declares, “The book's original purpose is to focus on sentence reading”. But it is borrowed from the traditional terminology of sentence-breaking, but it is fully equated with a specific structural unit, and in the actual analysis it has to be weighed with the prosodic factor, so its “reading” is participle phrase or clause? This is very difficult to identify and confirm. Here, we will only discuss the relationship between the order and prosody of the syntactic components of modern Chinese attributive, to reveal the actual rhythmic constraints and the rich content effects in syntax. We believe that similar complications exist in other

constituents, and even in the whole syntax. The facts have yet to be described and explained in more detail, and the theoretical construction has yet to be summarized in depth. The study of prosodic grammar has a very broad space for development.

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