STiL – Studies in Linguistics Vol. 2, 2008
CISCL Working Papers

Preposed Object and Low Periphery in Mandarin Chinese*

LINDA BADAN
City University of Hong Kong
lbadan@cityu.edu.hk

In this paper I analyse the Low Periphery in Chinese, following the basic lines of Belletti (2001, 2004) and Paul (2005). Like Italian, I show that Chinese displays Topic and Focus projections within IP. I individuate two different Functional Projections occupied by two distinct elements: the bare preposed Object (between Subject and verb) and the sentence-internal *lian* "even"+XP. Moreover I show that both have moved with A-movement. Contrary to the traditional analysis (Ernst & Wang 1995; Shyu 1995, 2001 among others), I finally argue that the bare preposed Object is not a Focus, but a Topic-like element with a Focus stress and it can be analyzed as a Contrastive Topic.

1. Introduction

Belletti (2001, 2004) proposes that the architecture of the domain below IP and above VP is parallel to the clause-external Left Periphery, i.e. in the CP area (see also Poletto 2006). In this article I follow Paul (2005), who applies Belletti's proposal to Mandarin Chinese, confirming the parallelism between CP and IP peripheries.

In the first part, I illustrate some tests to prove the existence of the Low Periphery in Chinese. In section 4, I study the two kinds of Object items that can occupy the position between Subject and Verb: the *lian* "even"+XP and the direct Object (without any additional marker) moved in a position between Subject and Verb. Following Shyu (1995, 2001), Ting (1995), Zhang (1996) a.o., I discuss the fact that the two preposed elements within IP are dislocated by A-movement (section 4.2). Furthermore, I will investigate the nature of the projections activated in the Low Periphery in Chinese. Leaving out the *lian…dou* construction, in the last part of the paper I analyze the SOV order. Contrary to the traditional analysis as a Focus item (Ernst &Wang 1995; Shyu 1995, 2001; Tsai 1994; Zhang 1996), I argue that it can be considered a Contrastive Topic, i.e. a syntactic Topic that can get contrastive stress, on the basis of its syntactic behavior and its pragmatic/semantic interpretation.

* I would like to thank Adriana Belletti, Pan Haihua, Waltraud Paul and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. All errors remain my responsibility.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

2. Belletti (2001, 2004)

Belletti (2001, 2004) proposes an analysis of the fine-grained structural cartography of the clause (IP)-internal Low Periphery[1]. She shows that the area immediately above VP is parallel - to some extent - to the (clause-external) Left Periphery of the clause. She refers to this "internal" area as the "clause internal periphery" or "Low periphery". The Low Periphery contains different positions associated to the corresponding interpretations and partly to different intonations, as opposed to the projections located in the High Periphery of the CP area. Chomsky (2000) (quoted in Belletti 2004) in a recent version of the Minimalist Program reached a similar conclusion, arguing for the consideration of CP and VP as two "strong Phases", i.e. two syntactic units, independent from each other, which are the domains of syntactic operations[2]. This idea suggests a parallelism between CP and VP internal structures and properties. Considering such a resemblance, Belletti (2001, 2004) proposes that in Italian there are two positions dedicated to Focus in the clause: a structurally high one, in the CP area, and a structurally low one, in the "clause internal periphery". She aims at showing that these two Focus Projections are different: the low Focus is restricted to Information Focus and the high Focus in the Left Periphery is a Contrastive Focus, and carries a special stress. After analyzing Subject inversion in Romance languages[3] and following Calabrese (1992), who proposed that the post-verbal Subject in Italian is Focalized, Belletti argues that the Spec of the low (Info)FocusP (a clause-internal Projection, above VP) is the landing site for a post-verbal Focalized Subject[4]. The Subject moves to the Spec of (Info) FocusP and the verb raises higher up, producing the order Verb-Subject:

(1) … [I Verb [TopP [FocP **Subj** [TopP [t_{subj}

(2) Q: Chi ha parlato?[5] (Belletti 2001: 3)
Who has spoken
"Who spoke?"
A: Ha parlato Gianni$_{InfoFocus}$
Has spoken Gianni
"Gianni spoke."
B: # GIANNI ha parlato.
Gianni has spoken
"Gianni spoke."

[1] See also Jayaseelan (2001), Belletti & Shlonsky (1995) and Poletto (2006).
[2] VP/vP are assimilated to the general format of the small clauses, which have been analyzed as full clauses that include a peripheral C Projection (Starke 1995; Sportiche 1995 quoted in Belletti 2004).
[3] Free Subject Inversion is a property of Null Subject languages, which allow the Subject to be phonetically unrealized (Kayne 1984; Belletti 2004).
[4] Notice that with appropriate pragmatic condition and the proper intonation the postverbal Subject can be interpreted as a Topic:
(i) Q: Che cosa ha poi fatto Gianni? (Belletti 2004: 10)
What has then done Gianni
"What (then) did Gianni do?"
A: Ha (poi) parlato, Gianni.
Has then spoken Gianni
"He spoke, Gianni."
[5] The following abbreviations are used in glossing examples: CL classifier; .*Cl* clitic; DE determination particle; EXP experiential aspect; FP final particle; PERF perfective aspect; Q question marker; TOP topic marker; SHI…DE cleft construction.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

As for the low Contrastive Focus, she proposes that the Subject moves to the Spec of the (Contrastive)FocusP in the CP area and the Object moves up to TopicP lower than (Contrastive)FocusP (Rizzi 1997)[6]. Their post-verbal position results from movement of the remnant IP to the Spec of a higher TopP, past the peripheral focalized Subject and topicalized direct Object (see (3) and the schematized movements in (4)):

(3) Ha comprato MARIA, il giornale. (Belletti 2004: 24Bb-27)
Has bought MARIA the newspaper

(4) [[$_{IPk}$ e_i ha comprato e_j]$_{TOP}$ [[MARIA]$_{FOC}$] [[il giornale]$_{TOP}$]….IP$_k$

As for Topics, consider the following sentences:

(5) a. **L**' ha comprato Maria, il giornale
It.*Cl* has bought Maria the newspaper
b. Ha comprato Maria, il giornale
has bought Maria the newspaper

(5)a is a case of Clitic Right Dislocation; (5)b is a case of so-called *emarginazione* "marginalization" in Antinucci & Cinque`s (1977) sense[7]. Following Cecchetto (1999), Belletti assumes that the right dislocated phrase is located in a clause-internal low Topic position (below the clause-internal Focus): the clitic is raised to the high position in the clause, for Case requirements, leaving behind the topicalized Object. The fact that in (5)b there is not the clitic, means that the Object is related to its Case assigning Head directly, without the mediation of a clitic.

In summary, Belletti's proposal is that the Low Periphery is symmetric to the Left Periphery as concerns Focus and Topics Heads: there is a low FocusP and also two TopicPs that surround it[8].

(6) [[IP [TopicP* [FocusP [TopicP* [VP]]]]]]

Here I follow Benincà (2001) and Benincà & Poletto's (2004) more restrictive theory, and I assume that it is not possible to have a Topic Projection lower than FocusP in the CP area. I maintain the same idea too as far as it concerns the Low periphery.

3. The Low Periphery in Chinese

3.1 Previous proposals

The Chinese language displays the possibility to have the "bare" direct Object (without any additional marking) not in its canonical post-verbal position (SVO word order), but raised to the left of verb[9] and below Subject, yielding the SOV order (henceforth I indicate the bare preposed Object within IP also with "SOV"):

[6] The hierarchy of the Left Periphery in the CP area proposed by Rizzi (1997) argues for a FocusP sorrounded by Topic Projections.
[7] Both of these Topics are pronounced, after a pause, with a downgrading intonation.
[8] She follows Rizzi (1997), who hypothesizes that Topic is a set of recursive projections (he indicates recursion with a *) occurring both higher and lower than a single Focus projection.
[9] For the moment I leave apart its pragmatic/semantic interpretation (see section 5.1)

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(7) a. Lisi mei kanguo [zhe ben shu]. (canonical SVO order))
Lisi not read this CL book
"Lisi did not read this book."
b. Lisi [zhe ben shu]$_i$ mei kanguo e_i. (bare preposed Object (SOV order))
Lisi this CL book not read

Also consider the cases of *even*-construction in Chinese (see Paris 1979, 1998, 1999; Shyu 1995, 2004; Gao 1994; Tsai 1994; Paul 2005, 2006; Hole 2004 among others). The construction is formed by two elements: *lian* and *dou*. *Lian* is traditionally associated with the meaning of "even" in English. *Lian* precedes the focalized element and its presence is optional (see Badan 2007 for further discussions). The Object preposed by *lian* is given emphasis, "the major stress" (Paris 1979). Literary *dou* means "all" and it must always be present, but is never litteraly translated in this context[10]. When a sentence contains the *lian…dou* construction, the Object is always obligatorily preposed[11]. A possible landing site is between Subject and Verb:

(8) a. Wo kanwan [zhe ben shu] le. (unmarked sentence (SVO order))
I read this CL book FP
"I read this book."
b. Lisi [*lian* zhe ben shu] *dou* yijing kanwan le.
Lisi even this CL book all already read FP
"Lisi have already read even this book."

In (8)b *lian* followed by the focalized Object appears on the left of *dou* and the verb. We argue that this order is the effect of an obligatory movement of the phrase *lian*+XP to the left of *dou*[12]. This movement in the *even*-construction is always obligatory:

(9) *Wo *dou* kanwan *lian* zhe ben shu le.
I all read even this CL book FP

The position of *lian*+XP…*dou* between the Subject and the verb is traditionally defined as a "sentence-internal" position (see (8b)). The whole "sentence-initial" position represents the case where *lian* and the XP move to the Left Periphery, namely to the left of the Subject. *Dou* never moves, but obligatorily stays in its position preceding the verb[13]:

[10] *Dou* is interchangeable with *ye* "also". Hole (2004) provides evidence for the quasi-fully interchangeability between these two elements; however I will use only on *dou*.
[11] Notice that the Subject can occurr in the *lian...dou* construction:
(i) Lian Zhangsan dou kanwan zhe ben shu.
Even Zhangsan all read this CL book
"Even Zhangsan read this book."
[12] Notice that this is the same as the movement you see in other sentences with the quantificational *dou* related to an object:
(i) Wo zhe xie shu dou kanwan le.
I this CL book all read FP
" I read all these books."
[13] I assume that *dou* have to precede the VP.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(10) (*Lian*) zhe ben shu, wo *dou* kanwan le.
Even this CL book I all read FP
"I read even this book."

In this paper, I concentrate only on *lian*+Object in the sentence-internal position. Considering the sentences above, are we dealing with a Double Topicalization of Subject and Object or with internal Projections? Several previous studies have proposed different analyses for these structures. Xu & Langendoen (1985), Tang (1990), Lin (1992) propose the Double Topicalization Hypothesis (DT). DT consists of two steps: (i) Topicalization of the Object that adjoins to IP; (ii) Topicalization of the Subject across the Object.

Here I reject such a hypothesis and, following Paul (2005), I provide further tests in favor of the idea that the preposed Object in Chinese is located above VP and below IP, in a Low Periphery.

First of all, consider more recent studies that refuse the DT Hypothesis, arguing for two different approaches that support the idea of the existence of a Periphery within the IP: Adjunction (Ernst & Wang 1995, Lu 1994, among others) and Substitution (Qu 1994, Shyu 2001). Both approaches exclude the idea that the Subject moves out of the IP to a Topic position; they propose that the Subject is located in IP and that the landing site for the preposed Object is IP-internal. Ernst & Wang (1995) argue that bare preposed Object undergoes VP (or ModalP)-adjunction and they distinguish it from preposed *lian*-Object[14]. Preposed Object is adjoined to VP with the verb Head bearing [+ Focus] features, while *lian*-Object is raised up to Spec, FunctionalP.

Qu (1994) argues that in Chinese Subject and Object can move covertly or overtly to the Functional AgrSP or AgrOP for features and Case checking. In this way he aims to explain different possible word orders in Mandarin Chinese.

Shyu (1995, 2001) argues that the SOV order is not related to Case checking and that it derives from the Object movement on par with *lian*-Object. Thus she proposes an uniform movement approach, triggered by the [+Focus] feature to a FocusP, which is either covert, in the case of bare preposed Object, or lexically realized, in the case of *lian…dou* structures.

In my paper I adopt Paul's (2005) analysis on Mandarin Chinese, which applies Belletti's (2001, 2004) proposal on the Low Periphery (presented here in section 2). As I have illustrated above (section 2), Belletti examines the position between IP and VP occupied by the preposed Object (SOV order) and she argues that it is a clause-internal position. Paul confirms the parallelism between CP and the low IP area. Her final hierarchy for the Low Periphery in Chinese is the following:

(11) IP > inner TopicP > *even*-Focus > vP

(11) corresponds only partially to the low hierarchy proposed by Belletti (2004); Paul shows that in Chinese no additional TopicP is allowed below *even*-Focus. Such a hierarchy corresponds to the more restricted structure adopted for the external periphery by Benincà (2001) and Benincà & Poletto (2004), excluding TopicP below FocusP, which I also adopt here, as already mentioned.

[14] Lu (1994) also shows a similar VP-adjunction analysis.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

3.2 Diagnostic tests

With my diagnostic tests I aim at proving the hypothesis that Chinese, like Italian, displays a Low Periphery in the IP area, i.e. below the Subject and above the VP[15]. As mentioned above, Paul (2005) argues for the status of the preposed Object as a clause-internal Topic position. She shows some differences between the internal *versus* the external Topic. For example, only DPs, but no clauses are acceptable in the internal Topic position:

(12) a. Ta wang le [$_S$ ji-dianzhong kai hui] (Paul 2005, 55)
He forget PERF what time hold meeting
"He forgot at what time the meeting is."
b.*[$_{IP}$ Ta [$_S$ ji dianzhong kai hui wang le]
he what time hold meeting forget PERF
c.[$_{TopP}$ [$_S$ Ji dianzhong kai hui] [$_{IP}$ ta wang le]], [$_{TopP}$ [$_S$ ji dianzhong chi fan] [$_{IP}$ ta mei wang]
what time hold meeting he forget PERF what time eat food he not forget
"At what time the meeting is, he forgot; at what time the meal is served, he did not forget."

Moreover Paul shows that multiple topics are allowed in external Topic position, but are excluded for the internal topic position:

(13) a. *Ni [$_{DP}$ huiyuan dahui] [$_{DP}$ mingtian de richeng] anpai hao le meiyou?
you member meeting tomorrow DE program plan finish PERF not
b. [$_{DP}$ Huiyuan dahui], ni [$_{DP}$ mingtian de richeng] anpai hao le meiyou?
member meeting you tomorrow DE program plan finish PERF not
"The general membership meeting, have you fixed tomorrow's program?"
(Paul 2005 ex 47)

The following sentences are additional tests of the presence of multiple Topics inside IP:

(14) a. Hua (a), Zhangsan zui xihuan meiguihua.
Flowers TOP Zhangsan most like roses
b. Hua (a), Zhangsan [meiguihua] zui xihuan.
Flowers TOP Zhangsan roses most like
c. Hua (a), meiguihua, Zhangsan zui xihuan.
Flowers TOP roses Zhangsan most like
d. *Zhangsan [hua] [meiguihua] zui xihuan.
Zhangsan flowers roses most like
"Among flowers, I like roses very much."

In (14)a there is only one Topic in the CP area, (14)b displays a Topic in the Left Periphery and a bare preposed Object; in (14)c there are two high Topics, but in (14)d the sentence is ungrammatical, due to the two bare internal Topics, which are not

[15] Cheng & Downing (2007) show that also in Durban Zulu there are two preverbal Topic positions, one preceding and one following the Subject.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

allowed. This shows that the area on the left and on the right have different characteristics.

The subject position can be occupied by an indefinite DP; on the contrary, Topic position cannot: a Topic has to be either definite or generic[16]. In (15) the first DP is clearly indefinite *yi qun* "a couple", thus it can be analyzed as located in the Subject position, but not in Topic position, which always needs a definite DP.

(15) Wanshang de shihou wo kandao *yi qun ren* sha le Lisi de gou.
Evening DE when I saw a couple persons kill PERF Lisi DE dog.
"During the night I saw that a couple of persons killed Lisi's dog."

A further difference between the positions on the left and on the right of the Subject position is evidenced by the presence *versus* the absence of a Topic marker (*a*) following *lian*+XP:

(16) a. Zhangsan$_i$, lian zhe ben shu (**a**), ta$_i$ dou yijing mai le.
Zhangsan even this CL book TOP he all already buy FP
b.* Zhangsan$_i$, ta$_i$ lian zhe ben shu **a** dou yijing mai le[17].
Zhangsan he even this CL book TOP all already buy FP
c. Zhangsan$_i$, ta$_i$ lian zhe ben shu dou yijing mai le.
Zhangsan he even this CL book all already buy FP
d. *Zhangsan lian zhe ben shu **a** dou yijing mai le.
Zhangsan even this CL book TOP all already buy FP

[16] Huang, A. Li & Y. Li (forthcoming: ch. 7: 3-4): "the Object in the SOV and OSV patterns (preverbal Object) generally does not allow an indefinite non-specific expression; but the Object of SVO (postverbal Object) easily allows it.
(i) a. wo zai zhao yi ben xiaoshuo.
I at seek one CL novel
"I am looking for a novel."
b. *wo yi ben xiaoshuo zai zhao.
I one CL novel at seek
c. *yi-ben xiaoshuo, wo zai zhao.
one-CL novel I at seek
The use of an indefinite expression *a novel* is not possible preverbally. When a bare nominal appears preverbally, it is generally interpreted as definite.
(ii) a. shu, wo hui kan.
book, I will read
"The book(s), I will read."
b. wo shu hui kan.
I book will read
"I, the book(s), will read."
c. wo hui kan shu.
I will read book
"I will read books."
(ii a-b) contrast with (iic). Only the latter allows the Object *shu* 'book' to be interpreted as indefinite…If an expression denotes quantity, such as 'a novel' below, it is possible in the preverbal position:
(iii) Yi ben xiaoshuo, ta yi ge wanshang jiu kan wan le.
One CL novel he one CL evening then read finish FP
"A novel, he finished reading in an evening."
(iv) Ta yi ben xiaoshuo yi ge wanshang jiu kan wan le.
he one CL novel one CL evening then read finish FP
"He, a novel, finished reading in an evening."

[17] Notice that the sentences (16b and d) are acceptable only with a comma or a pause after the Topic particle *a*, but this indicates a complety different structure.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(16)a shows *lian*+XP in initial-position, on the left of Subject, that may be followed by the Topic marker; in (16)b *lian*+XP is in clause-internal position, thus the Topic marker is not allowed; (16)c is perfectly grammatical, since the *lian*+XP is in low position, but without Topic marker; finally (16)d shows that *lian*+XP cannot be followed by a Topic marker, this means that it is located in sentence-internal position, thus *Zhangsan* is in Subject position within IP and it is not topicalized to the CP area (as, on the contrary, the Double Topicalization Hypothesis predicts).

Now consider the structure of the Left Periphery in Chinese sketched by Paul (2005) and Badan & Del Gobbo (in press). They show that *lian*+XP always occupies the lowest position of the Left Periphery, i.e. below (different kinds of) Topics and above Subject:

(17) [$_{CP}$ Topics > lian+XP] > [$_{IP}$ Subject…

Thus consider the following sentence displaying *lian*+XP on the left of a co-indexed resumptive pronoun *ta* "him//her":

(18) Lian Zhangsan$_i$, ta$_i$ zhe ben shu dou yijing kanwan le.
Lian Zhangsan he this CL book all already read FP
"Even Zhangsan, he read this book."

Following the idea that *lian*+XP occupies the lowest position of the CP and cannot be followed by other Topic or Focus projections, the resumptive pronoun *ta* "him" cannot be considered in a Topic position in the Left Periphery, but only in the Subject position within IP.

On the basis of the tests above, I argue that the bare preposed Object and sentence-internal *lian*+XP are located in a Low Periphery below IP and above VP, parallel to the Left Periphery in the CP area.

4. Preposed Object (SOV) and sentence-internal lian+XP

Shyu (1995, 2001) proposes a uniform Object movement approach for both bare preposed Objects and sentence-internal *lian*+XP. She analyzes them as derived by a substitution mechanism, triggered by the [+Focus] feature, which is either phonologically null or lexically realized in *dou*-sentences or *lian…dou* structures. Remember that she considers *dou* the Head of the FocusP that can be overtly expressed (in the case of *lian*+XP) or covert (in the case of the preposed Object). As I mentioned earlier, I do not consider *dou* as Head of FocusP and following Paul (2002, 2005), I analyze the SOV and *lian*+XP as two different items that have moved up into two different landing sites, as they have two different semantic/pragmatic interpretations.

4.1. Two different positions

Paul (2002) suggests that the bare preposed Object SOV is higher than the *lian*+XP in the Low Periphery. With the following tests I show that SOV and the sentence-internal *lian*+XP cannot be analyzed in a uniform way: they occupy two distinct positions in the Low periphery, corresponding to two different Functional Projections, and the former is higher than the latter.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

1. The preposed Object must precede the Aspectual (repetitive) adverbs[18] like *you* "again", while *lian*+XP must follow it.

(20) a.Ta (**you*) [nei ben shu] *you* kan le yibian. (Paul 2002: 22 a-b)
He again that CL book again read PERF once
"He has read that book one more time."
b. Wo *you* [lian yi fen qian ye] dou mei you le.
I again even one CL money also all not have FP
"Once again I don't have a cent."

2. SOV order and sentence-internal *lian*+XP can co-occur; the resumptive pronoun in Subject position shows that we are dealing with the Low Periphery and two different internal Projections.

(21) Zhangsan$_1$, ta$_1$ [zhe ge tang] lian wo de xiaohaizi dou song le![19]
Zhangsan he this CL sweet even I DE children all give FP
"As for Zhangsan, he gave the sweets even to my children!"

(22) [$_{IP}$ Lisi, [ta$_i$ [$_{int.TopP}$ yingyu [$_{FocP}$ lian liushi fen [$_{vP}$ dou mei nadao]]]]
Lisi he English even 60 point all not obtain
"Lisi didn't even obtain 60 points in English."
(Paul 2006: 60)

If sentence-internal *lian*+XP is in a higher position with respect to the bare preposed Object, the clause is ungrammatical (see also Paul 2002, 2005):

(23)*Zhangsan$_i$, ta$_i$ lian wo de xiaohaizi dou [zhe tang] gei le!
Zhangsan he even I DE children all this sweet give FP

(24)*[$_{IP}$ Lisi$_i$, [ta$_i$ [$_{FocP}$ lian liushi fen [$_{inTopP}$ yingyu [$_{vP}$ dou mei nadao]]]]
Lisi he even 60 point English all not obtain

3. Furthermore, another issue to defend the idea that the bare preposed Object occupies a different position from sentence-internal *lian*+XP is the fact that the SOV can be followed by a Topic marker (25)a, while *lian*+XP cannot (25)b. Notice that in order for (25)a to be acceptable, the preposed Object must be stressed.

(25) a. Zhangsan$_1$, ta$_1$ [zhe ben shu] **a** yijing kan wan le.
Zhangsan he this CL book TOP already read finish FP
"As for Zhangsan, he already read this book."
b. *Zhangsan$_1$, ta$_1$ [lian zhe ben shu] **a** dou yijing kan wan le.
Zhangsan he even this CL book TOP all already read finish FP

4. The bare preposed Object displays a characteristic proper of a Topic-like item in Chinese: it cannot be indefinite, while the element following sentence-internal *lian* may be:

[18] These kinds of adverbs are in low positions in Cinque's (1999) hierarchy. Traditionally they are called "VP adverbs".
[19] I owe this example to Lisa Cheng.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(26) a. *Ta [yixie jiu xinfeng] baocun zhe. (Zhang 1996: 15-16)
He some old envelope kept FP
"He has kept some old envelopes."
b. Ta [lian yixie jiu xinfeng] dou baocun zhe.
He even some old envelope all kept FP
"He has kept even some old envelopes."

5. A bare pronoun can be preposed within *lian…dou* construction , while without any marking it cannot (Paul 2002):

(27) a. Zhangsan [lian wo] ye piping le.
Zhangsan even I also criticize FP
"Zhangsan criticized even me."
b. *Zhangsan [**wo]** piping le.
Zhangsan I criticize FP
"Zhangsan critized me."

6. A bare preposed Object cannot be in a cleft configuration by means of *shi…de* (see Paul & Whitman 2001), which is different from *lian*+XP constituent:

(28) a * Zhangsan *shi* [zhe ben shu] kanwan *de*.
Zhangsan SHI this CL book read …DE
Lit: "Zhangsan, it's this book (that) he read."
b. Zhangsan *shi* [lian zhe ben shu] dou kanwan *de*.
Zhangsan SHI even this CL book all read …DE
"It's even this book that Zhangsan read."

Through the tests above I provide evidence for the following facts: the bare preposed Object above VP and the preposed *lian*+XP are not the same kind of element. They occupy two different Functional Projections: they display distinct behaviours with respect to some adverbs, the presence of the Topic marker, the possibility to be in a cleft sentence. Moreover, they can co-occur and the bare preposed Object has to be placed in a higher position with respect to *lian*+XP.

4.2. A-movements

It is generally assumed that the SOV and the sentence-internal *lian*+XP are derived by movement. (29)a, a case with a bare preposed object and (29)b, a sentence-internal *lian*+XP, are grammatical only with a gap in the object (base-generated) position. Thus, on the basis of what I said for Topics, I argue that both structures are derived by movement.

(29) a. Zhe zhi gou [ziji de zhuren]$_i$ yao le (*ta$_i$), bieren que bu yao.(Shyu 2001: 50)
this CL dog self DE master bite PERF him, others but not bite
"This dog bit its own master, but not others."
b. Zhe zhi gou [lian ziji de zhuren]$_i$ dou yao le (*ta$_i$), bieren que bu yao.
this CL dog even self DE master all bite PERF him others but not bite
"This dog bit even its master, but not others."

It seems that the empty element on the right of the verb is A-bound, since the two movements display several A-properties (see Fu 1994; Qu 1994; Ting 1995; Shyu

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

1995, 2001; Zhang 1996). I consider the landing-site for sentence-internal *lian+XP* as a Focus position derived by A-movement. A-chain Focalization is not a new idea; as Belletti & Shlonsky (1995) point out, Focalization is not a unitary phenomenon. In Italian and Hebrew it seems to be (in part)[20] part of the A- and not the Abar-system; on the contrary, Focus in Hungarian involves an Abar-chain. In this section I show the A-properties of SOV and sentence-internal *lian*+XP: clause-boundness, absence of Reconstruction for Principle C, absence of resumption.

1. Clause-boundness.[21,22]
The embedded Object cannot be preposed across a tensed clause boundary to matrix post-Subject/ pre-Verb position (Focus is Subject only to local movement):

(30) *Zhangsan pingguo$_i$ zhidao [$_{CP}$Lisi chidiao le e_i] (Ting 1995: 7)
Zhangsan apple know Lisi ate FP
"Zhangsan knows that Lisi ate the apples"

(31) a. Zhangsan renwei [$_{CP}$Lisi hen xihuan Mali] (Shyu 2001: 3-4)
Zhangsan think Lisi very like Mali
"Zhangsan thinks that Lisi likes Mali."
b. * Zhangsan Mali$_i$ renwei [$_{CP}$ Lisi hen xihuan t_i].
Zhangsan Mali think Lisi very like
"Zhangsan thinks that Lisi likes Mali."

I can refer to this phenomenon as *adjacency requirement*, following Belletti & Shlonsky (1995: 501), who show that in Italian (and in Hebrew) the postverbal Subject (in Spec, FocusP) is more acceptable when it is adjacent to the verb[23].

Notice, on the contrary, that OSV word order displays long-distance dependency:

(32) Pingguo, Zhangsan zhidao [$_{CP}$Lisi chidiao le *e*]. (Ting 1995:6)
apple Zhangsan know Lisi ate FP

(33) Mali$_i$, Zhangsan renwei [$_{CP}$Lisi hen xihuan e_i]
Mali Zhangsan think Lisi very like

Sentence-internal *lian*+XP (34)a *versus* sentence-external *lian*+XP (34)b:

---

[20] In Italian there is also the focalization to the left periphery through an Abar movement.
[21] "It has been often observed when A-movement applies, for example, in the case of super-raising:
(i) *John$_i$ seems [that it is likely [t_i to win]
The NP John raises across a tensed clause boundary and the sentence is ungrammatical. On the other hand, Abar- movement can freely take place out of a tensed clause, if no barrier is crossed:
(ii) What$_i$ do you think [that John fixed t_i]. (Ting, 1995: 292).
[22] See Fu (1994), Qu (1994), Shyu (2001).
[23] The examples analyzed by Belletti & Shlonsky (1995) for Italian are the followings:
(i) a. ?Ha dato un libro a Maria Gianni.
has given a book to Maria Gianni.
b. *(?)Ha dato a Maria un libro Gianni.
has given to Maria a book Gianni.
c. ?Ha messo il libro sul tavolo Maria.
has put the book on-the table Maria
d. *(?)Ha messo sul tavolo il libro Maria.
has put on-the table the book Maria.
e. *?Ha dato a Maria Gianni un libro.
has given to Maria Gianni a book.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(34) a. *Zhangsan *lian* Mali$_i$ renwei [$_{CP}$Lisi *dou* bu xihuan e_i]. (Shyu 2001: 3-5)
Zhangsan even Mali think Lisi all not like
b. *Lian* Mali$_i$, Zhangsan renwei [$_{CP}$Lisi *dou* bu xihuan e_i].
Even Mali Zhangsan think Lisi all not like
"Zhangsan thinks that Lisi doesn't like even Mali."

2. No Reconstruction effects for Principle C of the Binding Theory.
"Though coreference between the pronoun *ta* and its antecedent *Zhangsan* in sentence (35) impossible, it becomes possible when the indirect Object containing *Zhangsan* has undergone bare Object Movement (in (36)a) and Focalization (in (36)b) (Shyu 2001).

(35) *Wo bei ta$_i$ qiang-zou le [yi ben Zhangsan$_i$ de shu]. (Shyu 2001: 4)
I by him rob-away PERF one CL Zhangsan DE book
Lit. "I was robbed by him$_i$ of a book of Zhangsan$_i$.'

(36) a. Wo [Zhangsan$_i$ de shu]$_j$ jiao ta$_i$ na-zou le e_j (Shyu 1995:105, 83)
I Zhangsan DE book let him take-away FP
"I asked him to take away Zhangsan's books."
b.? Wo lian [Zhangsan$_i$ de shu]$_j$ dou bei ta$_i$ qiang-zou le e_j
I even Zhangsan DE book all by him rob-away FP
"I was robbed of [even Zhangsan$_i$'s book] by him$_i$."

3. No resumption.
"It is generally assumed that the gap left by A-movement cannot be filled with an overt pronominal" (Ting 1995: 295).

(37) *Lisi [nei ge ren$_i$] ji bu de ta$_i$ le. (Ting 1995: 17 s. m.) (SOV)
Lisi that CL person remember not be-able him FP
Lit: "Lisi that person cannot remember *her/him*."

(38) *Lisi [lian Mali]$_i$ dou hen xihuan ta$_i$. (Sentence-internal *lian*+XP)
Lisi even Mali all very like him
Lit: "Lisi even Mali likes very much her."

Could the impossibility of the presence of the resumptive pronoun be derived from the violation of Principle B? Consider the following examples:

(39)*Wo [nei ge ren]$_i$ renwei Lisi genben ji bu de ta$_i$ le.(Ting 1995: 17)
I that CL person think Lisi totally remember not be-able him FP
Lit: "I that person think Lisi totally can't remember him."

(40) *Zhangsan *lian* Mali$_i$ ***dou*** renwei [$_{CP}$ Lisi hen xihuan (ta$_i$)]. (Shyu 1995)
Zhangsan even Mali all think Lisi very like (her)
"Zhangsan thinks that Lisi likes even Mali."

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

The ungrammaticality of (39) and (40) indicate that SOV and sentence-internal *lian*+XP are clause-bound, which is considered a property of A-movement[24]. Ting (1995): "the ungrammaticality of (39) can no longer be attributed to the binding condition B, since the binding domain for the pronominal *ta* "he" is free in the embedded clause, satisfying the binding condition B, so there must be some other reasons for the ill-formedness of (39). Given the A-movement analysis, the ungrammaticality of (40) naturally follows, since it is generally assumed that the gap left by A-movement can not be filled with an overt pronominal."

As Ernst & Wang (1995) point out, the only case in which a bare preposed Object or *lian*+XP merged in the embedded clause has the position between the Subject and the matrix verb as its landing site, is when the Object is preposed from a nonfinite embedded Object position: "it is well known that nonfinite complements are Subject to clause union phenomena, in which matrix and embedded complement together display some properties of a single clause" (Ernst & Wang 1995: 245). Shyu (2001: fn27) shows that also with infinitive the resumption is still not allowed:

(41) Lisi bi [$_{IP}$ Zhangsan ma Mali] (Shyu 2001: fn 27) (base sent.)
Lisi force Zhangsan scold Mali
"Lisi forces Zhangsan to scold Mali."
(42) Lisi Mali$_i$ bi [$_{IP}$ Zhangsan ma (*ta$_i$)] (bare preposed Object)
Lisi Mali force Zhangsan scold her
Lit: "Lisi Mali forces Zhangsan to scold her."
(43) Lisi lian Mali$_i$ dou bi [$_{IP}$ Zhangsan ma (*ta$_i$)] (Sentence-internal lian+XP)
Lisi even Mali all force Zhangsan scold her

Thus SOV and sentence-internal *lian*+XP are A-moved. Consider that their movements also display Abar-properties: the site from which the XP moves is a position to which Case is assigned. I assume that Object Case is checked by verb government (Ernst 1998). On the contrary, A-movement forms a chain between the original position which is assigned a θ-role, but not Case. The landing site is a position where no Case and no θ-role are assigned.

Following Shyu (2001), I argue that the bare preposed Object/*lian*+XP-movements must have a sort of trigger, rather than Case assignment. The bare preposed Object is attracted by "selected" properties, following the Spec-Head checking relation within the maximal Projection of a FP. As I will show in the following section, the preposed object yields a contrastive Topic reading. Thus I propose that the bare object within IP moves up to check is Topic feature, in a Spec-head agreement configuration. I do not need to stipulate the optional Case checking for Chinese[25].

[24] Notice that both of them can stay in embedded position, for instance in relative clauses:
(i) Qing zai [[ta **nei ben shu** kanwan] de shihou] (Ernst & Wang 1995: 29)
please at he that CL book read of time
"Please come see him when that book, he finishes reading."

[25] Qu (1994) proposes Functional AgrPs to derive Subject and Object Case agreement in Chinese. Shyu (2001) argues that SOV is not triggered by Case assignment nor is Case related. She assumes that a Subject is base-generated in the Spec, VP position, following the Internal Subject Hypothesis (Kuroda 1988; Koopman & Sportiche 1990). She assumes that Subject raising to [Spec, IP] is obligatory, even though INFL is defective in Chinese. This Subject raising is for assigning abstract nominative Case. As I mentioned earlier, Object abstract Case is checked by Verb government.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

5. Bare Preposed Object (SOV): Topic or Focus?

In this section I concentrate on the syntactic properties of the SOV in the Low Periphery. The SOV shows clear Topic-like properties: presence of Topic markers, impossibility to be clefted by means of *shi…de* "be…DE", co-occurrence with a Focus *in situ*, definiteness requirement. From a pragmatic/semantic point of view, SOV requires a contrastive reading, i.e. it is always an emphasized element in the sentence. As mentioned earlier, the contrastive stress does not indicate by itself that an item is focalized, thus I can argue that the Chinese bare preposed Object moves up to the Low Periphery in order to occupy the Spec of a Contrastive Topic Projection. At a first sight SOV seems to be a focalized item, since, as I will illustrate below, it generally needs a context in which it gets emphasis. Indeed, in the literature it is generally assumed to involve Focalization (Ernst & Wang 1995; Shyu 1995, 2001; Tsai 1994; Zhang 1996), even if the role of such an emphasis is not always clear. Actually, from a syntactic point of view it displays only two Focus properties, while most of its characteristics are typical of Topic-like elements[26].

Focus properties:

1. The resumptive pronoun is not allowed. This fact indicates that the SOV is subject to an A-type movement (see section 4) and not to the typical Topicalization Abar-movement.

(44) *Zhangsan **Mali**$_i$ hen xihuan ta$_i$.
Zhangsan Mali very like her

2. SOV cannot be multiple. The impossibility to be multiple can be derived from the fact that the Low Periphery seems to be "more restricted" than the CP area, thus it does not admit more than one Topic.

Notice that SOV can co-occur with sentence-internal *lian*+XP. As mentioned above, multiple Foci are not allowed, thus: (i) one of them is a Focus and the other is a Topic; (ii) none of them is a Focus. Furthermore, when they co-occur, the main stress is on *lian*+XP and not on the bare preposed Object.

[26] First of all, if I follow Rizzi's (1997) tests in order to distinguish Topic from Focus, I have to take into consideration also the WCO, as I do for the elements in the CP area. In the case of the SOV, the results are not so clear. Qu (1994) and Shyu (1995) have both noted that Chinese SOV does not show WCO effects. SOV in the Low Periphery can be coreferent to the corresponding pronoun ta:
(i) Wo mei ge haizi dou bei [youguai ta$_i$ de ren] pian-zou le e_i.
I every CL child all by abduct him DE person kidnap-away FP
Lit.:"I was affected by every$_i$ child being kidnapped by the person who abducted him$_i$."
(Shyu 1995: 105, 84)
However, the result is not so clear: my Chinese informants have too many dissenting opinions about the grammaticality of the sentences showing SOV within WCO structure. See, for instance, another clause displaying WCO context, the result is ungrammatical:
(ii) *Zhangsan [Mali$_i$] zai ta$_i$ de jia jiandao le.
Zhangsan Mali in her DE home met FP
"Zhangsan met MALI at her home."
I think that the non-conforming judgments are probably due to some phenomena that interact with each other, thus they cannot be used as a valid WCO test in order to distinguish Topic from Focus.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(45) Zhangsan zhe zhong tang lian WO DE XIAOHAIZI dou song le…
Zhangsan this CL sweet even I DE child all give FP
"Zhangsan gave this sweet even to my child."

Most of the properties of the SOV are Topic-like.

Topic properties:

1. Compatibility with a *wh*-element. Bare preposed Object does not interact with the *wh*-item.

(46) Zhangsan [zhe ben shu] huan gei le shei?
Zhangsan this CL book give-back to PERF who
Lit. "Zhangsan gave back this book to whom?"

On the contrary the focalized item lian+XP interacts with a *wh*:

(47) *Zhangsan lian zhe ben shu dou huan gei le shei?
Zhangsan even this CL book all give-back to PERF who
Lit. "Zhangsan gave back this book even to whom?"

2. The preposed Object can be followed by Topic markers.

(48) Zhangsan [zhe ben shu] (a) yijing mai le.
Zhangsan this CL book TOP already buy FP
"Zhangsan this book already bought."

On the contrary, as showed in (16), the focalized item *lian*+XP cannot be followed by a Topic marker *a*:

(49) *Zhangsan lian zhe ben shu *a* yijing dou mai le[27].
Zhangsan even this CL book PART already all buy FP

3. Bare preposed Object cannot be clefted by means of *shi…de* pattern, which would, however, be expected if it were really a Focus (Paul & Whitman 2001).

(49) a. Women [gugong] qu guo le. (Paul 2002: 21)
We imperial-palace go EXP FP
"We have been to the imperial palace."
b. *Women *shi* [gugong] qu guo *de*.
We SHI imperial-palace go EXP …DE

(50) *Zhangsan shi [zhe ben shu] kanwan de.
Zhangsan SHI this CL book read …DE
"It's this book that Zhangsan read."

4. It can co-occur with a Focus *in situ*. Having in mind the impossibility of multiple Foci, it derives that the Object in a SOV sentence is not a Focus.

[27] This sentence is acceptable only with a comma or a pause after the Topic marker *a*.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

(51) Mali [zhe ben shu] huan gei LISI (bu gei Zhangsan)
Mali this CL book give-back to Lisi not to Zhangsan
Lit: "Mali, this book, gave back to Lisi (not to Zhangsan!)."

5. Like the topicalized elements in the CP area (OSV), bare preposed Object generally cannot be an indefinite non specific expression.

(52)a. Shu, wo hui kan. (Huang, A. Li & Y. Li forth.: 16) (Topic: OSV)
Book I can read
"THE books, I will read."
b. Wo shu hui kan. (preposed Object: SOV)
I book can read
"I THE books will read"
c. Wo hui kan shu. (canonical word order: SVO)
I can read book
"I will read (some) BOOKS"

Shyu (2001: 16) claims that, differently from a Topic in the CP area, a bare preposed Object in the IP can be indefinite. In order to indicate indefiniteness, she uses the numeral *yi* "one" (followed by the Classifier). Yet notice that an element introduced by the numeral *yi* "one" in Topic position and in sentence-internal position (the preposed Object position) is acceptable only if it is contrasted with another numeral item (53b). This means that in Topic position its interpretation is always definite:

(53) a. *Yi pian lunwen, wo hen xihuan. (Tsai 1994: 31) (Topic: OSV)
one CL paper I very like
"A paper I like very much."
b. [Yi pian lunwen], wo hai keyi yingfu, [liang pian na] jiu tai duo le.
One CL paper I still can handle two CL that then too much FP
"One paper, I can handle, but two papers, that's too much."

With the preposed Object, the contrastive construal of the sentence is obligatory, i.e. the clause with a preposed Object requires a conjunct with which to put it in contrast:

(54) Wo yi pian lunwen keyi yingfu *(lian pian jiu bu xing le). (Tsai 1994: 32)
I one CL article can handle two CL then not possible FP
"A paper, I can handle (but two papers, I can't)."

5.1. SOV: semantics / pragmatics

As mentioned earlier, Chinese Object preposing (SOV) is commonly assumed to involve Focalization (Ernst & Wang 1995; Shyu 1995, 2001; Tsai 1994; Zhang 1996). It normally has an emphatic function, but such an emphatic effect is not always clear. Some linguists have doubts about its Focus function and propose to treat it as a kind of Topic endowed with some Focus properties. For instance, Ernst & Wang (1995) show the pragmatic differences between the Topic in initial position (OSV), which they call "discourse Topic", and the preposed Object (SOV), called "Focus Topic". Ting (1995), borrowing the term introduced by Tsao (1997) for the *ba*-NP[28], defines the

[28] In Chinese the direct Object moved to a preverbal position can be preceded, obligatorily or optionally, by the morpheme *ba*. The exact function of *ba* is a widely discussed topic among linguists: it is treated either as a verb (Hashimoto 1971), a preposition (Travis 1984, Li 2001) or as a Case marker

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

bare preposed Object as a "secondary Topic", in opposition to the "primary Topic" OSV, i.e. a Topic in the CP area, and Paul (2002, 2005) analyzes it as a sentence-internal Topic preceding the Focus position occupied by *lian*+XP. Following the authors cited above, I adopt the proposal that Chinese bare preposed Object occupies the Spec of a Topic position, more precisely of a Contrastive Topic position.

First of all, there is a different pragmatic (and syntactic) requirement connecting sentence-initial Topic and the preposed Object in the IP (Ernst & Wang 1995; Tsai 1994; Huang, A. Li & Y. Li forthcoming among others).

The Object in SOV clauses must display some sort of contrastive reading, while the Object in OSV clauses does not need to, thought it may be contrastive[29]:

(55) a.[Zoumingqu], Zhangsan hen xihuan tan, dajia ye hen xihuan ting.
Sonata Zhangsan very like play all also very like listen
"As for sonatas, Zhangsan likes to play it and everyone also likes to listen to it very much."

b. (Wo dui lanqiu hen shou, danshi) [zuqiu], wo yi qiao bu tong.
I to basketball very familiar but soccer I one intelligence not understand
"I'm familiar with basketball, but soccer, I have no idea at all."
(Ting 1995: 3)

Which kind of contrast does bare preposed Object in the IP imply? The following diagnostic tests show that it can be semantically/pragmatically considered neither a Contrastive Focus nor an Informational Focus.

1. Bare preposed Object in the IP area is not an Informational Focus. The reply to a *wh*- question implies new information, i.e. Informational Focus:

(56) Q: Zhangsan mai le shenme?
Zhangsan buy PERF what
"What did Zhangsan buy?
A1: Zhangsan mai le [zhe ben shu]. (SVO)
Zhangsan buy PERF this CL book
A2: *[Zhe ben shu], Zhangsan mai le. (*OSV)
This CL book Zhangsan buy FP
A3: *Zhangsan [zhe ben shu] mai le. (*SOV)
Zhangsan this CL book buy FP
"Zhangsan bought this book."

Only the answer (56)A1 is acceptable; its word order is unmarked and – as have already seen before- that the Informational Focus in Chinese is realized *in situ*[30]. In

(Huang 1982, Goodall 1987) or as a higher verbal Head by Paul & Whitman (2005). For an analysis of functions and optionality/obligatoriness of *ba* see also Li (2006) and van Bergen (2006).

[29] Shyu (1995) makes a structural distinction between "Focused" OSV and unmarked OSV. The former is in IP-adjoined position, while the latter occupies the Spec, TopicP. I do not agree with this proposal, but, as I have shown, I propose that every kind of Topic in the CP area can optionally have a contrastive reading.

[30] A reviewer suggests that we could consider the new informational focus object as not located *in situ* position, but moved up to a focus projection of the low periphery. As a consequence, in order to obtain the surface order SVO, we should argue for the subsequent remnant movement of the VP containing the verb and the trace of the object. The landing site position of the of the VP should be the topic position higher than the focus in the low periphery. In the case of the object marked with lian, the remnant

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

contrast, neither (56)A2 nor (56)A3 is a proper answer. The former displays an element in sentence-initial position that cannot function as an Informational Focus, the latter is a case of Object preposing, which cannot be used as an Informational Focus[31] either.

2. Bare preposed Object in the IP area is not a Contrastive Focus. Considering that the bare preposed Object is pragmatically/semantically defined as a Focus-Topic, i.e. a Topic with a Contrastive reading, the next test aims at checking if it can be used as a Contrastive Focus. With Contrastive Focus I mean a stressed item that makes a correction to an information/assertion[32].

(57) Q: Zhangsan mai le zhe zhang chuang ma?
Zhangsan buy PERF this CL bed FP
"Zhangsan bought this bed?" (for his new room?)
A1: Bu shi, Zhangsan mai le ZHE ZHANG ZHUOZI.(Focus *in situ*)
Not be Zhangsan buy PERF this CL table
A2: * Bu shi, ZHE ZHANG ZHUOZI Zhangsan mai le. (*OSV)
Not be this CL table Zhangsan buy FP
A3: * Bu shi, Zhangsan ZHE ZHANG ZHUOZI mai le. (*SOV)
Not be Zhangsan this CL table buy FP
"No, Zhangsan bought this table!"

Compare (57) with Italian sentences:

(58) Q: Per la sua nuova camera, Gianni ha comprato il letto?
For the his new room Gianni has bought the bed
"For his new room, did Gianni buy the bed?"

A: No, Gianni ha comprato IL TAVOLO! (Focus *in situ*)
No Gianni has bought the table
"No, Gianni bought THE TABLE!"
A1: No, IL TAVOLO Gianni ha comprato. (**O**SV)
No the table Gianni has bought
"No, THE TABLE Gianni bought."

Chinese SOV cannot be defined as a Contrastive Focus since it cannot be used as a correction, even if it bears a sort of "Focus" stress.

---

movement does not take place, yielding the surface order S lian+XP V. It is an interesting idea which requires further work.

[31] Notice that OSV, generally being a Topic without a special stress, should be possible in an answer to a question in which it has been previously mentioned, while in this case SOV is infelicitous:
(i) Q: Shei mai le zhe ben shu?
Who buy PERF this CL book
"Who bought this book?
A1: [Zhe ben shu], Zhangsan mai le.
This CL book Zhangsan buy FP
A2:?? Zhangsan [zhe ben shu] mai le.
Zhangsan this CL book buy FP
"As for this book, Zhangsan bought."
In (A1) *zhe ben shu* "this book" is in an external Topic position and the sentence stress has to be on the Subject *Zhangsan*, since it is the Informational Focus of the clause. In (A2) the preposed Object needs a contrastive reading that in this case is infelicitous.

[32] In Chinese the Contrastive Focus cannot (overtly) move up to the Left Periphery, and it is always *in situ* (see Gao 1994, Badan 2007, Badan & Del Gobbo in press).

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

In summary, we can consider the preposed Object as neither an Info Focus nor a Contrastive Focus.

I noticed that, in every proposal regarding the contrastive stress given to the SOV, it is implied that the sentences in which such SOV appears always require a contrasted context of some sort. I would say that the SOV must be in comparison with two or more items of a set, as a contrasted element in a list. This kind of Topic appearing in analogous contexts in Italian is called List Interpretation Topic by Benincà & Poletto (2004), and more traditionally, Contrastive Topic.

When SOV appears in a simple sentence, this is interpreted as an "open sentence", i.e. a sentence that implies a conjunction or a contrast, either overtly expressed or not.

(59) Ta yingwen bao kan de dong, danshi dewen bao kan bu dong[33].
He English newspaper read be-able understand but German newspaper read not understand
"He can read English newspapers, not the German ones."

(60) Wo zhe pian lunwen xihuan *(na pian lunwen bu xihuan). (Tsai 1994: 32)
I this CL paper like that CL paper not like
"This paper, I like (but that paper I don't)."

Compare OSV with SOV: (61)a with the external Object is felicitous on its own, while the simple sentence (61)b containing a SOV cannot be pronounced out of the blue, but it requires a contrastive context or a conjunction (for instance that one in brackets).

(61) a. Yu a, Zhangsan gan chi. (Shyu 2001: 43-44) (OSV)
fish TOP Zhangsan dare eat
"As for fish, Zhangsan dares to eat."
b. Zhangsan [yu] gan chi, ([niurou] bu gan chi). (SOV)
Zhangsan fish dare eat beef not dare eat
"Zhangsan dares to eat fish, but wouldn't dare to eat beef."

Ernst & Wang (1995: 22) point out that (62)a requires a strong stress on the SOV or the use of the parenthesized clause. On the contrary, (62)b does not need any special stress on the SOV or any kind of contrast in order to be grammatical.

(62) a. Wo [jiu] he (kele bu he). (Ernst & Wang 1995: 22)
I liquor drink Coke not drink
"Liquor I drink (but Coke I don't drink)."
b. [Jiu], wo he.
Liquor I drink
"(As for) liquor, I drink."

Other examples are from Shyu (2001): (63)a with an intonationally unmarked external Topic is perfectly grammatical; on the contrary, (63)b is infelicitous if uttered

[33] From Abbiati (1998: 164 slightly modified).

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

out of the blue, but it is improved when uttered in a contrastive context: *yidaliwen* "Italian" is compared with *ladinwen* "Latin"[34].

(63) a. [Yidaliwen], geju yanyuan zhidao. (Shyu 2001: 40)
Italian opera performer know
"Italian, opera performers know."
b. # Geju yanyuan [yidaliwen] zhidao
opera performer Italian know
"Opera performers Italian, know."
c. Geju yanyuan [yidaliwen] zhidao, (danshi) [ladinwen] jiu bu dong le
opera performer Italian know but Latin then not understand FP
"Opera performers know Italian, but they don't understand Latin."

Actually, it is possible that a SOV can appear in a sentence without any strong stress, but in that case an emphatic element is obligatorily required, for instance the negation *bu* "not" or the adverb *ye* "also" (Ernst & Wang 1995):

(64) Wo [jiu] bu he le[35]. (Ernst & Wang 1995: 1)
I liquor not drink FP
"I won't drink liquor any more."

(65) Wo wenti hai mei xiangqing chu lai, bu neng wen ni. (Shyu 2001: 30)
I question still not think go-out come not can ask you
"I haven't come up with questions, so I cannot ask you."

Moreover, Ting (1995) points out that Focus interpretation of the SOV is not the only interpretation available, if there is a "real Focus present in the sentence":

(66) Q: Zhangsan zui xihuan zai nali chi pingguo? (Ting 1995: 5)
Zhangsan most like at where eat apple
"Where does Zhangsan like to eat apples most?"
A: Zhangsan [pingguo] zui xihuan ZAI CHUANG SHANG chi.
Zhangsan apple most like at bed on eat
"Zhansgsan as for apples likes to eat AT BED most."

In this case the Focus in the clause is *zai chuanshang* "at bed", which constitutes the Info Focus (the answer to the *wh*- question), while the SOV is simply a piece of old information, already mentioned in the question.

The last case in which SOV seems to lose its strong stress is when it co-occurs with the *lian*+XP:

(67) Zhangsan [zhe ge tang] lian (gei) wo de xiaohaizi dou song le…
Zhangsan this CL sweet even (to) I DE child all give FP
"Zhangsan gave this sweet even to my child

[34] Shyu (2001), following Kratzer's (1989) distinction between "stage level" predicate, which expresses a specific situation or event, from "individual level" predicate (generic sentences), claims that SOV order can appear in "individual level" clause only when the sentence has contrasting function.
[35] As a reviewer suggested to me, the negation by itself implies a sort of contrast.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

In this sentence my Chinese informants point out that the main stress is always on the XP following *lian* and not on the preposed Object[36].

Many linguists (Tsao 1977; Qu 1994; Shyu 1995) noted that two [+animate] NPs can switch their Theta-roles: [NP1 NP2 V]. In this case it is natural to interpret NP2 as the Subject and NP1 as the Topic. But if NP2 is uttered with a contrastive stress, NP1 functions as the Subject and the NP2 as the Object.

(68) Ta [Zhang xiaojie]$_i$ bu xihuan t_i. (Huang, A. Li & Y. Li forthcoming: 18)
he Zhang miss not like
"Miss Zhang does not like him."
?? "He does not like Miss Zhang."

The reading is clearer with a clause highlighting the contrastive use of the preposed Object:

(69) Q: Ta hui zhui Zhang xiaojie ma? (Huang, A. Li & Y. Li forth.: 19)
he will court Zhang Miss Q
"Will he court Miss Zhang?"
A: Ta [Zhang xiaojie]$_i$ bu xiang zhui e_i, [Li xiaojie]$_j$ cai hui zhui e_j
he Zhang Miss not want court Li Miss only will court
"He does not want to court Miss Zhang; (he) only will court Miss Li."

Furthermore, consider a typical "Aboutness Topic" in the CP area like the following:

(70) a. [Zoumingqu], Zhangsan xihuan tan, dajia ye xihuan ting. (Ting 1995:3)
Sonata Zhangsan like play everyone also like listen
"As for sonatas, Zhangsan likes to play them and everyone also likes to listen to them."

b. # Zhangsan [zoumingqu] xihuan tan, (dajia ye xihuan ting).
Zhangsan sonata like play (everyone also like listen)
Lit.: # "Zhangsan, sonatas, likes to play them and everyone also likes to listen to them."

A similar interpretation, i.e. as an "Aboutness Topic" for SOV is not possible. This is further evidence showing that SOV Object is a Topic with a contrastive reading. After the considerations above, I conclude that the SOV occupies a Contrastive Topic position. I also conclude that the Low Periphery in Chinese disposes of only one Topic position, with a Contrastive interpretation. Differently from the CP area, where any kind of Topic may be contrastively stressed, within the IP there is a dedicated position yielding contrastive interpretation (see Badan 2007). With the evidence that in Chinese the landing site of the bare preposed Object within IP is a Contrastive Topic Projection, I have argued that the Object moves up to check its Topic property, in a Spec-Head agreement configuration.

[36] *lian* functions like a Focus stress for the XP that it selects. For this reason, when it co-occurs with another item, it always gets the Focus accent (see Badan 2007).

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

6. Conclusions

In this paper I have applied Belletti's (2001, 2004) proposal for the existence of a Low Periphery. Following Paul (2005), I have shown that Chinese also shows a Low Periphery consisting of two kind of Functional Projections, occupied by the bare preposed Object (SOV) and the *lian*+XP. Finally I have concentrated on the SOV position. Contrary to traditional analyses, I have demonstrated that SOV is not a Focus syntactically speaking, but a Topic that gets Focus stress. I have argued that it can be defined as a Contrastive Topic.

References

Abbiati, M. (1998) *Grammatica di Cinese Moderno*. Venezia: Cafoscarina.

Antinucci, F. & G. Cinque (1977) Sull'ordine delle parole in italiano: l'emarginazione. In Studi di Grammatica Italiana 6: 121-146.

Badan, L. (2007) *High and Low Periphery: a Comparison between Italian and Chinese*. PhD Dissertation, Universita` degli Studi di Padova.

Badan, L. & F. Del Gobbo (in press) On the Syntax of Topic and Focus in Chinese. In Benincà P. & Munaro N. (eds.), *Mapping the left periphery*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.

Belletti, A. (1990) *Generalized verb movement*. Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier.

Belletti, A. (1999) Italian/Romance clitics: Structure and derivation. In Van Riemsdijk, H. (ed.), *Clitics in the Languages of Europe*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter: 543-580.

Belletti, A. (2001) "Inversion" as Focalization. In Hulk A. & Pollock J.Y. (eds.), *Inversion in Romance and the theory of Universal Grammar*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.

Belletti, A. (2004) Aspects of the low IP area. In Rizzi L. (ed.), *The Structure of IP and CP. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures, vol. 2*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.

Belletti, A. ed. (2004) *Structures and Beyond. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures, vol 3*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Belletti, A. & U. Shlonsky (1995) The Order of Verbal Complements. A Comparative Study. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 13: 489-526.

Benincà, P. (2001) The position of Topic and Focus in the left periphery. In Cinque G. & Salvi G. (eds.), *Current Studies in Italian Syntax. Essays Offered to Lorenzo Renzi,* Amsterdam: Elsevier-North Holland: 39-64.

Benincà, P. & C. Poletto (2004) Topic, Focus and V2: Defining the CP sublayers. In Rizzi L. (ed.), *The Structure of CP and IP. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*, *vol. 2*, New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press: 52-75.

van Bergen, G. (2006) *To BA or not to BA. Differential Object Marking in Chinese*. MA Thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen.

Calabrese, A. (1992) Some Remarks on Focus and Logical Structures in Italian. *Harvard Working Papers in Linguistics* 1: 19-27.

Cecchetto, C. (1999) A comparative analysis of left and right dislocation in Romance. *Studia Linguistica* 53, 1: 40-67.

Cheng, L.-S. L. & L.J. Downing (2007) Phonology and Syntax at the Left Edge in Zulu. Paper presented at the *What`s the TOPIC?-Workshop*, Centre for Language Studies (CLS), 23-24.I, Radboud University Nijmegen.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

Chomsky, N. (2000) Minimalist Inquiries: The Framework. In Martin R., Michaels D., & Uriagereka J. (eds.), *Step by Step*. *Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honour of H. Lasnik*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 89-155.

Cinque, G. (1999) *Adverbs and Functional Heads. A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ernst, T. (1998) Case and parameterization of scope ambiguities. *Natural Languages and Linguistic Theory* 16.1: 101-148.

Ernst, T. & C. Wang (1995) Object Preposing in Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 4, 3: 235-260.

Fu, J. (1994) SOV order in Chinese and IP specifier. Paper presented at the *6th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, University of Southern California.

Gao, Q. (1994) Focus Criterion: Evidence from Chinese. *Proceedings of the 6th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, University of Southern California.

Goodall, G. (1987) On the argument structure and L-marking with Mandarin Chinese *ba*. In McDonough J. & Plunkett B. (eds.), *Proceedings of NELS 17*, Amherst, MA: GSLA: 232-242.

Hashimoto, A. (1971), Mandarin Syntactic Structures. *Unicorn* 5.

Hole, D. (2004) *Focus and background marking in Mandarin Chinese: System and theory behind cai, jiu, dou and ye*. London-New York: Routledge Curzon.

Huang, C.-T. J. (1982) *Logical relations in Chinese and the theory of grammar*. PhD Dissertation, MIT. Published by Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, in 1989.

Huang, C.-T. J., A. Li & Y. Li (forthcoming) *The Syntax of Chinese*. Cambridge University Press.

Jayaseelan, K. (2001) IP-internal Topic and Focus Phrases. *Studia Linguistica*, 55, 1: 39-75.

Kayne, R. (1984) *Connectedness and binary branching*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Koopman, H. & D. Sportiche (1990) *The Position of Subject*. Ms., UCLA.

Kratzer, A. (1989) Stage-Level and Individual-Level Predicates. In *Papers on Quantification*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts.

Kuroda, S.-Y. (1988) Whether We Agree or Not: A Comparative Syntax of English and Japanese. In Poser W.J. (ed.), *Japanese Syntax*, Standford: CSLI.

Li, Y.-H. A. (2001) The ba-construction. Ms, http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/eacl/chinling/audreyli.htm.

Li, Y.-H. A. (2006) Chinese *Ba*. In Everaert M. & van Riemsdijk H. (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax, vol.1*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Lin, J. (1992) The syntax of *zenmeyang* "how" and *weishenme* "why" in Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 1: 293-331.

Lu, H.-C. (1994) Second Preverbal NPs in Chinese. *Proceeding of the 6th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, University of Southern California.

Paris, M.-C. (1979) Some aspects of the syntax and semantics of the *lian...ye/dou* costruction in Mandarin. *Cahiers de linguistique – Asie orientale* 5: 47-70.

Paris, M.-C. (1998) Focus Operators and Types of Predication in Mandarin. *Cahiers de Linguistique-Asie Orientale* 27, 2 : 139-159.

Paris, M.-C. (1999) Ordre des mots, topique et focus en chinois contemporain. In Guimier C. (ed.), *La thématisation dans les langues. Actes du Colloque de Caen, 9/11-10-1997*.

Paul, W. (2002) Sentence-internal topics in Mandarin Chinese: the case of object preposing. *Language and Linguistics* 3-4: 695-714.

Paul, W. (2005) Low IP and left periphery in Mandarin Chinese. *Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes* 33: 111-134.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)

Paul, W. (2006) *What the topic is (not) about: the Case of Mandarin Chinese*. Ms., CRLAO, EHESS, Paris.

Paul, W. & J. Whitman (2001) The complement structure of *shi…de* clefts in Mandarin Chinese. Paper presented at the *IACL-10/NAACL-13*, 22-24.VI, University of California, Irvine.

Poletto, C. (2006) Parallel Phases: a study on the high and low left periphery of Old Italian. In Frascarelli M. (ed.), *Phases of Interpretation*, *Studies in Generative Grammar* 91, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter: 261-294.

Qu, Y. (1994) *Object Noun Phrase Dislocation in Mandarin Chinese*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia.

Rizzi, L. (1997) The fine structure of the left periphery. In Haegeman L. (ed.), *Elements of Grammar. Handbook of Generative Syntax*, Dordrecht: Kluwer: 281-337.

Shyu, S. (1995) *The Syntax of Focus and Topic in Mandarin Chinese*. PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California.

Shyu, S. (2001) Remarks on Object Movement in Mandarin SOV Order. *Language and Linguistics* 2, 1: 93-124.

Shyu, S. (2004) (A)symmetries between Mandarin Chinese *Lian-dou* and *Shenzhi*. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 32, 1: 71-128.

Sportiche, D. (1995) French Predicate Clitics and Clause Structure. In Cardinaletti A. & M.T.Guasti (eds.), *Small Clauses, Syntax and Semantics vol.28*, 287-324.

Starke, M. (1995) On the Format of Small Clauses. In Cardinaletti A. & M.T.Guasti (eds.), *Small Clauses, Syntax and Semantics vol.28*, 237-69.

Tang, C.-C. J. (1990) *Chinese Phrase Structure and the extended X-bar Theory.* PhD Dissertation, Cornell University.

Ting, J. (1995) Deriving the secondary topic construction in Mandarin Chinese. *Proceedings of the 7th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, University of Southern California: GSIL: 289-302.

Tsai, W.-T. D. (1994) *On Economizing the theory of A-bar dependencies*. PhD Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.

Tsao, F. (1977) *A functional study of topic in Chinese: the first step toward discourse analysis*. PhD Dissertation USC, Los Angeles, California.

Travis, L. (1984) *Parameters and Effects of Word Order Variation*. PhD Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.

Xu L. & D. T. Langendoen (1985) Topic Structures in Chinese. *Language* 61: 1, 1-27.

Zhang, N. (1996) Three types of Object Shift in Mandarin Chinese. *Proceeding of the 8th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: 413-425.

BDD-A22676 © 2008 Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Cognitivi sul Linguaggio
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:49:13 UTC)