While English sentences are centred around the subject, Chinese sentences are argued to focus more on the topic (thematic meaning) because of their differences in the strategies of constructing sentences.

- Common to omit the subject/object or change the word order without altering its meaning in Chinese. For instance, an SVO structure can be turned into an OSV structure, which results in a different word order (see figure 1).
- Sentence structure in Chinese are more flexible than in English, which may suggest different mechanisms for processing and representing syntactic structure between the two languages, as in topic-prominent and subject-prominent.

Several topic-prominent features (e.g., subject omission) are suggested to be more common in Chinese than English. However, these suggestions are based on subjectively selected sentence examples, which may not represent how these features are objectively distributed in contemporary Chinese.

**Methods & Results**

- The current study examined the distributions of four key topic-prominent features in articles taught in textbooks (grade 7-12) in mainland China. The features included subject switching (SW; switching subjects in a sentence), double subject (DS; two consecutive subjects), flexible passive construction (FPC; passives without a be-passive structure), and subject omission (SO).
- Preliminary analyses show that SW, FPC, and SO are more common in sentences extracted from original Chinese articles (N=663; SW:33%, FPC:8.3%, SO:25.3%) than in Chinese articles translated from English (N=358; SW:18.2%, FPC:2.2%, SO:5%) and some of their source English articles (N=134; SW:13.5%, FPC:0%, SO:3.1%). DS was found to be uncommon across all article types.

**Discussion**

- These results confirm that some but not all topic-prominent features are differentially distributed in Chinese vs. English, demonstrating that objective analysis of feature distributions in corpuses can make meaningful contributions to the debate.
- Sentences on Weibo (Chinese social media) and Twitter will be scraped to conduct the analysis like above, which can suggest how speakers of mandarin and English are actually using these two languages now.
- Further researches will then focus on how these different feature distributions are represented in the brain from different aspects.

**References**