

Word Order in Taiwanese Based on Empirical Perspectives*

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Detailed investigation of materials from primary sources and comparison of Mandarin stories and their Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM) counterparts show that SVO is the predominant word order in TSM. Cross-linguistic differences in word order cannot be captured by parameterization of verb movement. Instead, this work explores factors contributing to TSM being perceived as SOV or weakly SVO, including lexical variation, verb compounding possibilities, and constraints on the “disposal” construction. Some of such factors may be affected by frequency of use and regional, generational and individual variations.

Key words: word order, SVO vs. SOV, micro-parameter, compound verb, disposal construction

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ordering of subjects (S), verbs (V), objects (O) in clauses has been an important issue in typological studies, as the basic word order of a language, such as SVO or SOV, can be correlated with many other properties in the language (see the many works on typological studies such as Greenberg 1963; Comrie 1981; Croft 2003; Dryer 1992, 2018; Hawkins 1983; Haspelmath 2001). Accurately determining the basic word order of a language is the cornerstone of generalizations regarding typological universals or tendencies. The insight of typological universals or tendencies can be captured in an X'-theoretic approach to word order in generative grammar: a language can be consistently head-final or head-initial (X being the head of a phrase XP, which can be of any lexical category) - the head parameter. Pursuing language universals further; works such as Kayne (1994, 2005), Takano (1996), Cinque (2013, 2017, 2020), among many others, argue that the same basic word order or a harmonious word order across categories can be adopted for all languages and different applications of head or phrasal movement create the varieties of options in individual languages.

In the vast studies on typological universals or universal grammar, Chinese has been a challenge, because it has a mixture of SVO and SOV properties (see, for instance, Huang 1982; Li 1985, 1990). Paul (2015) argues that non-harmonious word order allowing both head-final and head-initial ordering must be recognized. Empirical support for relevant claims often comes from dialectal word order studies, as such studies can shed light on possible word order changes, range of variation, and factors contributing to variation, in addition to providing comparative case studies for word order typologies. Within the Chinese language varieties, Liu's (2001, 2003) typological studies led him to claim that Cantonese is strongly SVO, Mandarin, mildly SVO, and Min and Wu, weakly SVO. In generative studies using the notion of "parameter" to account

for cross-linguistic differences, cross-dialectal variation in word order has been shown to be a fertile area in identifying the parametric properties or operations within a language family (e.g., Kayne 2005; Tang 2006; Huang 2014; among others). The generalization reached is that TSM is more analytic than Mandarin, which in turn is more analytic than Cantonese (the notion of analyticity is tied to the presence vs. absence of movement to combine lexical items). However, different observations and claims have also been made in the literature. Yiu's (2014) investigation of word order in constructions containing locative complements in Cantonese, Eastern Min Fuqing, and Southern Min Hui'an, Chao'an led her to conclude that Min should be like Cantonese in being SVO.

This work collects and analyzes data from a variety of sources to show that both SVO and SOV are possible in Mandarin, Cantonese, and TSM, regardless of the definiteness of the object. That is, grammar must be able to generate both orders in these dialects. In some cases, a word order is grammatical but not preferred due to factors such as the intended information structure. There are also a few cases disallowing post-verbal objects in TSM, as noted in the literature (e.g., Teng 1995; Pang 2014; among others) and confirmed with native speakers. Defining the grammaticality boundary helps us reach a more adequate grammatical analysis and better understanding of the role of non-syntactic factors affecting word order.

The study on the issue of preference will lead us to conclude that TSM actually is primarily SVO according to the data collected from searchable social media (including six video clips by a native TSM speaker highly respected for his competence in TSM and eight video clips of interviews and folktale from YouTube or broadcasting programs) and from direct comparison of ordering through TSM-Mandarin translation works. However, factors such as (i) lexical variation, (ii) the fewer compounding or complex verb formation cases in TSM than in Mandarin, and (iii) the different constraints on the use of the “disposal”

construction, may have contributed to the perception that TSM appears to be weakly SVO, i.e., favoring SOV, in contrast to Cantonese, strongly SVO, and Mandarin, mildly SVO, although the perception is not supported by the numbers uncovered by our study showing SVO as dominant in TSM.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the contradictory claims made in the literature and their empirical bases. Section 3 tackles the conflict and establishes the claim that TSM not only allows SVO but actually prefers SVO, according to detailed studies of sentence types and tokens in a variety of texts. Section 4 presents our extensive empirical studies, arguing that SOV cannot be the basic word order. Section 5 discusses possible factors contributing to the perception that TSM appears to be weakly SVO. Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature review

This section briefly describes the contradictory word order claims in the literature and their empirical bases.

2.1 Liu (2001, 2003): TSM as OV/weakly SVO

From the typological perspective, Liu (2001, 2003, also see the many references cited in these works) conducted detailed studies of word order in a good number of dialects in the Chinese language family. He observes that the SOV word order is preferred over SVO in some varieties of Chinese and reached the following conclusion: Cantonese is strongly SVO, Mandarin, mildly SVO, and Min and Wu, weakly SVO (Northern and Southern Wu further distinguished). Nonetheless, Liu also notes that the O in SOV constructions in these dialects is subject to constraints on animacy and definiteness, indicating that such a pre-verbal object is a secondary topic, which is defined as the topic phrase appearing pre-verbally after the subject of a clause. Accordingly, Liu concludes

that the SOV order in these dialects does not indicate that these language varieties have already become the SOV type. Rather, they have active secondary topics in the post-subject position.

In addition, Liu (2001) further describes the characteristics of the strong SVO type (Cantonese) as in (1). The weak SVO type would have the opposite properties.

- (1) i. under-development of the disposal *ba* construction;
 ii. the locative phrase following the motion verb;
 iii. the comparative standard appearing after the adjective:
 subject + adjective + *guo* ‘pass’ + comparative standard

2.2 Tang (2006) and Huang (2014): V-movement and parameters

Tang (2006) explores further and formalizes Liu’s observations. He proposes that a secondary topic is base-generated in a low position - in the Specifier position of the lowest VP. To capture cross-dialectal variation in word order, he suggests that verb movement takes place in some dialects but not in some others and that the height of verb movement may differ. That is, verbs can move to different projections and the height of verb movement determines different types of languages. In Min, verb movement does not apply, keeping the base-generated SOV order. Mandarin moves its verb to the *v* position dominating the VP containing the object. Hence, the V-movement crosses the object, deriving the SVO word order. Cantonese moves its verb further up to a higher functional projection, allowing more types of verbal suffixes, reflecting the fact that Cantonese has more verbal suffixes other than aspectual ones like in Mandarin, such as those meaning ‘all’, ‘only’, ‘should’, etc.

Huang (2014) relates the cross-dialectal variation in word order to a micro-parametric approach to language differences. Specifically, Huang focuses

on the distribution of definite objects. He marks the following contrasts (Huang 2014: 39) - Cantonese allows SVO; TSM, SOV; and Mandarin, both:

(2) a. 我唔鍾意本書。

Ngo m jungyi bun syu. (Cantonese)

I not like CL book

'I don't like this book.'

b. 我本書唔鍾意。

??Ngo bun syu m jungyi.

I CL book not like

(3) a. 我不喜歡這本書。

Wo bu xihuan zhe ben shu. (Mandarin)

I not like this CL book

'I don't like this book.'

b. 我這本書不喜歡。

Wo zhe ben shu bu xihuan.

I this CL book not like

'I don't like this book.'

(4) a. ??我看無這本冊。

??Gua khuann bo tsit pun tsheh. (TSM)

I read not this CL book

'I can't read this book.'

b. 我這本冊看無。

Gua tsit pun tsheh khuann bo.¹

I this CL book read not

‘I can’t read this book.’

In the study of micro-parameters to capture cross-linguistic variation, parameterization triggers have generally been attributed to feature specifications of lexical items, specifically functional heads - the line of research led by Borer (1984) and Chomsky (1995) - the “Borer-Chomsky conjecture” as termed by Baker (2008).² Along this line of research, Huang proposes that the word order differences illustrated in (2)-(4) can be captured by the postulation of a strong feature in the head of a higher functional projection dominating the VP. The presence of a strong feature in a higher functional head requires the movement of the lower verb to check off the strong feature. The absence of such a strong feature would disallow verbs to be raised to the higher functional projection. Cantonese has a functional head specified as having a strong feature requiring V-movement. Assuming that an indefinite object is base-generated in the complement of V position but a definite object is base-generated in the Specifier

¹ The Romanization symbols in these cited examples are adjusted to conform to the system used in this paper - the one adopted in the online dictionary <https://itaigi.tw>. In addition, we add ’ to separate the two syllables in bi-syllabic words. For abbreviations in the gloss, they are: BA - the marker *ba* indicating the disposal construction in Mandarin (see section 5.3); KA - the disposal *ka* construction in TSM (see section 5.3); CL - classifier; DE - the grammatical marker *de* in noun phrases relating an N(P) to other phrases in a noun phrase; EXP - the experiential aspect marker; LE - sentence-final *le* as an inchoative or aspectual marker. When *le* follows a verb in non-clause final position, it is glossed as PERF, perfective aspect; NEG - negation; PREP - preposition; Q - question marker; SFP - sentence-final particle; PRT - particle; LNK - linker.

² Baker (2008) uses the term “The Borer-Chomsky Conjecture”, defined as “All parameters of variation are attributable to differences in the features of particular items (e.g., the functional heads) in the lexicon.” (his (1)).

of VP position (Huang 1994a, 1994b; Cheng et al. 1997), V-movement obligatorily applies and crosses a definite object in the Spec of VP in Cantonese, creating the [V + definite object] word order. TSM is specified as having a weak feature (or not having a strong feature), failing to trigger movement and not deriving the SVO word order. Mandarin is optionally specified as having a strong feature on the functional item. V-movement optionally applies, deriving both SVO and SOV word order. Such a movement does not affect the word order of V with an indefinite object, because an indefinite object is generated as complement to V and the word order should be SVO in all these languages.

Huang (2014) uses the word order variation noted in (2)-(4) as a case demonstrating the working of a micro-parameter, converging with other micro-parameters to a macro-parameter of analyticity vs. syntheticity - that Cantonese is less analytic than Mandarin, which in turn is less analytic than TSM.

2.3 Yiu (2014): Empirical study for TSM as SVO

Yiu (2014) is concerned that Liu's dialectal word order classification was partially based on second-hand materials. First-hand field work would provide a better understanding of the data. She investigated Wu (represented by Shanghainese), Cantonese (spoken in Hong Kong), as well as three varieties of Min, of which Fuqing 福清 belongs to Eastern Min spoken in Fujian 福建, Hui'an 惠安, a Southern Min dialect spoken in Fujian, and Chao'an 潮安, a Southern Min dialect spoken in Guangdong 廣東. She chose the Hui'an variety of Southern Min to contrast with the Chao'an variety of Southern Min in order to determine if the facts observed were influenced by Cantonese or not, as Southern Min spoken in Guangdong might be under the strong influence of Cantonese. Importantly, the conclusion of her field investigation is that the above-mentioned Min varieties, despite small differences among them, all bear closer similarity to

Cantonese, regardless of their locations.

The constructions Yiu investigated were those involving directional verbs with locative objects, and with objects plus simple or compound directional complements, summarized in the following table (5), with the pattern in Mandarin examples.³

(5)

	Wu 吳	Fuqing 福清	Hui'an 惠安	Chao'an 潮安	Cantonese 廣東
A: Directional verbs					
Self-agentive motion events					
1. V _{ND} + Loc 下樓 xia-lou down-stair 'go down stairs'	?	√	√	√	√
2. V _D + Loc 來學校 lai xuexiao come school 'come to school'	*	√	√	√	√

³ The diacritics in the table used by Yiu, D, ND, are to indicate whether the location of the speaker is involved, as explained in her footnote 12, p. 545: "The orientation point of a non-deictic directional verb does not involve the location of the speaker, whereas that of a deictic directional verb in general does, except for cases when the subject is the speaker, when the location of the addressee becomes the orientation point."

3. to + Loc + V _D 到學校來 dao xuexiao lai to school come ‘come to school’	√	√	√	*	*
B: Directional verbs Agentive motion events					
4. V _{ND} + O 落包糖在個杯 Luo bao tang zai ge bei. fall bag sugar at CL cup ‘put sugar into a cup’	*	*	√	√	√
C: Simple directional complements Self-agentive motion events					
5. V + C _{ND} + Loc 走下樓下 zuo xia luo xia walk down stair down ‘walk downstairs’	?	√	√	√	√
6. V + C _D + Loc 走來學校 zou lai xuexiao walk come school ‘walk to school (toward the speaker)’	*	√	√	√	√

7. V + to + Loc + C _D 走到學校來 zou dao xuexiao lai walk to school come ‘walk to school (toward the speaker)’	√	√	√	*	*
D: Simple directional complements Agentive motion events					
8. V + C _{ND} + O 踢進兩個球 ti-jin liang-ge qiu kick-enter two-CL ball ‘kick in two balls’	√	√	√	√	√
9. V + C _D + O 寄來一封信 ji-lai yi-feng xin mail-come one-CL letter ‘mail in a letter (toward the speaker)’	√	?	?	?	?
10. V + O + C _D 寄一封信來 ji yi-feng xin lai mail one-CL letter come ‘mail in a letter (toward the speaker)’	√	√	√	√	√

E: Compound directional complements					
Self-agentive motion events					
11. V + C _{ND} + Loc + C _D 爬上山頂去 pa-shang shan-ding qu climb-up hill-top go ‘climb up to the hill-top (away from the speaker)’	?	*	*	*	*
12. V + C _{ND} + C _D + Loc 爬上去山頂 pa-shang qu shan-ding climb-up go hill-top ‘climb up to the hill-top (away from the speaker)’	*	√	√	√	√
F: Compound directional complements					
Agentive motion events					
13. V + O + C _{ND} + C _D 踢兩個球進來 ti liang-ge qiu kick two-CL ball jin-lai enter-come ‘kick in two balls (toward the speaker)’	√	√	√	√	√

<p>14. V + C_{ND} + O + C_D 踢進兩個球來 ti-jin liang-ge qiu kick-enter two-CL ball lai come ‘kick in two balls (toward the speaker)’</p>	√	*	*	*	*
<p>15. V+ C_{ND} + C_D + O 踢來兩個球 ti-lai liang-ge qiu kick-come two-CL ball ‘kick two balls (toward the speaker)’</p>	√	√	√	*	*

Comparing TSM and the others in the table above, we can conclude that TSM behaves like Chao’an and Cantonese in all except #15 in the table, which is acceptable in (11c) at least for some TSM native speakers (see section 5.2 later in the text for the variation in compounding possibilities). The following sentences in TSM illustrate the point (The following examples from (6) through (11) correspond to A-F in the table above).

A

(6) a. 你落樓梯，愛注意。 (Type 1)

Li loh lau'thui, ai tsu'i.

you descend stairs, need attention

‘You should pay attention when you walk downstairs.’

b. 伊欲去／來學校。 (Type 2)

I beh khi/lai hak'hau.

he will go/come school

'He is goin/coming to school.'

c. 伊欲到學校去／來。 (Type 3)

*I beh kau hak'hau khi/lai.

he will to school go/come

'He is coming/going to school.'

B

(7) 你應該先落淡薄仔油佇鼎仔，才炒菜。 (Type 4)

Li ying'kai sing loh tam'po'a iu ti tiann'a, tsiah tsha tshai.

you should first put little oil in wok can fry vegetable

'You should first add a little oil to the wok to fry vegetables.'

C

(8) a. 你行落樓跤，愛注意。 (Type 5)

Li kiann loh lau'kha, ai tsu'i.

you walk descend downstairs, need attention

'You should pay attention when you walk downstairs.'

b. 我欲行去學校。 (Type 6)

Gua beh kiann khi hak'hau.

I will walk go school

'I am walking to school.'

c. *我欲行（到）學校去。 (Type 7)

*Gua beh kiann (kau) hak'hau khi.⁴

I will walk to school go

'I am walking to school.'

D

(9) a. 踢入兩個球。 (Type 8)

That lip nng-liap kiu.

kick entert wo-CL ball

'Kick in two balls.'

b. 寄來一張批。 (Type 9)

Kia-lai tsit-tiunn phe.

mail-come one-CL letter

'Mail in a letter (toward the speaker).'

⁴ This sentence is possible when *kau* is interpreted as 'arrive':

(i) 你家已一个人敢有辦法行到學校去。

Li kati tsit-e lang gam u pan'huat kiann kau hak'hau khi.

you self one-CL person Q have ways walk arrive school go

'Can you yourself alone go and arrive at school?'

Considering such an interpretive discrepancy, we notice that when the modal denoting capability like *kam u pan'huat* 'can' in (i) and *e'sai* 'can' in (ii) is used, *kiann-kau* tends to be interpreted as 'walk and arrive', meaning 'entities have the capability of walking and reaching the destination.' In contrast, when the modal denotes intention such as *beh* 'want' in (8c), *kiann-kau* tends to be interpreted as 'walk toward a certain direction, not involving whether the destination is reached or not. Typologically, the second usage is not acceptable in TSM unless *kau* is denoted as 'arrive'.

(ii) 我會使行*（到）學校去。

Gua e'sai kiann *(kau) hak'hau khi.

I can walk to school go

'I am walking to school.'

- c. 寄一張批來。 (Type 10)
Kia tsit-tiunn phe lai.
mail one-CL letter come
'Mail in a letter (toward the speaker).'

E

- (10) a. *爬上厝頂去。 (Type 11)
*Peh tsiunn tshu-ting khi.
climb up house-top go
'Climb up to the roof.'

- b. 爬上去厝頂。 (Type 12)
Peh tsiunn-khi tshu-ting
climb up-go house-top
'Climb up to the roof.'

F

- (11) a. 踢兩粒球入來。 (Type 13)
That nng-liap kiu lip-lai.
kick two-CL ball enter-come
'Kick in two balls.'

- b. *踢入兩粒球來。 (Type 14)
*That-lip nng-liap kiu lai.
kick-enter two-CL ball come
'Kick in two balls.'

- c. 踢來兩粒球。 (Type 15)
That-lai nng-liap kiu.
kick-come two-CL ball
'Kick in two balls.'

The (un)acceptability of these TSM examples patterns like the results of Yiu's study table 7 in p. 560 summarizing the findings in the relevant Min and Yue dialects. That is, we can conclude that TSM is like Cantonese in being SVO, in contrast to the opposite claim by Liu, Tang, and Huang as discussed earlier. Why are there such contradictory observations and claims? To answer the question, we first clarify a few issues regarding the word order facts in TSM.

3. SOV or SVO in TSM? - resolving the conflict

To understand these contrasts and the proposals and ultimately to answer the questions of whether the observed dialectal word order variation is a matter of preference (Liu) or grammatical operations (Tang, Huang) and the question of why contradictory conclusions have been reached by Yiu versus Liu, Tang and Huang, we first present the cases where SOV is allegedly preferred or obligatory as reported in the literature, followed by our own investigation of the relevant data. Our detailed investigation of the data from primary sources will reveal that the SVO order does prominently exist in TSM even when the object is definite. In fact, it far outnumbers the SOV order. That is, the facts will lead us to claim that SOV is neither grammatically required in TSM, nor preferred. In addition, being definite is not the key factor that creates the SOV order in TSM.

3.1 SVO (definite or not) - grammatical in TSM

Based on Li and Wei (2019), this section shows that, in addition to indefinite objects, definite objects occurring post-verbally in TSM - SVO_{DEF}, is well-attested in linguistics literature and TSM writings. To begin with, we randomly take some existing works that have TSM examples and show that their examples actually have the SVO_{DEF} order. For instance, Lin (2001) shows that TSM productively allows locative, temporal, instrument expressions, etc. to serve as non-selected objects of verbs.

- (12) a. 我欲開高速公路。
 Gua beh khui ko'sok-kong'loo.
 I will drive high.speed-way
 'I will drive (on) the freeway.'
- b. 我攏行大路。
 Gua long kiann tua loo.
 I always walk big road
 'I always walk (on) big roads.'

The post-verbal objects in these examples were glossed as definite or generic. Moreover, a demonstrative with a classifier explicitly expressing definiteness, *tsit-tiao* 'this-CL' or *hit-tiao* 'that-CL', can appear as part of the post-verbal object in such examples, making the post-verbal object explicitly definite.

- (13) a. 我欲開彼條高速公路。
 Gua beh khui hit-tiao ko'sok-kong'loo.
 I will drive that-CL high.speed-way
 'I will drive (on) that freeway.'
- b. 我攏行這條大路。
 Gua long kiann tsit-tiao tua loo.
 I always walk this-CL big road
 'I always walk (on) this big road.'

In addition, corpus searches produced many instances of SVO in TSM, even when the O is definite. Below are some examples of transitive verbs taking pronouns and other definite noun phrases as objects post-verbally, or double object verbs with both objects in the post-verbal position.⁵

⁵ The TSM corpus examples in (14) are from Prof. Chinfa Lien's TSM corpus in Tsing Hua

(14) a. 毋准你講這款話。

M-tsun li kong tsit-khuan ue.
not-allow you say this-kind word
'You are not allowed to say this kind of words.'

b. 我有佇廟內共伊點彼个燈矣。

Gua u ti bio-lai ka i tiam hit-e ting a.
I have at temple-inside for him light that-CL light SFP
'I lighted that light for him at the temple.'

c. 誰來教我規矩矣？

Siang lai ka gua kui'ki a?
who come teach me rules SFP
'Who comes to teach me rules?'

d. 你會當送我一項物件。

Li e'tang sang gua tsit-hang mih'kiann.
you can give me one-CL thing
'You can give me one thing.'

Indeed, our corpus search revealed an abundance of examples of the SVO word order in TSM even with the object being definite. The abundant existence of such examples means a definite object can follow a verb grammatically. Therefore, a definite object is not required to precede the verb in TSM.

3.2 Both SVO, SOV grammatical in Cantonese, Mandarin, TSM

The previous section shows that TSM can have SVO word order, not just SOV. In addition, it should be noted that not only Mandarin has both SVO and SOV as grammatical word order, Cantonese, allegedly SVO-only, actually allows

the SOV word order as well - the preposed object is a contrastive focus. In a popular Cantonese language website Cantolounge, <https://cantolounge.com/cantonese-word-order/>, the following example was provided to show that Cantonese word order is flexible (the sentence is part 2 of lesson 7 at around 2:50 mark in the video. The video repeated the subject in the second clause. However, the repetition of the second subject was not liked by all the Cantonese native speakers that we consulted):

(15) 佢乜都唔鍾意，佢廁紙最鍾意。

Keoi mat-dou-m zongji, keoi cizi zeoi zongji.
 he nothing like he tissue most like
 ‘He, nothing likes; he, tissues, most like.’

Tommy Lee (personal communication) gave the following example:

(16) a. 你邊本書唔睇呀？

Nei5 bin1-bun2 syu1 m4 tai2 aa1?
 you which-CL book not read SFP
 ‘Which book didn’t you read?’

b. 我呢本書唔睇囉。

Ngo5 (mai5) ne1-bun2 syu1 m4 tai2 lo1.
 I FOCUS this-CL book not read SFP
 ‘I, this book, didn’t read.’

Lee observes that SOV order is acceptable and that it is more natural if there is some operator/focus scope element in the following VP (e.g. negation/focus maker *mai5*/modals).⁶

⁶ The point is that Cantonese is similar to TSM and Mandarin in regard to the presence of both orders. Moreover, SOV, OSV (OV word order, in contrast to VO) in all these varieties generally carry the additional discourse information such as focus or topic.

(17) 我呢本書唔會再睇㗎喇。

Ngo5 ni1-bun2-syu1 [m4-wui2 zoi3 tai2] gaa3 laa3.

I this-CL-book not-will again read SFP SFP

‘(lit.) I, this book, will not read again.’

(18) a. 佢呢本書咪已經睇過囉。

Keoi5 ni1-bun2-syu1 [mai5 ji5ging1 tai2-gwo3] lo1.

s/he this-CL-book FOC already read-EXP SFP

‘(lit.) She/He, this book, indeed has already read.’

b. 佢呢本書應該已經睇過㗎喇。

Keoi5 ni1-bun2-syu1 [jing3goi1 ji5ging1 tai2gwo3] gaa3 laa3.

s/he this-CL-book should already read-EXP SFP SFP

‘She/He, this book, should have already read.’

The important empirical generalization is that these three language varieties have identical word order possibilities grammatically. Analytically, there should be no requirement of V-movement to apply in order to derive the SVO-only word order, ruling out SOV in Cantonese. Nor can we claim that such an operation is disallowed to apply in TSM in order to derive an obligatory SOV word order. A parameterization distinguishing these language varieties via the application or non-application of V-movement cannot be adopted.

3.3 SVO - preferred in TSM: Taiwanese texts from Lee (2008) and Li and Wei (2019)

We showed in the previous sections that the order of SVO is grammatical and well-attested in TSM, even when the object is definite. The grammar of TSM must be able to generate the SVO order, regardless of the definiteness of objects, and there should be no grammatical requirements on an SOV-only order in this language. A further question that should be raised is whether SOV is the

preferred word order in TSM, as suggested in Liu's works on Min. Again, linguistics literature and writings in TSM show that the SOV word order in TSM is not preferred at all.

There is not a prominent presence of searchable and accessible TSM corpus. Professor Hui-chi Lee of Cheng Kung University in Taiwan conducted a research project funded by the National Science Council in Taiwan in 2006-2007 on Taiwanese word order and focus, with a paper in Lee (2008). She counted the instances for VO and OV in 19 TSM stories. The result was that 2846 instances out of a total of 45113 clauses were OV - 6.31%. The OV constructions include all the cases with the O in pre-verbal position - before or after the subject (OSV, SOV, OV when subject is missing), object of *ka* of the *ka* phrase pre-verbally (*S ka O V*, the so-called disposal construction. See section 5.3). This study did not separate the OSV, OV cases from SOV. The former, OSV and OV, are also often found in Mandarin (and Cantonese).

To identify how word order is actually used in authentic TSM writings, especially in regard to SVO vs. SOV, Li and Wei (2019) examined a TSM textbook compiled by Cheng et al. (2000) for college students. This book is a compilation of original writings, including essays, prose pieces and poems, by native TSM writers. The more colloquial Lesson 2 was used for the study. They went through each clause in the piece and grouped them by their word order and argument structures. Among the 154 clauses in the piece (a clause is defined as having a verbal or adjectival predicate), there are actually only 7 instances of object preposing, creating OV word order. For the others among the 154 clauses in the TSM text examined, 26 have the order SVO with the O being definite, 28 SV clauses with one-argument verbs. There are other V + O order cases that were not included in the 26 SVO count, including 12 cases with the verbs 'have', 'not have', 11 cases with the verb 'be', 11 with '(be) at' (the O being location or time), 5 with 'go/arrive', 14 with clausal complements, and 7 with the verb 'resemble'.

The objects in these cases are either definite or indefinite. Li and Wei (2019) did not include these in their SVO count, because it is harder for these to have the SOV alternative (though not impossible in all these cases). They aimed for a more conservative count - only those SVO cases were counted when they could well have the SOV variety. All the others are SVO with the object being indefinite or generic or fixed V-O expressions that cannot take another object such as *oh-sai-a* ‘study as disciple’.

In summary, these numbers show that, even with the most conservative count, the cases of SVO far out-number the SOV ones in TSM, even when the object is definite. In fact, Li and Wei (2019) could not even find examples in the entire piece demonstrating the word order Subject-Object-Verb except for the few instances with the disposal marker: Subject-Disposal Marker-Object-Verb. Therefore, we cannot even claim that TSM favors the $SO_{DEF}V$ word order, not to mention requiring such an order.

4. Our extensive empirical studies

The empirical data investigated include six video clips by a native TSM speaker highly respected for his competence in TSM in Section 4.1, eight video clips of interviews and folktale from YouTube or broadcasting programs from 2018 to 2020 in Section 4.2, and translations of a story from Mandarin to TSM by 14 TSM native speakers in Section 4.3.

4.1 Contemporary video clips

We further studied data from primary sources on contemporary TSM, using YouTube videos by Mr. Tse Long-Jie (謝龍介), who is a councilman in the Tainan City (Southern part of Taiwan) and who is famous for his Taiwanese language knowledge and skills. He generally speaks TSM, including when being interviewed by media, on talk shows, or in his own video-blogs on YouTube. The

data collected here are transcriptions of his YouTube videos. The TSM data are compared with the Mandarin counterparts to illustrate the problems facing the claims regarding cross-dialectal distinctions. The data reported here are from six video clips, in which Mr. Tse expressed his own thoughts in TSM on various issues in Taiwan. The recording dates and the lengths of the videos are:

(19)	<u>Recording date</u>	<u>Length</u>
	March 6, 2018	26:53 minutes
	April 20, 2018	50:21 minutes
	July 31, 2018	19:04 minutes
	August 21, 2018	30:15 minutes
	Dec. 18, 2018	1 hour and 21:02 minutes
	July 26, 2018	52:08 minutes

We transcribed the sentences in all these clips and counted the number of each sentence type. Of all the sentences, 305 sentences show the order SVO. Among them, like Li and Wei's (2019) study reported in the previous section, we excluded 105 instances involving the verbs 'have', 'not have', 'be', '(be) at' (the O being location or time), 'go/arrive', 'appear', 'resemble', and verbs taking a clausal complement. Accordingly, the most conservative count of SVO order is 200, of which 102 cases are of the order SVO with a definite object and the other 98 cases are SVO with a generic or indefinite object. There are 118 cases with (S)VO order (subject missing), which is listed apart from the SVO group.

(20)

Pattern	SVO	(S)VO	SOV	<i>S ka-O V</i>	<i>S tui-O V</i>	<i>S kap-O V</i>	OSV
Number	200	118	2	55	3	9	25
%	48.5%	28.6%	0.4%	13.3%	0.7%	2.1%	6%

In all these clips, only two cases of SOV are found, copied below. The objects *thoo'thuann* 'coal' 塗炭 and *siau-ue* 'crazy-word' 癡話 are generic. The complex verbs, *nge-sio* 'hard-burn' 硬燒 and *nge-lian* 'hard-practice' 硬練, are of a modifier-modifiee relation; *nge* 'hard' 硬 is an adverb modifying the verb *sio* 'burn' 燒 or *lian* 'practice' 練.

(21) 這兩冬恁就[塗炭]硬燒。

Tsit-nng-tang lin to [thoo'thuann] nge-sio.
this-two-year you then coal hard-burn

'You have to burn coals continuously during these two years.'

(22) 啊伊啊欲攞[癡話]硬練啊。

A i ah beh koh [siau-ue] nge-lian ah.
PRT he PRT want again crazy-word hard-practice SFP

'As to him, if he wants to say crazy words again, ...'

In the dataset, 55 sentences take the [S *ka*-O V] form. Among them, 28 cases are the disposal *ka* construction, which may or may not correspond to the *ba*-structure in Mandarin Chinese. We will return to the *ka/ba* construction in section 5.3. In addition, 6 cases have the *ka* NP as beneficiary, corresponding to *wei* 'for' in Mandarin, replaceable by *the/ui* in TSM; and 21 cases have the *ka* NP as goal (corresponding to *dui* in Mandarin or replaceable by *hiong/tui* 'to' in TSM). They do not have an SVO alternative.⁷

⁷ We conservatively do not include the number of the beneficiary *Ka*-NP in SOV. They are independently included in *Ka*-NP, which is listed to show the productivity of the pattern in TSM. Alternatively, some NPs in the *Ka*-NP can be interpreted as the thematic outer object of the complex verb, like *se-bin* 洗面 'wash-face' in (i) - an outer object of the [V + inner object] complex (see, for instance, Li and Thompson (1981), Huang (2006, 2007), and many other works on *li-he-ci* 'separate-combined-word').

3 cases in the dataset have *tui*, with the *tui* NP as goal, which cannot alternate with *ka*. They can have word-for-word counterparts in Mandarin, without changing word order or the preposition ‘to’. Again, these are not instances of a grammatical verbal object occurring in the preverbal position.

(23) a. 這[對臺灣]無幫忙。

Tse [tui Tai’uan] bo pang’bang.

this to Taiwan has.not help

‘This didn’t help Taiwan.’

b. 少年人[對伊]完全失望啊。

Siau’lian-lang [tui i] uan’tsuan sit’bong ah.

young-person to him completely disappoint SFP

‘He disappointed young generation.’

c. 逐個鄉親[對你]遮看好呢。

Tak’e hiong’tshin [tui li] tsia khuann-ho neh.

every countryman to you such look-good SFP

‘Every countryman considers you to be very promising.’

Additionally, there are 25 cases in the dataset having the order OSV, with the object being topicalized. 3 examples among them are listed below.

(24) a. [國防的經費]伊來擴張。

[Kok’hong e king’hui] i lai khok’tiong.

national.force LNK expense he come expand

‘He expanded the expense of national force.’

(i) 人[ka 咱]洗面。

Lang ka-lan se-bin.

people KA-us wash-face

‘(lit.) People wash face for us.’

- b. [彼款報告]我足 gâu 寫。
 [Hit khuan po'ko] gua tsiok gau sia.
 that kind report I very excel write
 'I am very good at writing that kind of report.'
- c. [做小生理的]你共問一下。
 [Tso sio sing'li e] li ka mng tsit'e.
 do small business LNK you KA ask try
 'You can try to ask those who do small businesses.'

Briefly summarizing, the result of this contemporary video clip study confirms the conclusion from the textbook study in Li and Wei (2019). It shows again that even the most conservative count reveals that the SVO cases far out-number the SOV ones, even when the object is definite. The number of the instances that clearly show the order of Subject + Object + Verb is tiny, to the point of being negligible. This raises the question of whether there are meaningful differences between TSM and Mandarin in word order preferences.

4.2 More empirical corpus studies

We collect more 8 colloquial clips from social media. All of them are YouTube or broadcasting programs from 2018 to 2020, with one host and one or two guests, discussing issues relating to 4 travelling clips in Taiwan, 1 on endangered languages in Taiwan, 1 on how to cope with fire, 1 about folklore or folktale in Taiwan, and 1 about new developments of Taiwanese social media. Each clip is about 15-20 mins in length, as below.

- (25) a. A travel clip from 00:13-00:26 for 13 minutes with three interlocutors.
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=250641906495768>

- b. A travel clip from 00:27-00:40 for 13 minutes with five interlocutors.
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=402257821031271>
- c. A travel clip about 9 minutes two interlocutors about picking trash and street painter for 17 minutes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRbTZOeB7IM>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5i6tFj5IQ8g>
- d. A travel clip regarding an old city in Taipei for 14 minutes with two interlocutors.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toZNVuiN-mQ&t=1s>
- e. A clip on endangered languages in Taiwan for 20 minutes with three interlocutors.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoYCYfuJaX0>
- f. A clip on how to cope with fire for 20 minutes with two interlocutors.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3WVH1poytw>
- g. A clip on ‘What is wrong with Taiwan Bear?’ for 11 minutes with two interlocutors.
<https://open.firststory.me/story/ckb9otjg8hzd30873p7jfqbhs>
- h. A clip on an interview about promoting Taiwanese for ten minutes with two interlocutors.
<https://www.ner.gov.tw/program/5a83f4eac5fd8a01e2df01fd/5aad4b021f133301cc412f09>

We transcribed the sentences in all these clips and counted the number of each sentence type. Of all the sentences (462), the most conservative count of SVO order is 184, including definite, generic or indefinite object. There are 147 cases with (S)VO order (subject missing), which is listed apart from the SVO group.

(26) Total sum (461)

Pattern	SVO	(S)VO	SOV	(S)OV	S ka-OV	(S) ka-OV
Number	184	147	5	2	47	24
%	39.91	31.88	1.08	0.43	10.19	5.2
Pattern	OSV	O(S)V	S kap-OV	(S) kap-OV	S hiong-OV	
Number	14	8	5	5	4	
%	3.03	1.73	1.08	1.08	0.86	

The interesting part of this study is that the number of SOV is 5, which is far less than SVO. It reflects the fact that the word order of TSM is predominantly SVO, not SOV. All the preposed objects are definite.

(27) a. 啊阮頭一集乎，會用心做啦。

A guan thau-tsit-tsip honnh, e iong'sim tso lah.
 PRT I head-first-episode PRT will use.heart do SFP
 'As the first episode, we would devote ourselves to it.'

b. 啊今你臺語會曉講著好矣，會曉聽著好矣。

A tann li Tai'gi e'hiau kong tloh ho ah, e'hiau
 PRT now you Taiwanese can speak TIOH well SFP can
 thiann tloh ho ah.
 listen TIOH well SFP
 'Right now, you can speak Taiwanese fluently and can listen to
 Taiwanese comprehensively.'

c. 你窗仔框一拍開。

Li thang'a khing tsit phahkhui.
 you window frame once do open
 'Once you open the window, ...'

- d. 你這件代誌交怙予伊按呢。
 Li tsit kiann tai'tsi kau'koo hoo i an'ne.
 you this CL matter let HOO he such
 'You can let him handle this matter in such a way.'
- e. 每一隻海龜[伊面頂懸的鱗]啊攏生了無全款。
 Mui tsit tsiah hai'ku [I bin ting'kuan e lan]
 every one CL sea.turtle its face top LNK scale
 a long senn'liau bo kang'khuan.
 PRT all grow.as not same
 'Every sea turtle grows a unique type of scales on its face.'

In the dataset, 47 sentences take the [S *ka*-O V] form and 24, the [(S) *ka*-O V] form. Among them, the disposal *ka* construction may or may not correspond to the *ba*-structure in Mandarin Chinese, which will be discussed in section 5.3. Only 2 cases have the *ka* NP as beneficiary, corresponding to *wei* 'for' in Mandarin, replaceable by *the/ui* in TSM; and 6 cases have the *ka* NP as goal, corresponding to *dui* in Mandarin or replaceable by *hiong/tui* 'to' in TSM.

- (28) a. 伊就[共我]比彼片。 [Beneficiary]
 I to [ka gua] pi hit ping.
 he just KA me point that direction
 'He just points to that direction for me.'
- b. 夜婆是[共咱]爕路。
 Ia'po si [ka lan] tshua loo.
 bat be KA us lead road
 'Bats is to lead the road for us.'

- (29) a. 啊逐家才閣共阮訂啦。 [Goal]
 A tak'ke tsiah koh ka guan ting lah.
 PRT everyone then again KA us order SFP
 'Then, everyone ordered from us.'
- b. 聽眾朋友共咱訂。
 Thiann'tsiong ping'iu ka lan ting.
 audience friend KA us order
 'Audiences as friends ordered from us.'
- c. 啊這個豹乎，就較緊共熊會失禮。
 A tsit e pa honnh, to khah kin ka him hue sit'le.
 PRT this LNK leopard PRT just more fast KA bear make apology
 'Oh, as to the leopard, it should make an apology to the bear more quickly.'
- d. 因為法律是足無聊个。你共逐家解說，開拆，伊嘛無想欲聽。
 In'ui huat'lut si tsiok bo'liau'e li ka
 Because law be very boring you KA
 tak'ke kai'sueh, khui'thiah, i ma bo siunn beh thiann.
 everyone explain destruction him also not want want listen
 'Because of the boredom of the law, you need to explain the
 destruction to everyone, who wouldn't want to listen.'
- e. 行政院所做的社會變遷調查共咱講。
 Hing'tsing'-inn soo tso e sia'hue pian'tshian tiau'tsa
 Executive-Yuan SOO do LNK society change investigation
 ka lan kong.
 KA us tell
 'What the Executive Yuan has done about the change of society tells
 us,'

f. 我定定[共阮的志工]講。

Gua tiann'tiann [ka guan e tsi'kang] kong.

I often KA our LNK volunteer tell

'I often tell our volunteers that, ...'

4 cases in the dataset have *tui*, with the *tui* NP as goal, which cannot alternate with *ka*. They can have word-for-word counterparts in Mandarin, without changing word order or the preposition 'to'. Again, these are not instances of a grammatical verbal object occurring in the preverbal position.

(30) a. 啊我家己本身齣對這大自然的仔、生態的仔攏有興趣。

A gua ka'ki pun'sin honn tui tse tua'tsu'lian e

PRT I myself self PRT to this big.Nature LNK

a, sing'thai e a long u hing'tshu.

PRT ecology LNK PRT all have interest

'I myself am interested in the Nature and ecology.'

b. [對福建彼片]坐船仔過來。

[Tui Hok'kian hit ping] tse tsun'a kue lai.

from Hok'kian that side take boat cross come

'Take a boat to cross the sea from the side of Hok'kian.'

c. 咱愛[對遮]覓過去。

Lan ai [tui tsia] seh kue khi.

We should from here search cross go

'We should search across there from here.'

d. 噯啲，這就是講愛對古早來講起矣！

Ai-io, tse to si kong ai tui koo'tsa lai

PRT-PRT this just be speak should from early.time come

kong'-khi.

speak-start

‘Oh! What is meant is that the story should start from the early time.’

Additionally, there are 14 cases in the dataset having the order OSV, with the object being topicalized. 8 examples among them are listed below with definite or generic topics.

(31) a. 這我知。

Tse gua tsai.

this I know

‘As to this, I know it.’

b. 這我看管的按呢喔。

Tse gua khuann’kuan’ e an’ne ooh.

this I supervise LNK so SFP

‘As for this, it is what I supervise, and so it is.’

c. 這逐家愛知影。

Tse tak’ke ai tsai’iann.

this everyone should know

‘As to this, everyone should know it.’

d. 這八字逐家一定愛記乎著。

Tse peh’ji tak’ke it’ting ai

this eight.character everyone certainly should

ki-hoo-tiao.

remember-HOO-firmly

‘As to this horoscope, everyone certainly should remember it firmly.’

e. 這逐家嘛千萬愛注意啦乎。

Tse tak’ke ma tshian’ban ai tsu’i lah honnh.

this everyone also certainly should notice SFP SFP

‘As for this, everyone certainly also should pay attention to it.’

f. 欸管我這點馬毋用矣啦！

Suh'kong gua tsit'tiam'ma bo iong ah lah.

tight.pipe I a.little.bit not use SFP SFP

'As to tight pipe, I didn't use it, even a little bit.'

g. 你彼牛原仔飼甲肥朥朥呢。

Li he gu guan'a tshi kah pui'tsut'tsut neh.

you that ox Guan feed till very.fat SFP

'As to your ox, Guan fed it to the extent of fatness.'

In brief, the result of these contemporary video clip studies confirms the conclusion from the textbook study in Li and Wei (2019). The number of the instances that clearly show the order of SOV is very small, again indicating the lack of meaningful differences between TSM and Mandarin in word order preferences. To firmly answer the question of whether there are significant differences in ordering between TSM and Mandarin, we did a study directly comparing Mandarin and TSM texts.

4.3 Mandarin-TSM translations

To compare the word order of Mandarin and TSM directly, we used translations of Mandarin texts to TSM by TSM native speakers. We asked TSM native speakers to translate a Mandarin story *Guozili de liwu* 'the gift of Civet' 果子狸的禮物 into TSM. These TSM native speakers are competent in Mandarin as well (specifically, able to read writings in Mandarin in characters used in Taiwan or mainland China). 14 TSM native speakers were able to complete the task. They were asked to write the TSM text in a manner that is as TSM-idiomatic as possible. The output was examined and discussed by other TSM native speakers to make sure that the translations were idiomatic TSM expressions.

The total number of the sentence units of the source text is 66. Among them,

22 cases have the order of SVO according to our most conservative counting as described in the previous two sections. There are only 2 cases of SOV. Comparing side-by-side the two texts in Mandarin and TSM revealed that the word order of TSM mostly paralleled that in Mandarin, such as the choice of SVO, SOV, OSV or OV. This confirms our claim throughout this paper that both SVO and SOV are grammatical word orders in Mandarin and TSM, and topicalization of O is available. Some of the examples illustrating these orders are given below.

(32) a. 他作了一個美好的夢。 (Mandarin SVO)

Ta zuo le yi-ge meihao-de meng.
 he make ASP one-CL nice-DE dream
 'He dreamed a beautiful dream.'

b. 伊夢著足嬌的夢。 (TSM SVO)

I bang'tioh tsiok'sui e bang.
 he dream.TIOH beautiful LNK dream
 'He dreamed a beautiful dream.'

(33) a. 大家都沒有看到他們的朋友果子狸。 (Mandarin SVO)

Dajia dou meiyou kandao tamende pengyou guozili.
 everyone all has.not seen their friend civet
 'Everyone has not seen his good friend, Civet.'

b. 逐家攏無看著您的朋友果子狸。 (TSM SVO)

Tak'ke long bo khuann'tioh in e ping'iu kue'tsi'ba.
 everyone all has.not see.TIOH they LNK friend civet
 'Everyone has not seen their friend civet.'

- (34) a. 答應別人的事一定會做到。 (Mandarin (S)OV)
 [Daying bieren deshi] yiding hui zuodao.
 promise other's matter surely will achieve
 'The thing that he promised, he certainly will achieve.'
- b. 允人的代誌定著做甲到。 (TSM (S)OV)
 Un lang e tai'tsi tiann'tioh ai tso kah kau.
 promise people LNK matter surely should do till arrive
 'The promised matter surely should be fulfilled.'
- (35) a. 他什麼事都知道。 (Mandarin SOV)
 Ta shenme shi dou zhidao.
 he what thing all know
 'He knows anything.'
- b. 伊啥儻知。 (TSM SOV)
 I siann long tsai.
 he everything all know
 'He knows everything.'

We did find altogether 20 instances by the 14 native speakers that made different ordering choices in Mandarin and TSM texts. We will return to these differences in Section 5.2.

4.4 Interim summary

The studies so far show that TSM is like Mandarin and Cantonese in allowing SVO and SOV grammatically, and SOV is much less frequent than SVO. The various types of primary source data we investigated all demonstrate that TSM is SVO, in terms of either grammaticality or preference. Accordingly, TSM cannot be labeled as an SOV or a weakly SVO language.

We have presented data from primary sources, including texts written by

TSM native speakers, videos by a native TSM speaker highly respected for his competence in TSM, and translations of a story from Mandarin to TSM by 14 TSM native speakers. Moreover, eight clips of interviews and folktale are studied from the perspective of word order variation. We also consulted native speakers to confirm the accuracy of our data. The result of our study shows that TSM allows SVO and SOV word order grammatically, so do Mandarin and Cantonese. Li and Wei (2019) argue that the preverbal O is always a focus or topic phrase (which can be contrastive) derived by focus movement or topicalization of the object to a position higher than the verb phrase. When SOV is derived via focalization/topicalization to a position outside the VP, it is the movement of the object that is relevant. Whether the V moves or how high the V moves is not responsible for deriving the ordering of O preceding V. That is, our work also argues against taking the relevant word order issues as evidence for a micro-parameter governing the movement of V, such as in Tang (2006) and Huang (2014). The grammaticality of SVO word order, regardless of the definiteness of the O, requires the grammar of TSM, not only Mandarin or Cantonese, to generate SVO word order. In addition, we showed that TSM not only can have SVO grammatically, and it is primarily SVO. A correlated fact is that it is a prepositional language (P + Object).

Sun and Givón (1985) found that in the Mandarin written and spoken texts they studied, VO order was 94% and 92% respectively. The much-less-frequently used OV order “is an emphatic/contrastive discourse device, having little to do with the contrast between definite and indefinite object” (Sun and Givón 1985: 329). Nonetheless, we should ask why TSM has been perceived as weakly SVO (or more SOV). Note that Hui-Chi Lee’s work mentioned in section 3.3 compared TSM and Mandarin texts appearing side-by-side in 19 stories, obtaining the following numbers.

(36) OV percentage in Mandarin vs. TSM

#of clauses in Mandarin	OV in Mandarin	Percentage	#of clauses in TSM	OV in TSM	Percentage
41254	1422	3.45%	45113	2846	6.31%

The table shows that, even though the OV order is a small minority, there is still a significant difference between Mandarin and TSM: 3.45% vs. 6.31% (Note that the OV in this study includes OSV, and the subject can be overt or missing.).

In the following section, we discuss some possible factors responsible for the contrast and will also clarify some issues that might have generated the perception that TSM is more SOV than SVO, despite the lack of factual support. We will present a real difference in word order options between TSM and Mandarin or Cantonese - the cases where a post-verbal object is not possible in TSM but is possible in Mandarin or Cantonese. We will further examine Liu's motivation for the claim regarding different strengths of SVO and show that word order is affected by some specific properties of the languages.

5. Why TSM tends to be perceived as OV

In section 2, we noted differences in accepting post-verbal objects between Mandarin and TSM in some cases. This section discusses possible reasons for such differences. We will consider these factors: (i) lexical variation, (ii) compounding or complex verb formation possibilities, and (iii) the *ka*-construction in TSM vs. its Mandarin counterpart, the *ba*-construction.

5.1 Lexical variation

A possible factor for the Mandarin/TSM word order difference in some cases concerns lexical variation. For instance, for verbs of saying, TSM has *kong*

‘say/speak’, but Mandarin has three different verbs: *gaosu* ‘tell’, *jiang* or *shuo* ‘say/speak’. *Gaosu* ‘tell’ in Mandarin allows the audience of the saying/speaking event to be a post-verbal nominal object (‘tell someone’, like English), but not *jiang/shuo*. The TSM counterpart *kong* ‘say/speak’ is not subcategorized for a nominal object. The (un)availability of lexical items with their specific subcategorization properties can be a factor contributing to the perception that the frequently occurring common verb of speaking/saying/telling in TSM requires an object pre-verbally (appearing as a PP pre-verbally, generally *ka* NP) but Mandarin allows both pre-verbal and post-verbal options.

(37) a. *我講你。

*Guo kong ni.

I tell you

b. 我共你講。

Guo ka ni kong.

I KA you tell

‘Let me tell you.’

5.2 Compounding/Complex verb formation

Mandarin and TSM contrast in compounding or complex verb formation possibilities. When compounding/complex verb formation does not apply to a sequence of V + Y, we have two separate units (the Y following the V can be another V or a non-argument, non-V complement of the V (such as an adjective, adverb, particle, etc.)). When the V is immediately followed by another unit Y, the object of the verb cannot appear after V + Y because an object in Chinese needs to be adjacent to the verb to satisfy the Case filter (see Li 1985, 1990 for the role of Case in Chinese). On the other hand, if compounding or complex verb formation applies, V + Y will be a single V unit and a nominal object can occur after the unit [V + Y] without being ruled out by the failure to meet the Case

requirement. These points are elaborated below.⁸

⁸ This paper aims to empirically support the fact that TSM is dominantly a SVO language. We have not devoted much space to the syntactic analysis. The construction with a preposed object in TSM has had different analyses in the literature. Lee (2008) argues that it is neither a topic nor a focus, but the result of movement to the preverbal position to avoid violating the postverbal constraint in the language (restrictions on the types and numbers of constituents allowed postverbally). In contrast, Li and Wei (2019) argues that the preverbal O is always a focus or topic phrase (which can be contrastive) derived by focus movement or topicalization of the object to a position higher than the verb phrase. Note that, to avoid violating the postverbal constraint, the following options are available (see Huang 1982; Li 1990): topicalization, focalization, movement to subject position (when the subject is non-thematic, as in passivization or subjects of unaccusative verbs), disposal construction, and verb copying, etc. The use of different strategies has implications for their different discourse functions. (51) may be derived as follows. The verb *sia* ‘write’ and phase marker *ho* ‘finish’ do not combine to form a complex verb unit. As a result, the object *phue* ‘letter’ cannot be assigned Case, violating the Case Filter in (51’).

(51) 果子猫批寫好了後。

Ke’tsi’ba phue sia ho liau’au.
 civet letter write finish after
 ‘After the civet finished writing letter, ...’

(51’)*果子猫[寫好]批了後。

*Ke’tsi’ba sia ho phue liau’au.

To repair this violation, movement is an option. This is very much like the cases with an outer and an inner object. Huang (1982) and Li (1990), among others, have suggested that an outer object cannot get case from the verb (the verb assigns accusative case to the inner object). Therefore, an outer object occurs either as a *ba/ka* object, a topicalized element (topic must be a case position), an object of a reduplicated verb (verb copying), or the subject in *Zhansang si-le fuqin* ‘Zhangsan’s father died’ 張三死了父親. That is, a thematic object might not be assigned accusative case by the verb. But it can get case through several other means mentioned above. A possible answer is to move to a preverbal position (a lower topic) for Case assignment.

5.2.1 Case Filter and arbitrariness

Let us first focus on the examples below. They contain a compound/complex verb ‘send out’. The TSM sentence can have the post-verbal object option in (37a) below, with the non-argument complement *tshut-khi* ‘out go’ appearing after the postverbal object. The object appearing after the complex of V+ complement *kia tshut-khi* ‘send out’ is acceptable to some speakers but not all (indicated by “?”).

(38) a. 我袂寄這張批出去。

Gua be kia tsit-tiunn phue tshut-khi.

I will.not send this-CL letter out-go

‘I will not send out this letter.’

b. ?我袂寄出去這張批。

?Gua be kia tshut-khi tsit-tiunn phue.

I will.not send out-go this-CL letter

‘I will not send out this letter.’

Such a contrast can be better understood in light of the observation in the literature regarding the relatively lower occurrences of a verb combined with its adjacent post-verbal non-object complement (compounding or complex verb formation) in TSM, such as an aspect marker (*kue* 過, literally meaning ‘pass’, functioning as an experiential aspect marker; a meaning completion, which is a sentence-final particle), a phasal marker (*liao* 了, *sua* 煞, *wan* 完, meaning completion), a resultative complement (such as *tsiah-pa* ‘eat-full’, *lim-tsui* ‘drink-drunk’, *tsu-nua* ‘cook-mushy’), and a potential complement (such as *tsu-e/be-nua* ‘cook-(un)able-mushy’).⁹

⁹ A reviewer asked why *tsiah-liao* 吃了 and *tsiah-a* 吃矣, are not recognized as complex verbs. First, the phrase *tsiah-liao* 吃了 can be intervened by such expressions as *hoo-i* ‘cause him/her/it’ between *tsiah* and *liao*, forming *tsiah hoo-i liao* ‘cause someone to eat it up.’

Teng (1995) notes that these non-object complements are actually verbs themselves - $V_1 + V_2$, with V_1 being the main verb of a clause and V_2 being the variety of expressions just mentioned. An important point made in his paper is that most $[V_1 + V_2]$ occurrences in Taiwanese do not form compounds (or complex verbs). The non-compounding nature of $[V_1 + V_2]$ in TSM can be demonstrated by the fact that the verbal sequence can be separated by prepositions, adverbs and objects (the following examples are from Teng 1995: 373-374).

(39) 你的名，愛寫予清楚。

Li-e miaN, ai sia ho chheng'chho.

your name must write HO clear

'Your name, (you) should write (it) clearly.'

(40) a. 車，你駛較出去。

Chhia, li sai kha chhut-khi.

car you drive more out-go

'Drive the car farther out.'

b. 我昨昏攏揣伊無。

Gua चाहng long chhue i bo.

I yesterday all find he not.have

'I could not find him all day yesterday.'

These cases do not have counterparts in Mandarin, showing that the form $[V_1 + V_2]$ is not two separate Vs in Mandarin grammatically.

Second, according to Cheng (1997), *a* in TSM is a sentence-final particle, located in the right periphery, meaning completion. That means that it is possible to insert aspectual markers like *kue* 過 or phasal markers like *liao* 了, *sua* 煞, *wan* 完 between *a* and the verb *tsiah*, forming *tsiah-kue-a* 'have eaten', *tsiah-liao-a* 'have eaten up', *tsiah-sua-a* 'have finished eating', and *tsiah-wan-a* 'have eaten up'. Therefore, both phrases are not single unit complex verbs.

- (41) *你的名字得寫給它清楚。
 *Ni-de mingzi dei xie gei ta qingchu.
 your name must write GEI it clear
 ‘Your name, (you) should write (it) clearly.’
- (42) *車子你開比較出去。
 *Chezi, ni kai bijiao chu-qu.
 car you drive more out-go
 ‘Drive the car farther out.’
- (43) *我昨天都找他不到。
 *Wo zuotian dou zhao ta bu-dao.
 I yesterday all find he not-arrive
 ‘I could not find him all day yesterday.’

Teng’s observation that V_1 and V_2 do not form compounds or complex verbs in TSM but do so in Mandarin is further supported by a correlating difference between these two languages: an object can follow $[V_1 + V_2]$ in Mandarin but not in TSM.

Li (1985, 1990) notes that even though Chinese seems to exhibit head-final properties in most instances, it nonetheless requires the object of a V or P to follow the V/P. Li attributes the constraint to the interaction of the head parameter and Case theory in Chinese - Chinese is head-final but the assignment of Case by Case assigners such as V/P is from left to right. In addition, Case assignment obeys an adjacency condition: the Case receiver must be adjacent to the Case assigner. This account essentially requires the non-argument complement adjacent to V to form a V-unit with the verb so that Case can be assigned by the V-unit to the argument object. Accordingly, we can find $[V_1 + V_2]$ followed by an object in Mandarin because $[V_1 + V_2]$ is a single V-unit - a

compounded (or complex) V.

This is not allowed in TSM because $[V_1 + V_2]$ are two separate units and the addition of an object after $[V_1 + V_2]$ would violate the Case filter - the object of the verb would not be properly assigned Case. The distinction applies as well when V_2 is replaced by another element that is not a verb, such as an adjective or adverb or a particle. The key distinction is whether a V-unit is formed or not, through compounding or complex V formation.

This account for the contrast between Mandarin and TSM should lead us to predict that even in TSM, an object can follow a non-argument complement of the verb in the post-verbal position if the non-argument complement forms a unit with the verb (compounded or complex V formed), together taking the argument as object. This is indeed the case. Teng (1995) notes that the generalization about non-compounding and the non-occurrence of post-verbal objects does not always hold in TSM. Counterexamples abound. He gave the following counterexamples showing the possibility of compounding and postverbal objects (Teng 1995: 15-20, (23a), (24a), (26a), and (34c) in that order).

(44) 土匪剖死 24 个台湾人。

Thouhui thai-si jichapsi-e Taiuan lang.
Bandit kill-die 24-CL Taiwan person
'Bandits killed 24 people.'

(45) 伊搥歹王教授的電腦。

I long-phai Ong Kausiu-e tiannao.
he cause-break Wang Professor's computer
'He wrecked Professor Wang's computer.'

(46) 學生揣無王教授。

Hakseng chhe-bo Ong Kausiu.
 student look-NEG Wang Professor
 ‘The students could not find Professor Wang.’

(47) 伊敢想會到遐？

I kam siuN-e-kau hia?
 he Q think-can-particle that
 ‘Will he possibly think of that?’

(44) and (45) are instances containing resultative complements; (46)-(47), potential complements. We can add a few more examples to demonstrate that counterexamples can be found for all the cases that have been studied - those involving aspect markers, phasal markers, resultative complements, directional complements and potential complements. They sometimes can be combined with the V and form a compounded or complex V-unit, followed by a nominal object.

(48) a. 等阮食飽飯你才來，好無？

Tan gun tsiah-pa png li tsiah lai, ho bo?
 wait we eat-full meal you then come good Q
 ‘Come after we finish the meal, OK?’

b. 我敢有可能看袂起個彼家人？

Gua kam u kho-ling khuann-be-khi in hit-ke lang?
 I Q have possibility see-not.can-up them that-CL people
 ‘Is it possible that I look down on them that family?’

We also predict that, because the formation of a non-argument complement and the verb into a single V-unit is most likely due to frequent usage or familiarity - how compounding takes place generally, we might find idiosyncrasies, greater speaker variation, or generational, regional differences in accepting the cases

seemingly violating the Case adjacency condition (that is, whether compounding or complex verb formation has taken place).

Indeed, an example of idiosyncrasy is this: TSM speakers accept *tsiah-pa png* ‘eat-full meal’ 吃飽飯 but not **lim-tsui tsiu* ‘drink-drunk wine’ 喝醉酒. The order of *lim tsiu-tsui* ‘drink wine-drunk’ 喝酒醉 is used instead.¹⁰ That is, even though both contain lexical items of the same grammatical categories and bearing the same semantic relations, the possibilities of the verb ‘eat’, ‘drink’ and the result expression ‘full’, ‘drunk’ forming compounds differ. In addition, native speakers may show different judgments in some cases, particularly for less established compounds. For instance, the judgement of the following sentence ranges from fully acceptable to unacceptable to the TSM speakers consulted:

(49) 伊猶未洗清氣遐的衫喔。

I ia be se tshing’khi hia-e sann o.
 he yet not wash clean those clothes SFP
 ‘He has yet washed-clean the clothes.’

¹⁰ A reviewer cast doubt on the acceptability of *tsiah-pa png* ‘eat-full meal’ 吃飽飯. The reviewer also mentioned that *tsiah-pa mi* ‘eat-full noodle’ 吃飽麵 is not acceptable. After further checking, we find that the native speakers consulted accept the expression *tsiah-pa png*, but not *tsiah-pa mi*. The expression in (i) is commonly used in daily life.

(i) 食飽飯猶未?

Tsiah-pa png iau-bue?
 eat-full meal still-not.have
 ‘Have you eaten or not?’

Such differences are due to lexical arbitrariness, elaborated in Section 5.2.1. Even if both contain lexical items of the same grammatical categories and bearing the same semantic relations, the possibilities of the verb ‘eat’, the result expression ‘full’ and the object ‘rice’, ‘noodle’ forming compounds differ. We propose that *tsiah-pa png* 吃飽飯 is much more like a fixed expression than *tsiah-pa mi* 吃飽麵, even though native speakers may show different judgments in cases like *tsiah-pa png* 吃飽飯.

Note that even in Mandarin, not all instances of a V and an adjacent element form compounds or complex verbs and take objects. The possibilities are often arbitrary. Notable contrasts are those observed by Li and Thompson (1981), Tang (1989, 1992, 1994, etc.), such as *tui/la-kai* ‘push/pull-open’ being acceptable, but not **tui/la-guan* ‘push/pull-closed’. Similarly, *chi-ni mifan* ‘eat-tired rice (tired from eating rice (too frequently))’ is better than **diao-ni yu* ‘fish-tired fish (tired from fishing fish (too frequently))’. In addition, some native speakers consulted found the following contrast in Mandarin:

(50) a. ??你應該疊整齊棉被。

??Ni yinggai die zhengqi mianbei.
 you should fold tidy comforter
 ‘You should fold-tidy the comforter.’

Cf. a’. 你應該把棉被疊整齊。

Ni yinggai ba mianbei die zhengqi.
 you should BA comforter fold tidy
 ‘You should fold-tidy the comforter.’

b. ??請吃乾淨盤子。

??Qing chi-ganjing panzi.
 ask eat-clean plate
 ‘Please eat-clean the plate.’

Cf. b’. 請把盤子吃乾淨。

Qing ba panzi chi-ganjing.
 please BA room sweep-clean
 ‘Please eat-clean the plate.’

Again, native speakers do not all agree on the contrast and the judgment is not always consistent with individual speakers, either. The disagreement and uncertainty are generally due to lexical or idiolectal variation in the possibilities

of forming as one unit the V and the non-object element following the V through V + V-compounding or complex V formation [V + Y]. Such uncertainty and disagreement are very much like how compounds or complex words are treated orthographically by users of English - the use or non-use of a hyphen or the spelling as one or two words as in *microparameter*, *micro-parameter*, or *micro parameter*.

The above paragraphs show that both Mandarin and TSM allow compounding or complex verb formation, and the occurrence of a post-verbal object is possible without violating the Case adjacency constraint. When compounding or complex verb formation does not take place, the verb and the non-argument complement do not together take an object syntactically. Therefore, an argument object following the V and the non-argument complement would be ruled out by the Case filter (Case not successfully assigned due to the failure to meet the adjacency condition.). However, whether compounding or complex verb formation is possible or not is often arbitrary and subject to regional, generational or individual variation especially for the less established cases.

5.2.2 Compounding or complex V formation affecting word order

The factor of whether compounding or complex V formation has taken place also accounts for the differences we found in the side-by-side Mandarin-TSM text study described in section 4.3, elaborated in the following paragraphs.

In the translated texts by 14 native speakers, two among them translated the order SVO in Mandarin into the order SOV in TSM as below. The verb and the non-argument complement, 寫好 in such examples do not allow a post-verbal object for these speakers due to their lack of compounding of 'write' and the phasal marker. Thus, these two TSM speakers use instead the construction with a preposed object SOV (2 cases) or S *ka*-O V (6 cases), deviating from the

corresponding cases in Mandarin in word order.

(51) 果子狸在寫完信以後。

Guozili zai xie-wan xin yihou. [SVO vs. SOV (2 cases)]

civet PROG write-finish letter after

‘After the civet finished writing letter,’

> 果子猫批寫好了後。

Ke'tsi'ba phue sia ho liau'au.

civet letter write finish after

‘After the civet finished writing letter,’

(52) 果子狸在寫完信以後。

Guozili zai xie-wan xin yihou. [SVO vs. S *ka*-O V (6 cases)]

civet PROG write-finish letter after

‘After the civet finished writing letter,’

> 果子猫 *ka* 批寫好了後。

Ke'tsi'ba ka phue sia ho liau'au.

civet KA letter write finish after

‘After the civet finished writing (the) letter,’

Another example of such variation in compounding possibilities is the contrast between *liu-xia* ‘stay-down=leave’ in Mandarin vs. *lau loh lai* ‘stay down come=leave’ in TSM. The object of *liu-xia* ‘leave’ in Mandarin can appear in the post-verbal position, whereas that of *lau loh lai* ‘stay down come=leave’ in TSM occurs pre-verbally as a *ka*-NP.

(53) 謝謝果子狸留下這麼好的禮物給大家。 [SVO vs. S *ka*-O V (1case)]

Xiexie guozili liuxia zheme hao-de liwu gei dajia.

thank civet leave so good-DE present give everyone

‘Thank the civet for leaving so nice a present to everyone.’

> 多謝果子狸 ka 這爾好的禮物留落來予大家。

To'sia kue'tsi'ba ka tsia'ni'ho e le'but lau'loh'lai
 thank civet KA so.good LNK gift leave.fall.come
 hoo tai'ke.
 HOO everyone

'Thank the civet for leaving so nice a present to everyone.'

Still another example illustrating a similar kind of distinction between Mandarin and TSM involves the TSM *tau san kang* 'help', corresponding to Mandarin *bang-zhu* 'help'. The latter is a V-V compound; but the former, *tau san kang* in TSM, is a V + O structure, disallowing an additional post-verbal object.¹¹ For instance, an object such as the generic noun *lang* 'people' cannot appear after the V + O structure *tau san kang*. Instead, the construction [S *ka*-O V] *ka lang tau san kang* has been used in our dataset in 4 cases, and a fifth one combines *ka-lang* into *kang*.

(54) a. 他也常常幫助別人。

Ta ye changchang bang-zhu bieren.
 he also often help-help others
 'He also often helps others.'

> 伊閣會定定共人鬥相共。

I koh e tiann'tiann ka-lang tau-sann-kang. (4 cases)
 he also will often KA-people help-some-help

¹¹ From the data collected from Taiwanese on-line dictionary conducted by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, we can conclude that *tau* 鬥 is a verb, meaning 'join/work together.' The phrase *sann-kang* can be interpreted as a nominal object 'each other's work'. Similar objects can be identified in *pang-tsan* 'help' 幫贊 and *kha-tshiu* 'foot-hand' 跤手 as in (i).

(i) a. tau-pang-tsan 'help' 鬥幫贊
 b. tau-kha-tshiu 'help' 鬥跤手

‘He also often helps others.’

b. 他也常常幫助別人。

Ta ye changchang bang-zhu bieren.

He also often help-help others

‘He also often helps others.’

> 伊閣會定定共人（合音）鬥相共。

I koh e tiann’tiann kang tau-sann-kang. (1 case)

he also will often KA.people help-some-help

‘He also often helps others.’

In other words, *tau san kang* ‘help’ in TSM does not correspond to *bang-zhu* in Mandarin structurally. Moreover, the idiosyncrasy regarding compounding possibilities is also demonstrated by Mandarin verbs meaning ‘help’. Mandarin distinguishes *bang-zhu* and *bang-mang*, the former is a compounded V-V ‘help-help’, but the latter should be analyzed as a V + O structure ‘help-busy’. This contrast is supported by the fact that *mang* of *bang-mang* behaves like a noun in being able to co-occur with a demonstrative, numeral, classifier, adjective, in contrast to the unacceptability of *zhu* in *bang-zhu*: *bang-zhe-yi-ge da mang/*zhu* ‘help this-one-Cl-big help = give a big help’. Accordingly, the thematic object of *bang-mang* occurs as the possessor of *mang* or in the pre-verbal position. The following examples illustrate the contrast regarding *bangmang* ‘help’ in Mandarin.

(55) a. *他常常幫忙他。

*Ta changchang bangmang ta.

he often help him

‘He often helps him.’

b. 他常常幫他的忙。

Ta changchang bang tade-mang.

he often help his-help

‘He often helps him.’

Our dataset also shows that psychological verbs often demonstrate the observed difference in compounding/complex verb formation in Mandarin and TSM, such as *fang-bu-xia (xin)* ‘not put down (heart) = not worry’ 放不下心 in Mandarin vs. *pang’be’loh (sim)* ‘not put down (heart)’ 放袂落(心) in TSM (2 cases), *nanguo* ‘sorry’ 難過 vs. *kankho* ‘bitter’ 艱苦/*siong-sim* ‘heart-breaking’ 傷心 (2 cases), *xinfan* ‘perplexed/worried’ 心煩 vs. *hoan-lo* ‘worried’ 煩惱 (1 case), and *zhidao* ‘know’ 知道 in Mandarin vs. *chai-ian* 知影 ‘know’ in TSM. We discuss these cases below.

First, in (56) below, the verb 放 ‘put’ in TSM is followed by either the post-verbal non-argument complement 袂落 ‘not settle’ or 袂落心 ‘not settle heart’, either of which does not take a post-verbal object 伊遐的朋友 ‘his friends’. Compounding or complex verb formation has not applied. Therefore, the object ‘his friends’ is either topicalized or appears as the object of a pre-verbal prepositional phrase *tui*-NP ‘to NP’. The Mandarin counterpart behaves differently. Compounding or complex verb formation can apply. When this happens, the thematic object of ‘worry’ can occur in the post-verbal position.¹²

¹² This set of examples is particularly interesting in that it shows how arbitrary compounding/complex verb formation is. The verbal unit in this case contains a negative potential complement: V-neg-‘down’. Verbs do not form a unit with the negative potential complement in many other cases.

(56) a. 只是他最放不下他那些朋友。 (Mandarin)

Zhishi ta zui fang-bu-xia ta-na-xie pengyou.

Just he most put-not-down he-those-CL friend

‘He was just most concerned about his friends.’

> 伊遐的朋友伊上蓋放袂落。 (TSM)

I hia e ping’iu i siong’kai pang’be’loh.

he those LNK friend he most put-not-down

‘He was most concerned about his friends.’

b. ?只是他最放不下心他那些朋友。¹³ (Mandarin)

Zhishi ta zui fang-bu-xia-xin ta-na-xie pengyou.

Just he most put-not-down-heart he-those-CL friend

‘He was just most concerned about his friends.’

> 只是對伊遐的朋友放袂落心。 (TSM)

Tsi’si tui i hia e ping’iu pang’be’loh sim.

Just to he those LNK friend put-not-down heart

‘He was just most concerned about his friends.’

In short, Mandarin and TSM are not different in principle grammatically. They follow the same requirement that a nominal object in the post-verbal position needs to satisfy the Case filter by being adjacent to the V. They only differ in the frequency of cases that are compounded or form complex verbs: it seems that Mandarin forms compounds/complex verbs more commonly than TSM, seemingly allowing more cases in Mandarin with a post-verbal object.

It is interesting to note that the number of V-V complex is much less than that of one-syllable bare verb with respect to taking definite/indefinite object in

¹³ As pointed out by a reviewer, some native speakers may not accept *fang-bu-xia-xin* ‘put-not-down-heart’ 放不下心 taking an object. Nonetheless, in general, Mandarin does differ from TSM in the extent of single-unit verb complexes being formed.

the 8 colloquial clips from social media. In colloquial speech, postverbal elements such as *tioh*, *kue*, *lai*, etc. are commonly used, followed by objects, showing that complex [V + Y] followed by objects is natural in TSM colloquial speech.

(57) a. 啊這個豹，有一工，抵著熊。

A tsit e pa, u tsit'kang, tu'tioh him.
PRT this LNK leopard have one.day meet bear
'As to this leopard, one day he met the bear.'

b. 毋過伊有可能牽涉著其他个部會。

M'ko i u'kho'ling khan'siap tioh ki'thann poo'hue.
but it possibly involve TIOH other department
'But it may involve other departments.'

c. 像咱節目捌訪問過李江却台語文教基金會執行長。

Tshiunn lan tsiat'bok bat hong'mng kue Li Kang'khiok
like our program ever interview ASP Li Kang'khiok
Tai'gi bun'kau ki'kim'hue tsip'hing'tiunn.
Taiwanese literature.education foundation director
'Just like that, our program has ever interviewed the director of the Li Kang'khiok Taiwanese Foundation.'

d. 我無看過彼部電影。

Gua bo khuann kue hit'poo tian'iann.
I have.not see ASP that-CL movie
'I have not seen that movie.'

e. 少年人會當轉來故鄉。

Siau'lian'lang e'tang tng'lai koo'hiong.
young.man can back.come hometown
'Young men can come back to their own hometowns.'

Languages may also more systematically differ in whether a certain morpheme can form a unit with its adjacent verb. For instance, Pang (2014, chapter 4) notes that the Min variety spoken in Hainan allows the compounding of a verb with the phasal marker *liau*, in contrast to the unacceptability of such compounding in TSM generally. The following Hainan Min example is from Pang (2014: 62, her (8)) in the book of Acts in the TSM Bible. Some TSM speakers also accept the use.¹⁴

(58) 全家攏信了主。

Soang5 kae1 doou1 tin3 liau2 Tu2.

all family all believe ASP Lord

‘The whole family believed in the Lord.’

To summarize, the perceived less frequent SVO in TSM, as compared to Mandarin and Cantonese, could very well be due to their difference in how much compounding or the formation of a complex V takes place, as noted by Teng (1995) - TSM has less compounding or complex V formation than Mandarin. The correlating difference is that more instances in Mandarin allow an object following verbal complexes (behaving as a single V) than in TSM. Nonetheless, it is not correct to claim that compounding or complex V formation always does or does not take place in the languages discussed here and in the relevant literature. TSM does allow compounding/complex V formation, as illustrated above. In addition, arbitrariness and varying judgments are often true with the

¹⁴ However, Lee (2016) has collected abundant colloquial cases of the Hainan Min with only object occurring between a verb and its non-nominal complement. This differs from Pang’s (2014) data from the Bible.

(i) Phah55-liak33-nang22 uat33 tse21 na42-ku11 siom44.

hunter dig trap very deep

‘The hunter dug a very deep hole as a trap.’

acceptability of such compounding or complex verb formation.

5.3 Varieties of the “disposal” construction

This section turns to the contrast reflecting the fact that the *ka* construction in TSM is used in wider contexts, as compared to the Mandarin *ba* construction - the so-called disposal construction, which takes the verbal object as the object of *ba/ka*, followed by the verb, creating the order of a verbal object preceding the verb: *ba/ka* object + V.

Mandarin has complex requirements on the types of verbs as well as the kinds of elements that need to follow the verb in order to make well-formed *ba* sentences (see, for instance, the constraint on verb types and the post-verbal “X factor” affecting the acceptability of *ba* sentences in Li (2006, 2017); Huang et al. (2009, chapter 5), and the many references cited there). In contrast, TSM *ka* construction allows a bare verb, without the need of assistance from a post-verbal X; and the types of verbs occurring in this construction are less restricted (also see Huang et al. 2009, chapter 5). The third-person *i* as object of *ka* can even be missing, in contrast to Mandarin requiring *ba* to be followed by an object. Li and Wei (2019) show that the following examples demonstrate contrasts between the *ka/ba* constructions in TSM and Mandarin. The TSM examples are from Lien’s TsingHua TSM corpus. Their corresponding *ba* sentences in Mandarin are not possible.

TSM	Mandarin
(59) a. 我共你教。 (四重奏 21)	*我把你教。
Gua ka li ka.	*Wo ba ni jiao.
I KA you teach	I BA you teach
‘I teach you.’	

- b. 共你笑。 (四重奏 1) *把你笑。
 Ka li tshio. *Ba ni xiao.
 KA you laugh BA you laugh
 ‘Laugh at you.’

These examples show that the *ka* construction in TSM allows a bare verb like ‘teach’ and ‘laugh’, but the Mandarin counterpart is impossible, due to its stricter restrictions on the acceptable types of verbs and greater sensitivity to the need of post-verbal constituents in the *ba* construction.

The more liberal use of *ka* in TSM is also due to the broader range of meanings available to *ka*. Cheng et al. (2000) note that *ka*, in addition to introducing the recipient of an action (patient), can also occur with a goal or a source, corresponding to Mandarin *xiang* ‘toward’, *gen* ‘with’. It also introduces a beneficiary, corresponding to Mandarin *wei/ti* ‘for’. That is, *ka* in TSM has multiple sources, which makes *ka* sentences correspond to Mandarin sentences with preverbal PPs, in addition to the *ba* phrase.

- (60) a. 我共伊請教。
 Gua ka-i tshing’kau. (TSM)
 I KA-him ask.for.advice
 ‘I asked him for advice.’
- b. 我跟/向他請教。
 Wo xiang/gen ta qingjiao. (Mandarin)
 I to/with him ask
 ‘I asked him for advice.’
- (61) a. 我共伊借錢。
 Gua ka-i tsioh tsinn. (TSM)
 I KA-him borrow money

‘I borrowed money from him.’

b. 我跟/向他借錢。

Wo gen/xiang ta jie qian. (Mandarin)

I with/to him borrow money

‘I borrowed money from him.’

(62) a. 共伊做牛做馬。

Ka i tso gu tso be. (TSM)

KA him do cow do horse

‘(I) labor for him.’

b. 我為他做牛做馬。

Wo wei ta zuo niu zuo ma. (Mandarin)

I for him do cow do horse

‘I labor for him.’

The discussion above points to the relevance of available lexical items. Mandarin has *ba* and TSM has *ka* but these two have different origins. TSM *ka* could be derived from multiple sources. The different historical development could be responsible for the fact that *ka* in TSM is used in wider contexts than *ba* in Mandarin. The TSM *ka* corresponds to a number of prepositions in Mandarin, such as *gen*, *xiang*, *wei*, *ti*, etc., in addition to *ba*. It is probable that the different degrees of restrictions on the use of the disposal construction create the impression that TSM prefers SOV word order, Cantonese SVO, and Mandarin in between. Regardless, our numbers still show that the disposal construction takes only a small percentage in actual texts. This construction can hardly be taken as representing the dominating word order of any of the languages. Nor should the examples with *ka* in TSM be responsibly taken as examples of SOV structures, as they are adverbial PPs in many cases with the *ka* object not being the object of the verb.

6. Conclusion

We have shown that detailed investigation of materials from primary sources and translation of Mandarin stories to Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM) do not support classifying TSM as an SOV language or even a weak SVO language. Although both SVO and SOV are found in TSM, as in Cantonese and Mandarin, SVO is nonetheless overwhelmingly dominant in this language. Our examination of a variety of primary datasets allowed us to present more adequate empirical generalizations, on which a more adequate analysis can be built. We also addressed the issue of why TSM was perceived as more of an SOV language, though not supported by facts. Possible contributing factors were considered in this work, including differences in available lexical items in the varieties of languages compared, compounding/complex verb formation possibilities, and the properties of the “disposal” construction. Some of these factors show more variation among speakers. Specifically, compounding or complex verb formation, often due to frequent use of expressions (and possibly other linguistic, socio-cultural factors), is generally subject to regional, generational and individual variation. Accordingly, the perceived differences are only tendencies, rather than absolute distinctions.

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台灣閩南語語序：從經驗實證的角度

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透過收集媒體實際口語語料及華語與台灣閩南語對譯，本文確認台灣閩南語並非 SOV 語言，這結果與台灣閩南語語序相關文獻（e.g., Liu 2001, 2003, Tang 2006, Huang 2014）有所差異。即使 SVO 及 SOV 皆為台灣閩南語之可能語序，然 SVO 依然是主導該語言的主要語序。藉由語言事實來研究台灣閩南語的語序變化，呈現出充分描述的語言概化原則，並且提高處理跨語言語序變化的分析能力，也因此能解讀所謂「語言參數」的實際意涵，推導出藉由輕動詞移位衍生，並不適用語序分析的結果。考量文獻所認定的台灣閩南語為 SOV 或弱化的 SVO 之傾向，我們歸因其形成之因素如下：一、詞彙變異；二、複合詞形成之可能性；三、處置式的使用規範。即便如此，跨語言語序之差異只是一種傾向，而非絕對的黑白分明，例如日常使用的複合詞或合成動詞，其形成往往受制於地區、世代及個人差異，其表現各有所不同。

關鍵詞：語序、微觀參數、複合詞、合成動詞、處置式

