

A Syntactic Study of English and Chinese Existential Sentences Based on Cartographic Theory

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Abstract: Existential sentences have always been one of the research focuses in the field of syntax. This article will use the syntactic cartography as a theoretical framework, conducting a comparative analysis of the syntactic generation mechanisms of typical existential sentence structures in English and Chinese from the syntactic-pragmatic interface. Here are the views of this article. Firstly, when the two functions of information structure and speech act are projected in syntax, the universality and difference of English and Chinese existential sentences at the pragmatic level can be observed more clearly and intuitively. Secondly, the universalities of English and Chinese existential sentences are reflected in the following points: 1) The syntactic positions of the components NP and VP are the same; 2) The components at the beginning of the sentence are all topics; 3) At the CoA level, the speech acts expressed by intonation are syntactically distributed in the same way. Thirdly, the differences between the two are reflected in the following points: 1) There is a *there* in the English vocabulary that can satisfy the EPP feature of T. English belongs to the subject prominent language, while Chinese, without deep subject, belongs to the topic prominent language; 2) In English existential sentences, LP is located at the verb complement position without displacement, while in Chinese existential sentences, LP moves to the topic position at the beginning of the sentence; 3) NP has dual characteristics of [- definite] and [+definite], but conditions are differ; 4) Sentence final intonation (SFI) can reflect the speech act of English existential sentences. Chinese not only has intonation, but also has sentence-final particles (SFP) to make its syntactic cartography richer and more abstract.

Key words: Existential sentences; Information structure; Speech act; Syntax