

Question 1 (50 points):

Li and Thompson (1976, 1981) propose a typological distinction between languages that are topic prominent and those that are subject prominent.

Part A (25 points): Elaborate on the differences between so-called topic prominent and subject prominent languages. Describe how English and Chinese fit into this typology and illustrate your points with examples from these two languages. Give examples from these two languages of grammatical properties that differ as a result of their topic prominence versus subject prominence.

Part B (25 points): Discuss how the typological difference between topic prominent and subject prominent languages could have an influence on L2 learners whose L1 and target language differ along this line (that is, their L1 is subject prominent while their target language is topic prominent or vice versa). Give concrete extended examples from the English errors that learners in Taiwan might make which could be attributed to this difference in subject prominence versus topic prominence.

Question 2 (50 points):

Languages have been characterized according to the so-called "pro drop parameter." One specific aspect of pro drop is null subject phenomena. Some languages allow null subjects quite freely while others are much more strict in requiring finite clauses to have subjects. It has been suggested that English and Chinese differ greatly from each other with respect to the distribution of null subjects.

Part A: (30 points) Describe what pro drop or null subject phenomena are and discuss how English and Chinese differ with respect to null subjects. Give specific examples from each of these two languages that illustrate your points.

Part B: (20 points) Discuss how this difference between Chinese and English can affect the English of learners whose L1 is Chinese. Give examples of likely or plausible learners' English errors and show how these are relevant to the differences between English and Chinese concerning null subjects.