

Error Analysis of Aspect Particle "了le" for Zimbabwean Students at University of Zimbabwe

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Abstract. Studying Chinese grammar is not an easy road for a lot of foreign students. Chinese auxiliary "Le" undoubtedly serve as the main point and the difficult point in teaching Chinese as second language, so far, students who are becoming interested in studying the Chinese auxiliary "Le" are innumerable. Chinese auxiliary "Le" is rich in semantic meanings, its position is flexible and its pragmatic is very complex, making it hard for foreigners learning Chinese to master. Zimbabwean students at the University of Zimbabwe are facing challenges when learning auxiliary "le". Many scholars from different countries have written many articles trying to address this issue as it has been affecting students from different nationalities, There are reports which shows that there were improvements to some extent in areas where this issue was addressed; but still a number of Zimbabwean students have challenges in mastering the concept of using the auxiliary "le" this article is written to try and assess errors made by students when using auxiliary "le" as well as provide possible solutions which help teachers when teaching Zimbabwean students. This thesis approaches this issue from a different angle through compiling data on common biased errors such as the local language interference phenomenon, grammatical rules in the Chinese language, teaching materials and environment, students' lack of proficiency, the complex nature of the Chinese auxiliary "le" since it doesn't have one use in Chinese language, overuse of the auxiliary "le" by Zimbabwean students and lastly, wrong word arrangement when constructing a sentence with auxiliary "le". This report conducted a statistical analysis with 3 groups of students. First group of students were students who had just studied Chinese language for 3 months. The beginners were only 15 students. The second group of students were the intermediate students. Their level of Chinese is better than the beginners and they have studied Chinese for more than a year. The intermediate students were 15 students. The last group of students who I analyzed were the advanced students who were coming to China for a year program of studying Chinese language. On the grounds of analysis, this report tries to find common errors in each group of students and common errors in all groups. This article also tries to find the reasons to these errors as well as providing solutions to these errors. This is all for the betterment of learning Chinese language in Zimbabwe.

Keywords. auxiliary "le1" "le2", Zimbabwean students, errors

1. Introduction

Chinese auxiliary words are a characteristic part of speech in Chinese. In Chinese, word forms do not change according to tense changes. Auxiliary words often take on the function of expressing tense changes. The auxiliary word "le" has always been a major difficulty encountered language students when learning Chinese. In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, the teaching of the auxiliary word "le" has also become a major difficulty in teaching

Chinese as a foreign language. In Chinese, the auxiliary word "了le" is used very frequently, but its meaning is in a highly blurred state, and its usage is also very complicated. There is a lot of research on it now, in a state where numerous schools of thought are contending and each expressing their own opinions.

He Xiaoli何晓丽 (2007) investigates a large number of extensive corpora of "le" and verbs, she counts the usage of the auxiliary word "le", and summarizes the regularity of the verbs that can add "le". Zhao Dong赵栋 (2011) studied the Chinese word "le", and the name of this study is "auxiliary words research".

In addition, scholars have also conducted a lot of research on foreigners learning Chinese. Most of the studies are surveys of foreigners learning Chinese in China. The researchers investigated the learning of the Chinese auxiliary word "le" by foreign students from different countries. Zhao Xiaotong (2014) used the dynamic particles of function words "zhe着", "le了" and "guo过" as the research object in his research called "A Study on the Acquisition Errors of Dynamic Auxiliary Words “zhe”, “le”, and “guo” by Foreign Students". The research summarized the dynamic auxiliary words' grammatical meaning and pragmatic rules. He analyzed the types of errors that foreign students often make when using "le", summarized the reasons for the errors, and put forward effective teaching suggestions based on the reasons for the errors. However, he did not use specific Chinese corpus in his analysis. His research focuses on the errors of foreign students in learning auxiliary verbs. These foreign students come from different countries and speak different languages. Each language is presented in its own unique way, so the mistakes made by these foreign students are different due to the difference in the language they speak.

In the process of second language learning, it is very important to analyze the mistakes made by Zimbabwean students in learning the Chinese auxiliary word "le". In the study of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, there are many studies on the Chinese auxiliary word "le". However, most of these studies are for specific countries, and there are few studies on the errors of Zimbabwean students in learning Chinese dynamic auxiliary words. When making research on Zimbabwean learners, I found that there are several common mistakes: missing or misplacement of auxiliary word “le”. This is because the correspondence between Chinese and Shona on dynamic particles is inconsistent. Dynamic auxiliary words in Shona are infixes, hidden, and some are compound words. For example: ndatenga (我买了; I bought). This example sentence indicates that the action has been completed but is not obvious. In this case, ordinary Chinese learners in Zimbabwe generally lose the dynamic auxiliary word "了".

Different geographical locations between Zimbabwe and China, different cultures, and different religious backgrounds cause huge differences between Chinese and Shona (Zimbabwe's local language). Zimbabwean students will inevitably make many errors when learning Chinese. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the two languages is needed.

The significance of this research lies in:

(1) It has a strong application prospect. In Zimbabwe, the number of students interested in Chinese is increasing rapidly. These students have a common mother tongue, which is Shona. The number of local Chinese teachers is also increasing, so it is necessary to conduct such research to facilitate the learning of teachers and students. This article attempts to analyze the errors of the auxiliary word "le" in Zimbabwean students' Chinese learning, hoping to find a way to combine the study of the auxiliary word "le" with the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, so that the two can promote each other.

2. Theoretical Background

Dynamic auxiliary words learning is an integral part of Chinese language learning. Many foreigners make errors mainly because of the influence of their mother tongue. Error Analysis theory is a very important theory in the research of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Errors refer to when learners of the second language learn and use the target language, due to their incomplete grasp of the target language, which leads to the deviation of the target language, and a certain regular error occurs. The theory of error analysis was proposed by Corder in 1967. "Bias analysis" is the analysis and research of the errors made by second language learners in the process of acquiring a second language. In the theory of error analysis, it is a very normal phenomenon for learners to make mistakes in second language learning, and these errors can reflect the level of learners' second language acquisition. Corder proposed the five basic steps of error analysis:

The first is to collect the data; the second is to find out the errors that appear in the corpus research data; the third is to describe and classify the errors that appear; the fourth is to analyze and explore the reasons for the errors; the last is Evaluate the bias and provide possible solutions.

3. Research Methodology

Research methods and sufficient research materials are prerequisites for safeguarding research conclusions. This paper used the questionnaire method to obtain data from students at the university of Zimbabwe learning Chinese language. In this survey, the author conducted a questionnaire survey of 38 students from the University of Zimbabwe. The mother language of these students is Shona, and the official language of their country is English. The survey subjects can be divided into three groups: The first group is 15 students from the elementary class, aged between 18 and 20. Their Chinese proficiency is at the elementary level. Their understanding of Chinese is limited to basic knowledge and not much knowledge of Chinese grammar. Their Chinese proficiency can only answer simple questions, such as introducing yourself and what you are currently learning. The second group is 15 students from the intermediate class, aged between 20 and 23 years old. Their Chinese proficiency is higher than that of the students in the elementary class, and they have mastered basic Chinese grammar. The third group is comprised of 8 students from the advanced class, aged 21 to 25 years old. They have studied Chinese for nearly three years, and they are able to carry out simple conversations in Chinese. Some students have a one-year Chinese study in China. Most of the students passed the HSK Level 3 exam, and some students passed the HSK Level 4 exam.

3.1. Research on the Dynamic Auxiliary Word "了"

An auxiliary verb is a verb that can increase the grammatical function or meaning of a sentence, such as expressing tense, aspect, modality, sound, emphasis, etc. According to Li Dejin (2008), the words that are attached to a word, phrase or sentence and express various additional meanings, grammatical relationships or tone are called auxiliary words. Particles can be divided into three categories: result particles, dynamic particles and modal particles. Particles have no real meaning and cannot be used alone. Huang Borong and Liao Xudong (2011) believe that "the role of auxiliary words is to attach to content words, phrases or sentences to express structural relations or dynamics and other grammatical meanings". Auxiliary verbs are usually accompanied by a main verb. The active word provides the main semantic content of the sentence. Such as the verb "了" in the sentence "我已经吃完了我的晚餐I have finished my dinner". Here, the main verb is "to finish" and the particle "le" can express the completion of

the action. Some sentences contain two or more auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are also called help verbs, or (spoken) auxiliary verbs.

In modern Chinese dictionaries, the first interpretation of "了" as an auxiliary is: "After a verb or adjective, it means that the action or change has been completed". In Huang and Liao's "Modern Chinese", "le" is used after verbs and adjectives to indicate the realization of actions or tasks, which has become a fact. Lu Shuxiang also believes that "le" is used after a verb to indicate the completion of an action. If there is an object in front of the verb, then the auxiliary verb "le" is placed before the object, for example: 吃了饭eat a meal, 喝了水drink water, 换了衣服change clothes.

3.2 A Comparative Study of Chinese Auxiliary "Le" and Its Corresponding Words in Shona

The main purpose of this research is to find out the grammatical errors made by Zimbabwean students in learning the auxiliary word "le". As mentioned in the abstract, there are huge differences between Chinese and Shona. It is necessary for Chinese learners to conduct comparative studies on these two languages. The following are some comparisons between Chinese and Shona. It is these differences that confuse students in Zimbabwe, which leads to language errors.

In Chinese language sometimes it is difficult to ascertain where to put "le." For example, "我已经吃完了我的晚餐。I have already finished eating my dinner" In this sentence eat is the verb but "le" is put after 完 (finish) which becomes confusing to students on where and when they should use "le" in a sentence.

In Chinese, "le了" belongs to the auxiliary verb, but in Shona grammar, it is analyzed or classified at the inflection point of the language, and is regarded as a part of the tense symbol (verbal inflection). After the verb, the auxiliary word "le" is often used to express various additional meanings. For example; 我买了一本书 wo mai le yi ben shu. ("买mai" is translated buy. "le了" which is positioned in front of buy means the "buy" action has been completed. In Shona the phrase "ndatenga bhuku 我买了一本书" can have two meanings depending on the tone used.

Another difference between the Chinese dynamic auxiliary word "了le" and the corresponding word in Shona is their position in the sentence. The position of "了le" in Chinese is not fixed. This is because the "le" in Chinese is dynamic. Sometimes "了le" appears in the middle of the sentence and sometimes at the end of the sentence. When "了le" is in a sentence, we can realize that it is a mark of a dynamic particle. The Shona language is different. The corresponding word of "了le" in Shona has no obvious position in the sentence (hidden). This is the difficulty for Zimbabwean students when translating between two languages. For example;

a) The action is completed: (ndatenga 我已经买了 wo yijing mai le; I already bought, vasvika: 他们已经到了 tamen yijing daole; they have arrived, tapedza: 我们做完了 wo men zuo wan le; we are done) but it is not obvious in Shona(hidden). In the example provided, there is no fixed verb to indicate the completion of the action. Different verbs have different usages for the perfect tense. Therefore, it is difficult for Zimbabwean students to master the Chinese dynamic auxiliary word "了".

Sometimes the usage of the Chinese auxiliary word "le" when the action is completed is regular. At this time, the grammatical function of "le" and "已经yijing" are the same. The

corresponding mark in Shona is infixal-to-for example: (我已经买了woyijing mai le; ndatotenga, vatosvika 他们已经到了ta men yijing dao le; they have arrived, and tatopedza 我们已经做完了; wo men yijing zuo wan le; we have already finished). In addition, since “le” and “yijing” have the same meaning and sometimes can be found in the same sentence, it becomes difficult for learners to know when and when not to omit the auxiliary verb “le”.

b) Indicates changes

The suffix "-zo-" in Shona indicates a changed morpheme. E.g:

• (vazoenda kubasa)-zo- (他上班了). If there is no "-zo-", the change cannot be expressed, which is still "他上班了." In Chinese when “le” is omitted it can change the meaning of the sentence.

These usages can confuse learners. They are hidden in verb phrases, which are combined words in Shona. Chinese and Shona have different forms. "了" is an independent morpheme. In Shona, the dynamic form is "-to-", and "-zo-" is sticky morphemes. If there is no prefix and suffix, they are meaningless and are not free morphemes. *Azodzokera* 他回去了, *atodzokera* 他已经回去了. These linguistic differences make it difficult for Zimbabwean students to accurately grasp the usage of "le". Therefore, in the process of expressing, sometimes they add "le" where it's not suitable and sometimes they omit le where it is needed.

As mentioned above, Shona uses inflectional morphemes as an important grammatical technique. The corresponding expression marks of Chinese "了" in Shona are the morphemes "-a-", "-ve", "-zo-", "-to-" and "-cha-", which are all infix morphemes. Shona relies on morphemes to express tense (tense sign), some negation (negation) and auxiliary verbs (auxiliary) and so on. This article only discusses the infix morphemes corresponding to the auxiliary word "了", and other tense morphemes and usage have not been involved.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The study was tested on three groups of students from the University of Zimbabwe in November 2020. Although the subjects had different Chinese proficiency levels, the test used the same questionnaire to all study groups and allowed subjects to translate the sentences in Shona language to Chinese. The elementary class had 15 participants, the intermediate class had 15 participants and the advanced class had 8 participants making it a total of 38 participants. The purpose was to investigate whether the language errors appearing are related to the Chinese proficiency. According to the results of the questionnaire survey, I found common problems in each group, analyzed the reasons for language errors, and propose corresponding solutions based on these problems.

4. A Study on the Mistakes of the Chinese Auxiliary Word "了" for Zimbabwean Students

4.1. Table 1: survey of students at the University of Zimbabwe on how they used "le"

Table 1 "University of Zimbabwe" s students use of "le" survey statistics

number	Type of error	Elementary class	Intermediate class	Advanced class	Total of errors made	Percentage
1	Error of addition	11	10	4	25	49.02%
2	Error by omission	12	9	5	26	50.98%

The first table is the case of "le" that added by mistake or omitted in a sentence. The numbers of sentences with errors by addition in the three groups are: 11 sentences in the elementary class, 10 sentences in the intermediate class, and 4 sentences in the advanced class. The errors by omission are 12, 9 and 5 respectively. The error ratios are 49.2%, and 50% respectively. The ratio of errors in the elementary class and the intermediate class is obviously higher than that of the advanced class. This is because the advanced class had fewer participants and also the fact that they have been learning Chinese for a longer period compared to other groups.

5 Analysis of Causes of Errors

5.1 Mother tongue interference

The mother tongue, as the primary tool for foreign students to learn Chinese, has an important influence on their Chinese acquisition, which is the transfer of mother tongue. Mother tongue transfer is divided into positive transfer and negative transfer. If the difference between the mother tongue and the target language is small, which is beneficial to the learner's learning, the mother tongue will have a positive transfer effect. If the mother tongue and the target language are very different and hinder the target language learning Produce negative transfer of mother tongue. Generally speaking, students in the elementary stage of Chinese can only rely on knowledge of their mother tongue when they are not familiar with the rules of the target language. Therefore, learners of the same mother tongue also make similar mistakes, which is also called "Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue" (rujian, 1992) . Among Zimbabwean students whose mother tongue is Shona, the mistake of adding the auxiliary word "了" is very common. For example, "...ka..." in Shona means that the action has been completed. One of the grammatical functions of "了" is to indicate the completion of an action. Therefore, when Zimbabwean students translate directly from their native language into Chinese, as long as the

sentence has "...ka", they will automatically add the word "了". There is a sentence in the questionnaire saying "ndageza geza ndikarara", "ndikarara" means the completion of the action. The person has completed the action of taking a bath, and then goes to sleep. Therefore, Zimbabwean students add the word "了" after "bath" or "sleep". This kind of error is caused by the influence of the native language on the target language. There are two verbs in one sentence so it is difficult to know where to correctly put "le" and end up putting le in after every verb.

Omission errors are also very common, mainly caused by the influence of the mother tongue. Some words do not have "...ka" in Shona, but they can still indicate that the action has been completed. For example, the word "ndadya" indicates that the act of eating has been completed, but there is no "...ka" to indicate the completion of the action. In this case "le" is usually omitted. Word disorder is another common mistake that is affected by the mother tongue. The word order of Shona language and Chinese is completely different. For example, in Shona language, time is usually placed in the middle or at the end of a sentence, while in Chinese, time is usually placed at the beginning of a sentence. This usually causes confusion among Zimbabwean students when expressing Chinese, leading to disordered word order. For example, there is a sentence in the questionnaire that needs to be translated, saying "handina kuuya kuzvidzidzo nezuro". Many students made many mistakes. "Nezuro" means time and it is at the end of the sentence. "Nezuro" refers to an event that has occurred yesterday. Therefore, word order is usually affected. These errors are very common in elementary and intermediate classes, but less in advanced classes, because the advanced class has learned Chinese for a long time and the Chinese level is already very high. Advanced classes have the advantage of learning Chinese for a long time.

5.2 Intra-lingual interference

Intra-language interference means that learners apply limited and insufficient target knowledge to the new language phenomenon of the target language improperly by analogy, which is also called "overgeneralization of target language rules" (Liu Xun, 2002). With the increase of Chinese knowledge and the improvement of Chinese level, "generalization of target language rules" is one of the main reasons for errors. Intermediate and advanced students use grammatical rules for reasoning, which can get rid of imitating language learning and improve learning efficiency. However, this shortcut learning method often over-applies the "rules of the target language" and makes many mistakes. Because many rules of language are traditional, they cannot be judged by rational knowledge.

For example, "le" and "guo" are used confusingly, because the usage of "le" and "guo" are very similar. In some sentences, "le" and "guo" can be interchanged. For example, "我吃过 了 I ate before, if "le" is removed the sentence still have the same meaning." But there is still a big difference between the two. "guo" means that a certain action has taken place or has such a state, whilst "了" has no such usage.

According to the analysis data, we can see that in the use of "le", more problems lie in the middle-level students. At this stage of learning, the learner has mastered part of Chinese grammar, but some subtle differences are still not learned, so various errors will appear. These are all errors due to "target language generalization".

6 Teaching suggestions for Zimbabwean students to learn "le"

6.1 Suggestions on the teaching methods of "le."

From the perspective of grammatical structure, learners at the elementary stage should understand the position and usage rules of "le" in a sentence, explain common usage, and form

a sense of language in the continuous sentence imitation and practice. Ask the students to memorize some simple sentence patterns. Once they find that the students have added "" to their past actions, the teacher should summarize the unusable situations.

6.2 Compare native language and target language, learn in context

Zimbabwean students speak more than one language. The most commonly used languages are Shona and English, and they are very capable of learning languages. However, many language studies have found that they will transfer their mother tongue when learning Chinese. Teachers should pay attention to the differences between different languages in the teaching process. Word order is one of the domains mainly affected by the mother tongue. For example, "I went to supermarket yesterday." usually has a wrong translation, the translation will be "我去了超市昨天." These word order errors are what teachers need to focus on.

6.3 Suggestions for students

Language learning is a conscious activity of students, and it is an internal cause. Textbooks and teachers are objective factors which are external factors. Internal factors always play a decisive role. The individual factors of students' second language acquisition include many aspects, such as physiological factors, cognitive factors and emotional factors. Students in Zimbabwe attach great importance to their test scores, so students should reflect on their own learning methods through each test score and discover the differences in learning strategies between themselves and other students, so as to learn from each other and improve their learning effectiveness. When acquiring a second language, students should not adopt an evasive attitude to grammatical points because they are afraid of making mistakes. It is normal for errors in the process of language learning. More lectures and practice will improve and reduce errors. Therefore, learners should closely cooperate with teachers. The teaching activities are active. Actively participate in classroom activities. Students can get short-term motivation from the rewards given by teachers, and long-term motivation from the practicality of learning Chinese. In addition, learners can also find interest in learning and freshness in contact with new things from the beauty of Chinese pronunciation, the richness of vocabulary, and the regularity of structure.

Conclusion

The Chinese auxiliary word "le" is an important grammatical content, which runs through the three stages of Chinese learning process: elementary, intermediate and advanced. This grammar point is very important to learners at all levels. This article mainly uses questionnaires to investigate the use of the Chinese dynamic auxiliary word "le" by Zimbabwean students. Through investigation, the author learned that the types of mistakes often made by Zimbabwean students can be divided into several categories: wrong addition, wrong order, omission, and confusion of "着, 了 and 过" which can be used interchangeably but not in all cases. In addition, on the basis of summarizing the types of errors, the reasons for the errors of Zimbabwean students are further analysed, mainly due to the negative transfer of mother tongue, the complexity and pragmatic rules of the Chinese auxiliary word "le", the generalization of target language rules, teaching and textbooks Misleading and the influence of Zimbabwean students' communicative strategies on Chinese. Aiming at the reasons for these errors, the author puts forward some specific teaching suggestions, hoping to help Zimbabwean students effectively avoid mistakes when learning Chinese auxiliary words.

As the time for intermediate and advanced students to study Chinese increases, their grammatical knowledge also expands, but they are not sufficiently detailed in specific rules,

and there will be more wrong forms of the sentences. This requires teachers to pay attention and strengthen the training of students' basic skills.

This article analyses the current situation of Zimbabwean students' learning "le", and provides practical help for the "le" teaching. Due to the knowledge level and time constraints, the author only analysed the students in the process of "le". The author has analysed the mistakes made by the students, but the information is not rich enough, the author will do in-depth grammar research in the future research.

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