

Analysis Of Acquisition Of Chinese Structure Auxiliary Words 的, 得, 地/De By Zambian Learners.

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Abstract:

Zambia's all-weather friendship with China dates back to 60 years ago. This relationship has resulted in great cooperation in all sectors of the economy. As the saying goes learning Chinese doubles your world, there are great opportunities for fluent Mandarin speakers in Zambian banking, mining, and education sectors. However, to master the language, structural auxiliary words are a must for the learners of the Chinese language. This paper will focus on the acquisition of Chinese auxiliary words by Zambian learners of the Chinese language, with the hope of motivating and helping the learners use the auxiliary words correctly. The research surveyed over 38 Zambian learners of Chinese with a total of 30 questions comprising 10 fill-in-the-blanks, 10 multiple-choice questions, and 10 true or false questions. Furthermore, there are three main research methods in this paper namely materials from students' HSK study materials, interviews, and questionnaires. Furthermore, this paper analyzed the acquisition of Chinese structural auxiliary words “的, 得, 地” and the challenges that Zambian Chinese learners face when acquiring these words. Consequently, the paper has revealed that the learners have a good command of the structural auxiliary word de (的+noun), and it is one of the most used structural auxiliary words. Nonetheless, the research has also revealed that Chinese learners find it a challenge to master the other two structural auxiliary words “得+complement” and “地+verb”. It was observed that the learners wrongly misuse 得for 地 whenever they do not know which word to use. Hence, future research should consider separately conducting the error analysis of the acquisition of the two structure auxiliary words (得and 地), thereby positively contributing to the development of teaching and learning the Chinese language in Zambia.

KeyWord: Auxiliary words “地, 得, 的”, Acquisition, second language, Zambian learners.

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I. Introduction

According to Zhu (1965) The Auxiliary word “de” is a nominal maker, and further stated that “de” has three main uses. The first one is to be an enclitic of an adverbial unit, the second one is to be an enclitic of a descriptive adjective, and the third one is the enclitic of a nominal unit. Liu Jingyao (2021) also argues that modern Chinese and the studies on the conception of the presupposition, the nominal structure “X+DE” should be classified as a type of presupposition trigger where the “X” is the presumed to be true, and the “de” is the marker of the presupposition.

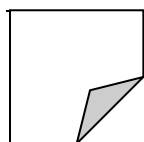
Yun Jina, Qing Lib, Yingshun Wua, and Young-Gil Kim (2009), define a structural auxiliary as an unstressed form word that performs the grammatical functions of structure in the Chinese language. The structural auxiliaries are the most frequent words used words in Chinese. Their study concluded that the average occurrence of structural words in Chinese news articles is 1.25 per sentence. Although structural auxiliaries occur extremely frequently in Chinese, there are only three words that perform the grammatical functions of structure, and they are, “的 (de), 得 (de), 地 (de)”. Furthermore, Liu XueMei (2006) also argues that in modern Chinese, the structural auxiliary word de “的” is generally used after the attributive, de “地” is used after the, and de “得” is used before the compliment;

Attributive+de “的+名字/“定语+的 +名词” beautiful scenery/漂亮的风景。

Adverbial +de 地+central language/状语+“地”+中心语。如：高兴地走了，快乐地练习。

Central language +de 得+complement/中心语+“得”+补语。如：穿得暖，吃得饱

In addition, 吕叔湘 (1981) in the book The 800 Commons, pointed out that 的, 得, 地 are attributive, adverbial, and complements. That is to say that they are marks of attributes, adverbial, and complements. From



this definition, we may see the importance that the scholars have put concerning the acquisition of structural auxiliary words. The author believes that mastery of these structural auxiliary words is important for those who want to communicate and express themselves in the Chinese language correctly. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyse the nature of errors by Zambian students during the acquisition of Chinese structural auxiliary words and the possible ways of correcting them. Finally, the study is expected to greatly benefit both the learner and the teacher of the Chinese language in learning and teaching the Chinese language as a second language.

II. Theoretical Framework

This research draws its hypothesis from the contrastive study theory. According to Gast (2013:1) cited by James Zulu (2024) in a paper titled; A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Nyanja Noun Classifiers states that “Contrastive analysis investigates the differences between pairs (or small sets) of languages against the background of similarities and to provide input to applied disciplines such as foreign language teaching and translation studies”. Therefore, since Chinese belong to a different language group, this theory will help compare the grammatical laws between the learners' language of instruction, and the Chinese language. On the other hand, Language input theory will be applied. According to Krashen (1985), receiving comprehensive input is a way that can lead to the acquisition of a second language. The theory attempts to cover most of the facts involved in second language acquisition such as age, personality traits, classroom instruction, mechanism of language acquisition, environment influences input, etc. Therefore, this paper attempts to answer the following question.

1. What are some of the errors that Zambian learners make when acquiring the use of the 3 auxiliary words?
2. Where do these errors emerge from?

III. Review Of Related Literature

Though learning Chinese in Zambia has over ten years of history, Zambian learners have little or no research on the acquisition of structural auxiliary words. With five years of teaching Chinese as a second language in Zambia, the author has noted that one of the challenges learners of Chinese are facing in Zambia is the mastering of structural auxiliary words. Furthermore, the language environment in Zambia is very different. Zambia has seven local official languages namely; Lozi, Luvale, Lunda, Kaonde, Tonga, Bemba, and Nyanja. That says, though the learners use English at school, they also use their local languages daily.

Nonetheless, in second language learning several pieces of research have been done. For example; Zulu James (2024), states that throughout the field of second language teaching and learning, it was observed that students find it challenging to use words of the target language mainly because the meaning and use in the target language differs from the similar or equivalent word in the student's language when they are used. According to Lado (1995:2), those elements similar to the student's first language will be simple for the students, and those elements that are different will be difficult for the student.

Liu Yue Hua (1983), pointed out that in the Chinese language, when objectives, nouns, verbs, and so on are used as attributes tenses, the structural auxiliary words must be put in front. However, not all attribute tenses must be filled by de 的。On the contrary, according to Michael Swan (1982), in English, there are no structural auxiliary words de 的, but rather use “s” and the preposition “of” to express ownership or belonging. For example;

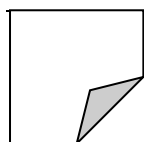
1. David's book/大卫的书
2. Wang's wife/王的爱人
3. The flag of Zambia has different colors/赞比亚国旗有不同的颜色。
4. Lusaka is the capital city of Zambia, and Beijing is the capital city of China/卢萨卡是赞比亚的首都, 而北京是中国的首都。

In addition, according to Gao Xia (2005), in English the attributes, that modify the central word of the noun can also be used as an adjective or a proposition, an attribute clause, etc. There is no word equivalent to “de” between the central words. However, when these attributes are translated into Chinese, the structural auxiliary word de“的” is generally used in Chinese Language. For example;

5. FT Boys is a group of group of popular singers/FT 青年是一群最受欢迎的歌组
6. I have just moved into a house in Gaopengdadao/ 我刚半岛高朋大道的房子

*The above six sentences already show us the challenges that Zambian learners face when acquiring structural auxiliary words, especially for 5 and 6 which do not reflect the essence of the auxiliary word. And the question at this point is are Zambian learners of Chinese able to acquire Chinese structural auxiliary words?

Therefore, to cultivate professionalism in teaching Chinese as a second language, several researches have been done on the acquisition of Chinese auxiliary words. For example; Chi Daojia (2020:1) carried out research on the error analysis of the acquisition of Chinese Auxiliary by Uzbek Speakers based on the error analysis, the results show that there are auxiliary words in both languages, but their grammatical structures are quite different.



Therefore, the author pointed out that, learners should pay attention to the general structure of Auxiliary usage. On the other hand, Yang, and Zhan's (2017) research on international students' ultimate attainment in Chinese structural auxiliary word “de” (的) acquisition. The research pointed out that “adults’ second language acquisition on grammar is more based on the acquisition of grammatical rules than children. Thereby, the clarity of grammatical rules affects adults’ grasp of these rules directly. For nouns as attributes, the frequency of monosyllabic nouns as attributes is lower than that of disyllabic nouns as attributes.”

Chuanli Zang, Manman Zhang, Xuejun Bai, Guoli Yan, Bernhard Angele, and Simon P Liversedge (2018) also researched on Skipping of the very-high-frequency structural particle de (的) in Chinese reading. The results showed that Chinese readers were more likely to skip the target when the preview was de than in either of the other conditions, suggesting that de-skipping is triggered by the parafoveal preview of a commonplace particle word rather than by the likelihood of the upcoming word given the sentential context. Yumo Zhu (2022:33) researched An Error Analysis of “得” Stative Complement Structures. The author reviewed that “得” Stative complement structure is “a distinctive syntactic structure in Chinese, which has always been considered as a difficulty in teaching Chinese as a foreign language”. He further pointed out that the structure takes “S+V+得+C” as its basic structure, other slight changes are derived from it. Errors frequently occur because there is no corresponding structure in Indo-European languages. For example;

7. Speak Chinese fluently-中文说得很流利

8. The painting is so beautiful-画得真好看

9. Walk very fast-走得很快

*from these three sentences, we can see how different Chinese grammar is from the English language. Hence, at this point, the question is what errors Zambian learners face when acquiring the structural Chinese auxiliary words.

Xiaoshi Li (2010) researched Sociolinguistic Variation in the Speech of Learners of Chinese as a Second Language, the results The general patterns are as follows: (a) DE tends to be deleted more in informal speech than in formal settings; (b) higher proficiency and longer residence in China—more interactions with native speakers—promote DE deletion; and (c) females tend to adopt more formal language style and use DE more than males. The study also found that teachers and textbooks use DE much more often than native speakers. Learners’ patterns of DE use closely follow those of their teachers and textbooks, suggesting the necessity of explicit instruction in sociolinguistic variants in L2 classrooms. Yun Jina, Qing Lib, Yingshun Wua, and Young-Gil Kim (2009), researched the Effective Use of Chinese Structural Auxiliaries for Chinese Parsing. The research reviewed CSAs are usually used wrongly or improperly in Chinese because of the same pinyin or same writing style of these three words. They are misused in place of each other. For instance;

10. 现金流量非常的充沛 -very abundant cash flow, the word “的” is misused to be replaced as the correct word “地”.

*Sentence #10 points out the misplacing among these three auxiliary words, this is so because they have the same pinyin and same pronunciation. The question at this point is whether there is any misuse of each other among the auxiliary words by Zambian learners

Therefore, this paper attempts to analyze the nature of errors by Zambian learners during the acquisition of Chinese structural auxiliary words and the possible causes of the errors. Finally, the paper is expected to be reference material for the teaching of Chinese as a second language.

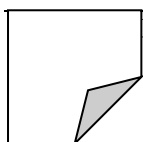
IV. Methodology

The research surveyed over 38 Zambian learners of Chinese with a total of 30 questions comparing 10 fill-in-the-blanks, 10 multiple-choice questions, and 10 true or false questions. Furthermore, there are three main research methods in this paper namely materials from students' HSK study materials, interviews, and questionnaires. This survey is meant to establish the nature of errors, and sources as well as their possible causes, and in turn, make necessary recommendations for the teaching of the Chinese language in Zambia.

V. Data Analysis And Interpretation

Analysis of de“的”.

De “的” is one of the frequently used structural auxiliary words by Chinese learners. Its basic grammatical structure is 的+名词。 Therefore, to examine the acquisition and usage of this structural auxiliary word “的”, students' HSK materials and a questionnaire were analyzed. The questionnaire had 30 questions of which third or ten questions were for “的’。 This survey showed that Zambian learners of Chinese showed mastery of this structural auxiliary word “的”。 This was observed from the fill-in-the-blanks and multiple-choice questions they low error rates of 12.43% and 10.43% respectively. This may be traced to the fact that this is the first structural auxiliary word that learners learn from their early classes and also its possessive use in daily



conversation. On the contrary, the students had a high error rate of 43.8% from true or false questions (section C). It seems this section had tricky questions, for example;

zhè shì wǒ gòu
11. 这是我够。

Though this sentence looks simple, in second language acquisition, the cultural aspect of the target language must be considered too. Therefore, from the above sentence the students made the error omission, that is to say, they omitted “的” in the sentence by saying that the sentence is true. This error of omission may be traced from sentences like 这是我妈妈/this is my mother etc. That is to say, when talking of kinship one may omit the “的”, but when talking of ownership of animals or things, the addition of the word “的” is a must. Cui Xi Liang (1996), stated that “A 的 B” means B belongs to A. That is to say, it is for A, while in “AB”, it means A belongs to B or says A is for B. Therefore, in this sentence (11) 这是我狗, our A=我, and B=狗。Therefore, if I say 这是我够, I am simply saying I belong to the dog or I am for the dog. Hence learners have to pay attention to the correct use of 的 and its cultural background. Finally, this sentence, 这是我狗 has to be corrected to 这是我的狗。 That is to say 这是我狗 is not the same as 这是我的狗。

wǒ yǒu yí gè zhōngguó de péngyou
12. 我有一个中国的朋友。

Secondly, this question had an error rate of 58.33%, which shows that many learners underestimated the sentence and the structural word “的” As the saying goes never underestimate your enemy. The error in this sentence was due to the wrong use or addition of the “的” in the sentence. This can be traced to the fact that students are used to say the following sentences;

13. 她是我的朋友/she is my friend

14. 他是我的汉语老师/He is my Chinese language teacher.

However, students have to look at the other side of the coin from the following sentences;

15. 他是我的爸爸的爸爸/He is my father's father. That is to say, we are not talking of my father but my father's father. Wang Xijie (1992), in the book titled Difficulties Foreign Students face when learning Chinese Grammar, pointed out that 中国的朋友 is not equal to 中国朋友。 For this reason, 中国的朋友/friend of China is not my friend but a friend of China. And I cannot have a friend of China, but I can have a Chinese friend/中国朋友。 Let 中国的朋友=A, and 中国朋友=B, we may say A is not equal to B or B is not equal to A. Therefore, learners need to pay attention to the correct use of “的”, thereby speaking the perfect Chinese language. Finally, the students have shown a command of the “的+名词/noun” structure. This may be due to students' daily use of this word. Michael Swan (1982), also pointed out that there are no structural auxiliary words “的” in English, however, there is the use of “s” and the preposition “of” to help show ownership or belonging. Hence, it seems students may be able to connect with this concept.

Analysis of de“得”

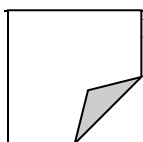
Yumo (2023:33) states that the structural auxiliary word takes the grammatical structure “S+V+得+complement”. Liu (2006) pointed out that in the modern Chinese language, the structural auxiliary word takes the structure “central language+得+complement”. That is to say, this word goes with the complement. Therefore, to analysis the acquisition of this word by Zambian learners of Chinese, a questionnaire was carried out, as well as HSK material was analyzed. One-third of the questions in the questionnaire were for 得。 The survey revealed that Zambian learners had challenges using “得+complement” especially when it was the only required structural auxiliary word in the sentence. This was observed from the fill-in-the-blanks (section A) and true or false (section C) which had high error rates of 30.39% and 41.47% respectively. On the other hand, the author noted that when the two auxiliary words “得 and 的” are used together the learners were able to get it right. For example;

16. 张老师 (的) 女儿长 (得) 很漂亮。

This sentence had a very low error rate of 6.2%. This can be traced to the fact that students can see that these two words are different and hence able to use “的+名词” and “得+补语”。 On the contrary, sentences like;

17. 赞比亚的 (得) 手机号码有十位数字, had an error rate of 25%. Several learners chose true, that is to say, this sentence is true and the error that was observed was a wrong grammatical error since 得 goes with a complement and a not a noun in this 手机 is a noun so it cannot be used directly in front of 得。

Lastly, the author took the question (17) 赞比亚得手机号码有十位数字 on Google Translator and translated from Chinese to English. The answer was correct “Zambian phone number has 10 digits”. From this example, we can see that the translator did not trace the error, that says if the learner what to check the answer



using the app, s/he Will think the sentence is correct because the translator does not reveal the grammatical difference between “得+补语” and “的+名词”

Analysis of de“地”

Liu (2006), noted that “地” is the adverbial structural auxiliary word. Therefore, it takes the grammatical structure“状语+地+中心语”。On the other hand Chi Daojia (2020) in the paper titled Acquisition of Structural Auxiliary Words by Uzbekistan Students, simply puts it as “地+动词”.Therefore, to fully analyse all three structural auxiliary words. The questionnaire also had ten questions that examined students on the correct use of the structural auxiliary word“地”.The survey revealed that of the three structural auxiliary words “地” has the highest error rate. That is to say that Zambian learners of Chinese had challenges using the “地+动词”。The author noted, not only from the questionnaire but also from the interviews, the author noted that the student rarely uses this structural auxiliary word“地”.Therefore, the error rate for all three sections was 52.75%,44.43%, and 33.33% respectively. This can be seen from the following questions,

18. 专心 (地) 上课不
大意
地+动词

This question had an error rate of 46.7%.learners were choosing “得” instead of 地。 Therefore, the author noted that Zambian learners of Chinese usually confuse 得 for 地。 Hence, students need to master the basic grammatical structure for 地 which is 地+动词。

19. 我实实在在 (地) 告你, 没骗你了
重叠+地+动词

The survey showed that Zambian learners of Chinese are not familiar with this structure, and the author noted that the students hardly used this kind of structure. Hence the error rate of 43.8 was recorded for this sentence. Furthermore, when this sentence is translated into English, the students do not see any trace of the Chinese structural auxiliary word 地。

20. 苦得 (地) 伤心

伤心是一个形容词, therefore, it cannot be paired with 地, but rather with 得。 Hence wrong use of the word 地.The author also noted a similar sentence in student HSK 四级 past papers. The students were required to rearrange the words and the correct answer should be;

21.他听到这消息后伤心地哭了.from this sentence, we can see that students usually meet this kind of question having the structure“状语+地+动词”。

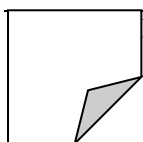
Therefore, this sentence is “伤心地哭” is under the 状语+地+动词”.However, 苦得 (地) 伤心 because it is 动词+得+伤心, and because students are yet to master the use of these two different structural auxiliary words learners wrong choose 得 instead of 地 resulting in into the error rate 37.35%.

VI. Summary And Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the acquisition of Chinese structural auxiliary words“的, 得, 地” and the challenges that Zambian Chinese learners face when acquiring these words. Therefore, the paper has revealed that Zambian learners of Chinese have a good command of the structural auxiliary word de (的+noun). This may be traced from the materials papers and HSK which is one of the most used auxiliary structural auxiliary words. On the other hand, the other two structural auxiliary words “得+complement and 地+verb” have proved to be a challenge to Zambian learners of the Chinese language. The author has pointed out among many things that these two words seem to have no equivalent in English, hence posing a challenge to Zambian learners whose official language or whose language of instruction is English. Furthermore, this paper has revealed that the learners wrongly use the word “得” for “地” hence in many instances. Furthermore, when these words are translated from Chinese to English, the online translators (APP) are not able to trace the grammatical difference between these three words. Therefore, learners and teachers should take note of these translations.

On the other hand, the author has pointed out the fact that the pinyin and pronunciation of these three words are the same. Hence, when typing on the computer students may enter the wrong character in the sentence, thereby posing a challenge when students what to use these words. Therefore, the author has outlined several recommendations that will be useful for both teachers and learners of the Chinese language;

1. Zambian learners and teachers should pay attention to different basic grammatical structures of these words, for example; 的+名词: 这是我的狗, 得+complement: 他汉语说得很好, and 地+verb: 弟弟高兴地走了, thereby helping the students masters there proper use and difference.



2. In second language acquisition, the teacher should also bring out the cultural background of these words, for example, one may say 我妈妈, and 我爸爸, but cannot say 我狗. That is to say to have always to say 我的狗 (always add the 的).
3. Due to technological advancement, the teacher of Chinese should transform from a normal way of teaching (black/whiteboard and a book) to multimodality (adapt new teaching skills such as the use of PowerPoint, the internet, and pictures in our lessons to give the students more ways of learning,). This implies that when the teacher is teaching the three different words, the teacher may teach using a song having words because students learn fast via singing. The teacher may also take the students to the sports ground and take pictures which will later be projected on the PowerPoint presentation (PPT), thereby helping students connect with these three Chinese structural auxiliary words (CSAW-3).

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