ERROR ANALYSIS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES OF CHINESE TIME ADVERBS “ZAI” AND “CAI” FOR INDOONESIAN STUDENTS

Laurencia Noviana

Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, School of Chinese Language and Literature, Wuhan University
Wuhan, Hubei Province, P.R.China 430072
noviana.laurencia@yahoo.com

Received: 12th February 2019/Revised: 21st February 2019/Accepted: 15th March 2019

How to Cite: Noviana, L. (2019). Error analysis and teaching strategies of Chinese time adverbs “zai” and “cai” for Indonesian students. Lingua Cultura, 13(2), 93-97. https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v13i2.5390

ABSTRACT

This research aimed at investigating Indonesian students’ mastery of Chinese adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). Modern Chinese adverbs were a difficult point in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The time adverb of modern Chinese, zai (再) and cai (才), was an adverbial adverb easily misused by Indonesian students because these two adverbs had the same counterpart in Indonesian language. This research conducted a questionnaire survey among 83 Indonesian students in China. The questionnaire was a test about the use of time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). The sentences that test 10 questions all came from the BCC corpus of Beijing Language and Culture University. After investigation, it is found that Indonesian students’ errors are more obvious. The researcher hopes that it can supplement the research achievements of Indonesian students in learning Chinese adverbs, and arouse more scholars to study the characteristics of learning Chinese adverbs for Indonesian students and promote the development of Chinese language teaching in Indonesia.

Keywords: error analysis, teaching strategies, Chinese adverbs

INTRODUCTION

The study of adverbs in modern Chinese has always been a hot and important topic in grammar research (张明辉 & 朱, 2019). Adverbs are one of the most important and divergent parts of word class in Chinese (王, 2017). Adverbs in modern Chinese are also one of difficult points in teaching Chinese as a foreign language (周 & 潘, 2017). The Chinese adverbs often have more than one meaning, and the usage of each meaning is quite complex, such as the time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) in modern Chinese (宋, 2014). The adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) have five meanings in the Eight Hundred Words of Modern Chinese (吕, 1980), even the two adverbs have some similar meanings, which leads to the Chinese learners often mixing the Chinese adverb zai (再) and cai (才), and Indonesian students are no exception.

Time adverbs have always occupied an important position in modern Chinese system, and they have always been the main content of research (郑, 2017). There are many studies on Chinese time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才), but there has never been a comparative study of the two adverbs. And there has never been any study on the difficulties Indonesian students encounter in learning Chinese time adverbs or the mixed use of these two adverbs. The objective of this research is to analyze the misuses of the time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) among the Indonesian students in mastering modern Chinese and to find out the reasons for the errors, and propose some teaching strategies for these two adverbs.

METHODS

The data of this research are collected through the questionnaire. In order to understand the mastery of the time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) in modern Chinese, the author designs a set of Chinese adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) questionnaire. The questionnaire is a test about the use of time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). The sentences that test 10 questions (6 zai (再) sentences, 4 cai (才) sentences) all sentences come from the BCC corpus of Beijing Language and Culture University. Test questions are multiple choice questions. Indonesian students in China are asked to choose zai (再) or cai (才) to fill in the brackets of sentences. The author uses the online electronic questionnaire distributed to Wechat Groups of Indonesian students in China with around 500 population; 104 respondents filled in the questionnaires.
and 83 of the valid questionnaires are analyzed. This research use qualitative descriptive analysis. Classified the true and false answers of the data received, and find out the reasons. The results and analysis discuss below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first part of the questionnaire focuses on the background and Chinese level of Indonesian students. Among 83 Indonesian students whose mother tongue is Indonesian; 83,13%, native language is Indonesian dialect (Java, Sunda, and other dialects) 8,43%; native language is Chinese dialect (Cantonese, Minnan dialect, Chaozhou, etc.) 8,43%. Their time length in learning Chinese is divided into three categories, 1-2 years (45,78%), 3-5 years (40,96%), 6 years or more (13,25%). Their Chinese levels are respectively; beginner Chinese level (12,05%), intermediate Chinese level (50,60%), advanced Chinese level (37,35%).

The second part of the questionnaire is about 10 sentences contains time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). The right answer for sentences no. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9 is zai (再).

As can be seen from Figure 1 and 2, Indonesian students are most likely to make the mistake of misusing the adverb of time zai (再) as the adverb of time cai (才).

Figure 1 Misuse of Cai

The right answer for sentence no. 4, 7, 8 is cai (才).

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.

Those are the analysis finds out that the semantics of the sentence no.10 is vague.
Adverbs *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) can both appear in “t1_ VP", which means that the action happens later. Therefore, he thinks that *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) are synonyms, and they have differences. The differences are *cai* (才) can be used for what has already been, or for what has not been; *zai* (再) cannot be used for what has already been, but only for what has not been. Beside that, “t1 *cai* (才) VP" expresses the subjective evaluation of the narrator, and holds that “t1VP" is too late, while “t1 *cai* (才) VP" reflects the willingness of the arranger to arrange VP at a later time (吴, 1997).

Sentence 9 should use the adverb *zai* (再) to indicate that VP2 (eating) will occur or end after VP1 (father’s return).

Most Indonesian students (56.63%) chose adverb *cai* (才) to fill in the blanks, probably because they thought VP2 (eating) happens later, so the speaker (I) express dissatisfaction (unhappy). It is worth noting that the word *cai* (才) can be used as already, but the sentence containing the adverb *cai* (才) cannot add the auxiliary word *le*. Some Chinese sentences have vague semantics and non-native speakers sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between the adverbs *zai* (再) or *cai* (才), as in the following two sentences:

- *午餐下午4点吃, 晚餐吃到晚上11点才吃*. In this sentence, the adverb *cai* (才) means VP happens late.

- *午餐下午4点吃, 晚餐吃到晚上11点再吃 (才)*. Some Indonesian students (28.92%) chose *zai* (再) incorrectly. Maybe they think that *zai* (再) should be used here to express action (eat) repetition. In fact, the sentence ‘eat’ is not the same ‘eat’. The first ‘eat’ is lunch, the second ‘eat’ is dinner, not action repetition.

Second, the semantics of the time adverb *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) are similar, which lead to the relationship between the two adverbs as synonyms (吴, 1997). Third, adverb *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) have a lot of meanings that can confuse Chinese learners. In modern Chinese 800 words, Lyu Shuxiang has listed five meanings for the adverb *cai* (才) and *zai* (再, 2015). For adverb *cai* (才): (1) Just now or it is not long ago; (2) things happen or end late; (3) the quantity is small and the degree is low, only; (4) means what happens only under certain conditions, or for some reason or purpose; (5) emphasize definite tone.

Lyu Shuxiang also gives a note to compare *cai* (才) and *zai* (再). For *zai* (再): (1) repeat or continue an action (or a state); (2) indicates that an action will occur in a certain situation; (3) before adjectives, the degree of expression increases; (4) *zai* (再) and negative words are used together; (5) in addition.

On the adverbs *cai* (才) and *zai* (再), Lyu Shuxiang has also added a note that *zai* (再) means that the action has not yet been achieved, but will be achieved at some time. While *cai* (才) means that the action has been achieved, and emphasizes that the action has been realized late. This note also shows that Lyu Shuxiang has long noticed this linguistic phenomenon and that the second meaning of the adverb *zai* (再) is quite similar to that of *cai* (才). Wu Zhongwei has also discussed this issue in his paper *On the Procrastination Meaning of Adverb Zai - also on Strengthening the Pragmatic Study of Chinese Adverbs* 《论副词“再”的拖延义——兼论加强对汉语副词的语用研究》. In his opinion, the generalization of the meaning of *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) in Lyu Shuxiang’s 800 Words of Modern Chinese (吕, 1999) is basically correct, but it cannot explain all the problems, such as:

1. [I明天再去吧。]
2. [我今天才去呢，（你什么事急！）]

Adverbs *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) can both appear in “t1_ VP", which means that the action happens later. Therefore, he thinks that *zai* (再) and *cai* (才) are synonyms, and they have differences. The differences are *cai* (才) can be used for what has already been, or for what has not been; *zai* (再) cannot be used for what has already been, but only for what has not been. Beside that, “t1 *cai* (才) VP" expresses the subjective evaluation of the narrator, and holds that “t1VP" is too late, while “t1 *cai* (才) VP" reflects the willingness of the arranger to arrange VP at a later time (吴, 1997).

Sentence 9 should use the adverb *zai* (再) to indicate that VP2 (eating) will occur or end after VP1 (father’s return).

Most Indonesian students (56.63%) chose adverb *cai* (才) to fill in the blanks, probably because they thought VP2 (eating) happens later, so the speaker (I) express dissatisfaction (unhappy). It is worth noting that the word *cai* (才) can be used as already, but the sentence containing the adverb *cai* (才) cannot add the auxiliary word *le*. Some Chinese sentences have vague semantics and non-native speakers sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between the adverbs *zai* (再) or *cai* (才), as in the following two sentences:

- *午餐下午4点吃, 晚餐吃到晚上11点才吃*. In this sentence, the adverb *cai* (才) means VP happens late.

- *午餐下午4点吃, 晚餐吃到晚上11点再吃 (才)*. Some Indonesian students (28.92%) chose *zai* (再) incorrectly. Maybe they think that *zai* (再) should be used here to express action (eat) repetition. In fact, the sentence ‘eat’ is not the same ‘eat’. The first ‘eat’ is lunch, the second ‘eat’ is dinner, not action repetition.
This sentence is one of the sentences with zai (再) VP in the BCC corpus. 69.88% of the respondents fill in ‘wrong’. The author observes this sentence carefully and finds out that it can use the adverb zai (再) and the adverb cai (才). By interviewing 20 native speakers of Chinese, it is found that they all think the sentence could use both zai (再) or cai (才), but 18 people prefer to use the adverb cai (才) to indicate that VP2 (meeting) happens late, and the native speaker is not satisfied (Can I have any comments?). Two people prefer to use the adverb zai (再) to indicate that VP2 (meeting) would occur after VP1 (off duty). Thus, the Chinese adverb zai (再) and cai (才) also have a ‘cross’ relationship. In some cases, both can be used and can be substituted for each other, but the meaning is different.  

Fourth is there are only few comparative studies on Chinese adverbs zai (再) and cai (才), so the explanations of these two adverbs in TCFL textbooks are not comprehensive enough. Most of the vocabulary in the Elementary Textbooks of Chinese as a foreign language is accompanied by a translation. There are some problems in the processing of translation (张喜芹, 2014). These problems will lead to negative language transfer, resulting in errors in word understanding, and then lead to errors in Chinese vocabulary especially adverb learning of foreign students. Many experts and scholars have discussed the problem of adverb zai (再) and you (又), or the problem of adverb jiu (就), cai (才), including comparison and error analysis, but there are only few comparisons between time adverb zai (再) and cai (才). In the researcher’s opinion, the adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) have never been mentioned and explained in the textbooks of Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language (TCFL), and the difference between the two adverbs has never been noticed by teachers of TCFL to make it easy for Chinese learners to misuse the adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) (曾, 2014). 

In order to help Indonesian students master the difference and usage of the adverb zai (再) and cai (才), the researcher puts forward some teaching strategies; the first is translation. The students are asked to translate Chinese sentences into Indonesian as far as possible. The standard Indonesian language is different from the daily spoken Indonesian language. One of the reasons why most Indonesian students misuse adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) is that some of the Indonesian counterparts of the two adverbs are the same (baru). In fact, if someone translates Chinese sentences into standard Indonesian, it may be able to solve this problem, for examples:

1. 早上不开会，下午不开会，偏偏选择晚上下班后才开会，我能没意见吗？
   *Gaji tidak rapat, sore tidak rapat, malah memilih malam hari setelah jam pulang kantor baru kemudian rapat, bagaimana mungkin saya tidak protes?*
2. 早上不开会，下午不开会，偏偏选择晚上下班后才开会，我能没意见吗？
   *Pagi tidak rapat, sore tidak rapat, malah memilih malam hari setelah jam pulang kantor baru kemudian rapat, bagaimana mungkin saya tidak protes?*

Sentences use the adverb zai (再) to indicate that a meeting (VP2) is delayed until after work in the evening (VP1). In the process of sentence teaching, students should try their best to compare and analyze such sentences. Students should remember the different usages of adverbs zai (再) and cai (才), so that they will not easily misuse the adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). 

The third is separation. The time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) should be supplemented and explained separately. Adverb zai (再) in elementary Chinese teaching means repetition of actions. Most students may remember the meaning better. The time adverb zai (再) marked with procrastination is almost impressive, because the meaning appearing in the textbook is in the sentence pattern 先……再……（first... then...), there is no separate supplementary explanation for the time adverb zai (再), such as:

3. 早上不开会，下午不开会，偏偏选择晚上下班后才开会，我能没意见吗？
   *Come back to me when you earn a million dollars.*

Which adverb zai (再) in the above sentence? Does it mean repetition of action VP (来) or VP2 (来) occur after VP1 (earn up to 1 million)? This may be a problem that many Chinese learners do not understand. The researcher thinks that because the sentence has the word “等” wait” at the beginning, zai (再) should be meant procrastination, VP2 (来) will occur after VP1 (earn up to one million). In order to
make it easier for students to analyze sentences containing zai (再), the researcher thinks that sentences that can use the structure of ‘先……再……(first...then...)’ belong to the meaning of procrastination, such as:

1. 进来聊下再睡吧。——先进来聊下再睡吧。
2. 你等赚到一百万再来找我吧。——先等你赚到一百万再来找我吧。
3. 少开窗，等太阳出来再开窗通风。——少开窗，先等太阳出来再开窗通风。
4. 我终于明白，原来旅行的意义，是遇见一些人，再与他们告别。
5. 我终于明白，原来旅行的意义，是先遇见一些人，再与他们告别。
6. 饭后休息10-15分钟后开始散步有保健作用。——饭后先休息10-15分钟后再开始散步有保健作用。
7. 刚刚梦里饿的不行，奶奶让等爹回来再吃饭，于是我就不开心的等着。
8. 刚刚梦里饿的不行，奶奶让先等爹回来再吃饭，于是我就不开心的等着。  

CONCLUSIONS

The scope of this research is limited to part of Indonesian students that studying in China, with 12.05% beginner Chinese level, 50.60% intermediate Chinese level, and 37.35% advanced Chinese level.

Through research and analysis, it is found that most Indonesian students do not understand well the use of Chinese time adverbs zai (再) and cai (才). Its main reason is that the adverb zai (再) and cai (才) have the same corresponding word ‘baru’ in Indonesian, resulting in Indonesian students who often misuse these two adverbs. Besides, the textbook of teaching Chinese as a foreign language mainly emphasizes the adverb zai (再) as repetition, such as 再见、再来、再读一遍, while the adverb zai (再), which denotes procrastination is less spoken.

Therefore, the researcher believes that it is necessary for teachers of Chinese as a foreign language to compare the adverb zai (再) with cai (才) while teaching adverb cai (才), and to list some sentences of the adverb zai (再) with different meanings.

As a preliminary study of the misuse Chinese adverbs zai (再) and cai (才) by Indonesian students, it still needs a more comprehensive research on this field. Future research on this field, could be conducted on broader respondents with different levels of Chinese language.

REFERENCES

曾俊一. (2014). 《跟副词“才”有关的偏误分析》. 甘肃高师学报, (6), 48–51.
吕叔湘. (2015). 《现代汉语八百词》. 北京: 商务印书馆.
潘智启. (1995). 《汉语印度尼西亚大词典》. 北京: 商务印书馆.
宋琼瑶. (2014). 《副词“再”的义项研究》. 武陵学刊, (3), 114–120.
王坤. (2017). 《汉语副词研究综述》. 西华大学学报（哲学社会科学版）, (04), 43–51.
吴中伟. (1997). 《副词“再”的拖延义——兼论加强副词的语用研究》. 世界汉语教学, (3), 18–25. https://doi.org/10.13724/j.cnki.ctiw.1997.03.003
张明辉, & 宋红雨. (2019). 《21世纪现代汉语副词研究综述》. 云南师范大学学报（对外汉语教学与研究版）, 17(1), 45–56.
张喜芹. (2014). 《对外汉语初级教材副词翻译及教学对策研究》. 语文教育（中）, (03), 130–131.
郑立君. (2017). 《现代汉语时间副词研究》. 湖北大学学报, (10), 119–120.
周小兵, & 宋巍. (2017). 《时间副词“才”与句尾“了”共现偏误的跨语言分析》. 华文教学与研究, (01), 1–8.