Preventing Grammar Interference in Teaching Chinese to Bachelors

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Abstract
This article presents the results of a study on the prevention of grammatical interference in teaching Chinese to bachelors. The purpose of the study was to identify ways to prevent grammatical interference in the written language of bachelors studying Chinese. The relevance of the study is determined by the insufficient development of the problem. The research methodology consisted in the study and analysis of scientific sources, development and testing of exercises based on grammatical comparative tables of the native and Chinese languages. The study was carried out on the basis of NESU among bachelor students of the 1 year of study. Results are presented in the diagrams of the article. A conclusion is drawn on the effectiveness of the proposed approach. The results obtained confirm the advisability of using a comparative table and a set of exercises to prevent interference in teaching Chinese to bachelors.

Keywords: grammatical interference; Chinese; bachelor; comparative table.

Introduction
An approach to teaching foreign languages in Europe and Asia has been growing rapidly and does not cease to focus on the socio-economic needs of the state (political and international relations, economic, etc.). In the past two or three decades, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has shown high growth and development in the economic sphere, and thanks to this, the language of the "Celestial Empire" is becoming in demand all over the world, including Russia. So, the need for learning the Chinese language is growing every year.

The methodical school of teaching the Chinese language in Russia has existed for a long time and there are basic achievements in teaching. In accordance with the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES), the main purpose of studying at a university is the formation of communicative competence and language is one of the components of that, which provides for the formation of skills. As an analysis of theoretical research and experience in teaching foreign languages shows, the grammatical aspect is the most difficult to master. In our opinion, the problem is primarily related to the fact that the Russian and Chinese languages have great differences in grammar. In Russian, grammatical relations are usually conveyed using the form of the word, and in Chinese - using the word order. In Russian, the word order is not so strict, if necessary, a word shift can be made. When changing the words order, you only need to save the suffixes and endings, and the meaning of the
sentence, its structure as a whole will remain unchanged. Because of these characteristics, it is difficult for students learning Chinese to master Chinese grammar functions and the structure of Chinese syntax.

The concept of “interference” has become important in the theory of teaching a second language. Speaking in a foreign language is influenced by the mother tongue. This phenomenon was first described in Uriel Weinreich's work on language contacts, which was published in 1953. Some Soviet linguists have defined this phenomenon. Interference, according to the Russian linguist Ditmar Elyashevich Rosenthal, is the transfer of the features of the native language to the studied foreign language (Ignatova, 2014). There are several types of interference: grammatical, lexical and graphic.

Overcoming grammatical interference is one of the priority tasks in teaching a foreign language. It is realized by reducing the number of grammatical mistakes when students speak.

There are different approaches to solving the problem of interference. One of the first traditional methods proposed by the national academician Lev Shchherba, was the "method of comparing languages" (or consciously-comparative method). Namely, a comparison of a foreign language with a native language (this was in the period during 1940-50s of the XX century). However, this method did not provide practical knowledge, only a lot of theoretical knowledge that could not be verified in practice, and soon the "method of comparing languages" came into conflict with the purpose of studying. The main disadvantage of the traditional method is that it creates ideal conditions for the emergence of the, so called, language barrier. Where a person does not speak, but simply combines words using grammar rules.

The candidate of pedagogical sciences Raisat Gasanova (2012) in her thesis describes the algorithm for overcoming interference in the process of mastering the grammatical side of speech in multilingualism in 3 consecutive stages. At the first stage, a language sample is presented (through analysis and synthesis of the grammatical phenomenon). This stage presupposes the awareness, identification and differentiation of the studied grammatical phenomena. It is necessary to create conditions for demonstrating the form and construction as a dynamic unit, which has a certain functionally communicative role in communication. The next stage is training and it is aimed at the development of grammar skills. It accounts for the development of skills regarding the exact recreation of the studied phenomenon in communication situations and the development of their flexibility by varying the communication conditions. This requires adequate grammatical presentation of the statement; use in speech in order to master social experience. And the last third stage is the further improvement of grammar skills.

At present, the methodological basis for overcoming grammatical interference in the context of co-learning several languages uses a rational approach (Moschenko et al., 2018). In the framework of this approach, comparative tables of grammars (mother tongue, first and second foreign languages), a set of exercises based on them, pedagogical texts of various genres containing the grammatical phenomena studied (Ignatova, 2014) are the means of rationalization. However, this approach is less studied when learning Chinese.

Thus, there is a need to develop comparative tables of Russian and Chinese languages, to create a special system of exercises aimed at overcoming interference when teaching grammar at the initial stage of studying. Research in this area, in turn, can serve as a basis for improving the methodology of teaching Chinese as a foreign language at the initial stage.

The objectives of the study are to determine the causes of grammatical interference in the written speech of bachelor students studying the Chinese language and to develop a set of exercises to prevent interference, to verify in practice the effectiveness of this set of exercises.
Methods

The research methods were: analysis and synthesis of scientific and methodological literature data; a comparative analysis method; questionnaires; approbation; observation; testing; statistical method (processing of the obtained data).

Discussion

This is not the first study to be contacted in the territory of the Magadan Region: an analysis of student mistakes in English and German. And as part of the study of the Chinese language, such a study was the first. Testing took place in two stages, which also used a comparative table of grammar of the mother tongue and a foreign language. The theoretical significance of this study lies in the fact that it presents an analysis of the grammar of the Chinese language on the level Hányǔ Shunping Kǎoshi 1-2 (HSK 1-2) at the initial stage of studying and that is why this is a positive side of this study. The practical value of the work is the ability to use the materials and conclusions of the study to create special grammar aids for teaching the Chinese language. However, to carry out such a task, it is necessary to improve the system of exercises and conduct a larger number of tests. This topic can be continued in further studies, but in other aspects of the grammar of the Chinese language (possibly also in the aspect of the vocabulary of the Chinese language).

Results

The research base served the Northeastern State University (NESU) of the city of Magadan. The study involved first-year students of the philological faculty of the Chinese language department (8 people). The study consisted of several stages:

1. analysis of the students' written language in the learning process, determination of complex grammatical constructions in which the largest number of mistakes are made;
2. testing;
3. mistakes analysis, work with the group (and individually), discussion of complex tasks;
4. familiarization with the comparative table of Russian and Chinese languages, its elaboration in pairs and individually, the implementation of a set of exercises;
5. conducting final testing, using a comparative table;
6. analysis of mistakes and summing up

As a result of studying the written works of bachelors, grammatical mistakes in the constructions of the HSK level (Hányǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshi) 1-2 were fixed, that caused the greatest difficulty for students. We have decided to divide it into 2 big groups:

1. The use of perfect and modal particle 了 (le).

This particle may be used in the following situations:

- when indicating the completeness of the action, while this action can be performed both in the past and in the future:

  你到了中国（以后），一定要常常给我写信。– Nǐ dào le Zhōngguó (yǐhòu), yídīng yào chángcháng gěi wǒ xiě xìn – When you come to China, you shall write me the letters (Action in the future);

- description of countable actions in the past:

  我在中国的时候，认识了不少中国朋友。– Wǒ zài Zhōngguó de shíhou, rènshi le bù shǎo Zhōngguó péngyou – When I was in China, I made many Chinese friends;

- designation of change of new situation: 天黑了，风也大了，我们回家吧。– Tiān hēi le, fēng yě dà le, wǒmen huí jiā ba – It got dark and the wind got stronger, let's go home (Kondrashevskii et al., 2014).
2. The use of the verb preposition 在 zài to express the location of an object or person.
   - Noun + 在 + Place (or) direction: 图书馆在宿舍楼的右边。– The library is on the right side of the dormitory (Li, 2004, p.35).
   - 在 – a verb, performing predicational function. For example: 他在城里 – Tā zài chéng lǐ – He is in the city.
   - location For example: 书在桌子上 – Shū zài zhuōzi shàng – A book (lies) on a table (Gasanova, 2012, p.75).

After summarizing grammatical mistakes, tests were developed that were borrowed from foreign educational-methodological complexes (EMC): Boya Chinese Elementary I (including a workbook) and Developing Chinese (Li et al, 2013). Some tasks were slightly complicated in compliance with the standard requirements. Below you may find the examples of such tasks:

1. Make sentences with the given words below:
   1) 我, 上星期, 朋友, 去, 了, 看____________________________________
   2) 买, 一个, 苹果, 妈妈, 前天, 了__________________________________

2. Change these sentences: 1) to negative 2) from negative to question
   1) 我们看了这个电影 = ______________________________
      2) 我喝了一瓶汽水 =_______________________________

3. Find out mistakes in these sentences where it's necessary and then rewrite them:
   1) 他不忘带笔__________________________________
      2) 昨天我读了读课文______________________________

6. Translate these sentences in Chinese:
   1) After I finish my breakfast, I will go to the university. ____________________
   2) Yesterday we were passing an exam in Chinese. _______________________

The analysis of mistakes in the test works of students was carried out in a group and individually. The results are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. The analysis of mistakes in the test works of students**

Analyzing the presented diagram data, we can draw conclusions about the degree of interference of students.

1) A high level of interference is observed when using effective verbal adjectives, especially when using a negative form (more than 70% of mistakes of this type are for expressing a negative form): The misuse of these verbal additions jian 见 and dao 到 is due to the fact that students, it
seems to us, confuse their functions. Morpheme 见 is used only after the verbs of sensory perception, and 到 is also used with other verbs and carries the meaning of arrival (to the destination).
The negative form is created only with the help of the negative particle 没 méi.

I saw that text in Chinese language (we need to find a mistake, but there is no mistake in here).

For example: 我 看到 那个 汉语 课文 了 - a mistake, here is the verb of sensory perception.

2) A low level of interference is observed when expressing a location using the preposition 在 and using this preposition with postpositions and verbs (these mistakes are characterized by rearrangement of the verb-preposition zai 在 in different places):

1. 我 住 在 长春，不在 北京 (correct) - I live in Changchun, but not in Tokyo.
   我在住长春, 不在北京. (incorrect, the word order is wrong);
2. 我一般自己 准备考试在家 – Normally, I am preparing for the exam by myself;
   我的一般 准备考试在家 (incorrect, the word order is wrong).

The next step was to develop a comparative table of the most complex grammatical structures. Students carried out the study of the table in pairs and individually. And performed a set of exercises using this table. The most difficult situations were dealt with collectively and also individually. Particular attention was paid to emerging mistakes. The activities of the bachelors ranged from verbal dialogue in pairs, to a brief writing (for example, weekend plans). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Grammar comparison table

| The language function of grammatical phenomenon | Russian language | Chinese language |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Designation of a new situation or change of situation | 1) It has started raining.  
2) The autumn has come. It has become cold outside. | 1) 外面下雨了。  
2) 春天到了。外面冷了 |
| 2. Expression of duration in the past | 1) I was studying Chinese language in Beijing for 3 years.  
2) Yesterday I was doing my home task for almost 5 hours. | 1) 我在北京学习了汉语大概3年。  
2）昨天我做了作业差不多5个小时。 |
| 3. Action is completed and the result is clear | 1) I came back to Japan yesterday.  
2) Have you heard this music now?  
3) I have already watched | 1）我前天回到了日本。  
2）你现在听到这音乐吗？ |
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4. Expression of future

1) I will buy a car tomorrow.
2) He will study.
3) It will rain soon.

3) 我已经看了这个电影在电影院。

In the final part of the study, the final testing was conducted, where students could use a comparative table. The final test was supplemented by some tasks, based on the requirements for the bachelor's program. Below you may find the examples of such tasks:

2. Change these sentences:
a) To negative (7-8 make your own sentences).

比如：他买了水果 = 他（还）没买水果 / 我在家休息 = 我不在家休息

1) 我买了一瓶白酒 = _______________ 2) 我晚饭了 = _______________
3) 我们看了这个电影 = _______________ 4) 我喝了一瓶汽水 = _______________

3. Find out mistakes in these sentences where it's necessary and then rewrite them:

1) 他不忘了带笔 _______________ 2) 昨天我读了读课文 _______________
3) 他认识很多留学生了 _______________ 4) 我还看了这个电影 _______________

6. Translate these sentences in Chinese:
After I finish my breakfast I will got to the university; Yesterday we were passing an exam in Chinese language; I still haven’t done my homework.

7. Look at the picture and answer these questions. Please, give the full answer for each question:

1. 玛丽和米沙在哪儿？
2. 电视在哪儿？
3. 桌子在椅子和电视的之间吗？
4. 书放在哪儿？
5-6 Make your own questions and then answer

The results of the final testing showed a significant reduction in the number of errors when expressing the location (and using verbs and postpositions) and when using effective verb addenda. Unfortunately, students continued to make mistakes in the temporal form of particle 了, in the use of grammatical structures representing regular actions in the past. Nevertheless, we managed to reduce mistakes in the most difficult situations, but such mistakes were made most of all, in other cases the number of mistakes was reduced.

The Figure 2 below shows the results of the final testing of students.
Conclusion

Comparing the results of two tests, we came to the conclusions:

1) The number of mistakes when using the preposition 在 to express the location of the object has significantly decreased (this also applies to the negative form, in which most of the previous mistakes were made);
2) Mistakes using 在 with postpositions and verbs also managed to be reduced;
3) The number of mistakes when choosing verbs for the effective supplementation 见 and 到 decreased, and when expressing the negative form, the number of mistakes was reduced by more than two times.
4) Aspectual-temporal particle 了. Particular cases of the formulation (or absence) of a particle when the action occurs regularly in the past and the use of 了 with short-acting verbs still requires work on this. But in other cases, the number of mistakes was significantly reduced.
As a result, we concluded that the developed exercises and the comparative grammar table contribute to the positive dynamics in preventing grammatical interference. The number of mistakes in the use of grammar structures of the HSK 1-2 level at the initial stage of learning the Chinese language of bachelors has significantly decreased.

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