

ERROR ANALYSIS OF CHINESE MEASUREMENT WORDS TEACHING IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Measurement words are a very important in Chinese. There is a large number of measurement words in Chinese with different categories. Due to the lack of corresponding components of measurement words in Romanian learners' mother tongue, it is very easy for the Romanian learners to make errors in measurement words, which has already become a difficulty in Romania's Chinese teaching. Based on the Error-Analysis theory, this paper tries to analyze the types of errors made by Romanian learners when learning measurement words and summarize the causes of the errors. In the end, this paper is going to put forward the teaching strategies as solutions, so as to improve the teaching efficiency of Chinese measurement words.*

Keywords: *Measurement words, Error Analysis, Chinese teaching in Romania, Teaching strategies.*

1. Introduction

Among the parts of speech in Chinese language, measurement word an unique, representing the quantitative unit of things or behaviors, also known as “unit word” (Tang, 2000), which is very strange and confusing for Romanian Chinese learners. What kind of measurement words do nouns match? What kind of measurement words to use under different circumstances also obeys particular rules and can not be discussed in general. Because of this, measurement words have become one of the touchstones for Romanian students in their Chinese learning. Therefore, the teaching of measurement words is both a difficult and key point in Chinese language didactics.

The research on error analysis and second language acquisition is marked by the publication of the *Significance of Learner's Errors* in Corder's paper in 1967. In 1972, Selinker put forward the “interlanguage” theory in his paper, which laid a theoretical foundation for the in-depth study of “error and acquisition”. In China, the publication of *Interlanguage Theory and Phonetic Error Analysis of Foreigners Learning Chinese* by Lu Jianji in 1984 marks the beginning of the research in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Liu Xun's

(2000) introduction to the pedagogy of Chinese as a foreign language adopts the same conception as Lu Jianji and makes further abstract generalization and detailed interpretation. “Error analysis” is a breakthrough to study the law of Chinese as a second language acquisition. It has gone through 20 years in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The theoretical basis is second language acquisition and interlanguage theory. By introducing and absorbing foreign advanced research theories and methods, based on the characteristics of Chinese itself and on the basis of accumulating a large number of corpora with Chinese as the interlanguage, scholars have deeply discussed the errors, causes and teaching strategies in the process of learning and acquiring Chinese, and accumulated valuable experience in practice.

Based on the measurement words in the *Standard and Outline of Chinese Proficiency Level* and the *HSK Standard Course*, this paper is going to analyze the types and causes of errors for Romanian learners’ learning Chinese measurement words, and to find appropriate strategies and methods, so that Romanian Chinese learners can better understand and master this unique part of speech in Chinese.

2. Analysis the Types of Errors in the Use of Measurement Words by Romanian Learners

Measurement words have always been a difficult problem for Chinese as second language learners. The common errors that Romanian students often make in learning and using Chinese measurement words can be summarized into the following categories:

➤ Omission of Measurement Words

The omission of measurement words refers to the situation that the learners do not use the measurement words when they are supposed to, resulting in errors with the form of incomplete sentence structure or unclear meaning. Errors in this aspect are very common in Romanian Chinese learners’ daily communication. For example, in the sentence “玛丽有一本书。(Marry has a book.)”, the measurement word “本” is often been omitted by Romanian learners.

➤ Incorrect Addition of Measurement Words

Mistakenly adding measurement words means that students use measurement words when they do not need to. For example, in the sentence “我已经学习中文两(个)年了。(I have been learning Chinese language for two years.)”, the measurement word “个” is incorrectly added.

➤ The Misuse of Measurement Words

The misuse of measurement words indicates that students use measurement word B when they should use measurement word A, resulting in error expressions. This type of error is the most common one in Romanian learners’ process of learning Chinese measurement words. The misuse mainly includes the following categories:

• The Misuse of Homophonic Measurement Words

Romanian learners are particularly prone to errors when they encounter homophonic measurement words because Chinese measurement words are numerous and their usage is very complex. It is inevitable to make errors when encountering homophone. This kind of error only appears in written Chinese, but does not exist in Chinese listening and speaking. For

instance, the measurement words “支” and “只” have the same pronunciation “zhī”, but the meanings are totally different. “支” is often used with objects which have a long and thin form, while “只” is usually used with animals. In the incorrect sentence “* 我有一只笔。 (* I have a pen.)”, the measurement word “只” should be replaced by “支”.

- **The Misuse Caused by Similar Character Patterns**

Modern Chinese language has many similar-pattern Chinese characters, which is also a difficulty for Romanian Chinese learners. Typical examples are: the measurement word “座” is often misused with “坐”, and the measurement “副” is always mistaken for “幅”.

e.g., * 门前有坐山。 (* In front of the door is a mountain.)

The verb “坐” is misused in the place of the measurement word “座”, which is mainly used for objects with a large volume and heavy weight.

e.g., * 墙上挂着一副画。 (* There is a picture on the wall.)

The measurement word “副” is supposed to be correct with the measurement “幅”. The semantic characteristics of the two measurement words are different. “副” is mainly matched with those objects in pairs, while “幅” is used to measure cloth, wool, banners, pictures, slogans and other plane objects (Zhang, 2015).

- **Misuse of Measurement Words with Similar Meanings**

From the teaching practice, we notice that Romanian students make mistakes when two measurement words have very similar meanings. For example, the two measurement words “对” and “双” both match objects in pairs, so they are often mixed.

- **Misuse Caused by Improper Understanding of the Emotional Color of Measurement Words**

e.g., * 他在街上碰到了一位小偷。 (* He runs into a thief on the street.)

The measurement word “位” has the emotional color of respect and is often matched with words with respect, while “thief” is a derogatory word, so these two can not be matched.

- **Word Order Confusion Caused by Improper Position of Measurement Words**

Improper position means that learners put the measurement word in the wrong position in a sentence, resulting in confusion in word order and unclear meaning.

e.g., * 这是我刚买的的一件衣服。 (* This is the new clothes I just bought.)

When there are adjective and measurement word in front of nouns, the measurement word should generally be placed in front of the adjective. So, the correct sentence should be like this:

这是我刚买的一件新衣服。

➤ **The Over Generalization of Measurement Words**

The overgeneralization of measurement words mainly refers to learners' extensive and inappropriate analogy of the learned knowledge to other occasions, resulting in errors (Guo & Wang, 2006).

The typical overgeneralization of measurement word is the word “个”, which is widely and frequently used. Many Romanian learners regard the word “个” as a universal measurement word. When they encounter the noun that they don't know which measurement word to match, they will all use “个” instead. Generally speaking, Chinese nouns have their fixed measurement words collocations. Therefore, we can't match them with any measurement word randomly. Moreover, the use of measurement word should be appropriate. Only in this way can they play a rhetorical role in expressing delicate feelings, which is one of the main functions of the measurement word.

3. Analysis on the Causes of Measurement Words Errors

Liu points out that the main causes for Chinese learners' errors are the negative transfer from their mother tongue, the negative transfer of target language, the negative transfer of culture, the influence of learning and communication strategies, the influence of learning environment and so on (Liu, 2000). Chinese Measurement are not only rich in quantity but also very complex. There are many causes for the errors, which are not only related to the learners' own learning methods, but also related to teachers' teaching methods. The main causes are as follows:

➤ **Negative Transfer from Romanian Mother Tongue**

In the process of second language learning, especially in the primary stage, learners do not understand the language rules of the target language. Therefore, in the process of learning, they will naturally replace the language rules of the target language with the language rules of the existing mother tongue, resulting in errors. For example, in Romanian language, numerals directly modify nouns, such as “o carte” (a book), “un mar” (an apple), etc. When expressed in Chinese, Romanian learners usually mistakenly put as “一书”, “一苹果”, etc., which is the omission of the measurement words mentioned above. It is not easy to correct under the influence of the negative transfer of their mother tongue.

➤ **Negative Transfer of Target Language**

In the process of Chinese learning, learners always use analogy to apply their already learned but insufficient target language knowledge to new knowledge. In fact, they just over generalize the immature knowledge to other knowledge, resulting in errors. Some Romanian learners casually apply the learned grammatical structure “numeral + measurement word + noun” as a universal structure, resulting in wrong usages such as “三个天” and “五个年”, in which the measurement word “个” is redundant.

➤ **The Problem of the Teacher**

It is not true that if a person speaks Mandarin well or speaks well a foreign language, he can teach foreign students Chinese. A qualified international Chinese teacher should have the specific knowledge structure and ability structure - not only be proficient in the theoretical knowledge and skills of Chinese language, but also be familiar with the

theoretical knowledge and skills of one or two foreign languages. In the same time, the Chinese teacher is also expected to master the theories and methods of comparative linguistics. In addition, the knowledge of linguistics, psychology and pedagogy is also vital for the qualified Chinese teacher, who is supposed to have high cultural literacy, be familiar with the relevant cultural knowledge of China and foreign countries, and have a certain ability to organize teaching.

➤ **Classroom Teaching Arrangement**

Up to now, Romania does not have a complete set of scientific local teaching and learning materials for Chinese as a foreign language and the materials currently in use are not perfect and integrate. Most textbooks have many explanations of Chinese grammar, but there are few of the measurement words. Moreover, the exercises of measurement words mostly stay in a few groups of limited word collocations and there is a little comparison between different measurement words. Apart from this, in the process of Chinese teaching, the Chinese teacher pays more attention to the grammatical functions of measurement words, ignoring the collocation and selection laws of measurement words teaching.

4. Teaching Strategies

There is a general principle in the teaching of Chinese measurement words as a foreign language, that is, students are required to use measurement words accurately, appropriately and vividly. This principle can be achieved little by little with the gradual learning.

➤ **Step-by-step Principle**

The introduction and learning of common measurement words are mainly in the primary and middle stages of Chinese language teaching. In the primary stage, there are some measurement words with strong prescriptive collocations, that are mainly taught. In the middle stage, the teacher can introduce complex measurement words which have more functions and meanings. In the advanced stage, when the learner's level of Chinese is high, the teacher can teach advanced measurement words with rhetorical features and emotional colouring.

➤ **Student-centered Principle**

In the process of Chinese measurement words teaching, teachers should fully stimulate learners' subjective initiative and improve their competence to participate in the class. In classroom teaching, teachers should not blindly speak and to practice the contents regardless of students' feelings. They should often interact with students and try to let each student participate in classroom learning by designing more interesting exercises, such as filling in the blanks, classroom games, role-playing and so on.

5. Conclusions

In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language in Romania, the teaching of measurement words is an unavoidable difficulty. The way Romanian learners master measurement words will affect their normal communication to a great extent. At present, there is relatively little research on the theoretical research and teaching practice of measurement words teaching as a foreign language both in China and in Romania. The content of measurement words teaching is relatively simple, lacking of systematic structure and continuity. Due to the causes for Romanian students' errors in measurement words learning that this paper mentioned at its beginning, the teaching and research of measurement words still needs more

attention in order to provide teachers with better teaching methods, helping the students reduce their learning difficulties to better their Chinese.

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