An Investigation on the Acquisition Error of Chinese Complement of Result by

Foreign Language Learners at an International University

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by foreign language learners at an International University in Thailand. The quantitative method of research was applied to analyze and summarize the data of all the participants involved in the study. The questionnaire adapted from second language acquisition and language testing research was conducted and distributed to the participants. Based on the findings of the study, the acquisition error made by foreign language learners was classified into 4 kinds; omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. The important sources of errors were interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Some suggestions were proposed to enhance Chinese language proficiency of foreign language learners.

Keywords: Chinese, Complement of Result, Acquisition Error, Foreign language learners, International University

Introduction

Background

The complement of result is one of the important syntactic structures that appears very frequently in Chinese. Due to its special characteristics and complication, difficulties are faced by students in learning Chinese as a second language. However, the students who get into difficulties or make slow progress might be aware of the causes and how to solve them. The instructors also have to find ways to help students overcome barriers of learning Chinese and make students master and able to communicate effectively in Chinese.

Objective of the Study

The main focus of this study is to investigate the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by foreign language learners at an International University in Thailand, and to understand sources of competence errors that made by CFL learners.

Research Questions

The research questionnaire was adapted from second language acquisition and language testing research. The participants had to provide their demographic information which is including gender, age, students' status, native language and their Chinese language learning background.

Scope of Study

This study was conducted with the sample selected from students who are studying Chinese language at an international university in Thailand, using English as a medium of instruction. The data of the study is obtained through administered questionnaires to the total number of 165 participants.

Literature Review

Research on Ontology of Complement of Result in Chinese

The complement of result (COR) is closely combined with the verb. Zhang (2008) stated that if there is an aspect particle or an object in the sentence, either of them must be placed after the complement of result, neither of them can be placed between the verb and complement of result. Examples:

Subject	Adverb of Time	Auxiliary verb	Verb	COR	Object	
我们	明天	可以	看	完	这本小说	。
We	*tomorrow*	*can*	*read*	*finish*	*this book*	

(*我们明天可以看这本小说完。)

(We can finish reading this novel tomorrow.)

Topic	Subject	Verb	COR	Perfective Aspect	Object	
昨天的考试	学生	做	错	了	很多题	。
Yesterday's examination	*students*	*did*	*wrongly*		*many questions*	

(*昨天的考试学生做了很多题错。)

(Students answered many questions wrongly in yesterday's examination.)

The negative form of the complement of result is "没(有) Verb + Complement", such as 没(有)做好 *(not finish doing)*；没(有)看懂 *(not understand (by reading or watching))*；没(有)吃完 *(not finish eating)*；没(有)听清楚 *(not listen clearly)*. However, the negative form "不 +Verb + Complement" is used in suppositional condition, such as 不做完作业，就不准看电视。 *(You are not allowed to watch television unless you finish your homework.)*; 不学好汉语，我就不回国。 *(If I don't learn Chinese well, I won't go back to my country.)*

The complement of result is placed after the verbal predicate, indicating outcome or result of an action. It is also called 'predicate-complement structure' (verbal predicate + COR). In Chinese, some verbs and adjectives can be used as predicate of the sentence, and some verbs and adjectives which can further explain the result of an action can be used as the complement of result.

The predicate-complement structure in Chinese can be divided into 4 kinds as Table 1.

Table 1

The Predicate-Complement Structure in Chinese

No.	Predicate-complement Structure	Examples
1.	Verb + Verb	我 听 懂 他说的话。 *I listened understand what he said.* *(I understood what he said.)*
2.	Verb + Adjective:	妈妈 把 车 洗 干净 了。 *Mother (disposal marker) car wash clean (perfect aspect).* *(Mother washed the car clean.)*
3	Adjective + Verb:	那只鸟 好几天 没有 吃 东西，终于 饿 死 了。 *That bird many days didn't eat things, finally hungry death (perfect aspect).* *(The bird hadn't eaten for several days and finally starved to death.)*
4.	Adjective + Adjective:	他总是在压力下工作，累坏了自己。 *He always at under pressure work, tired bad (perfect aspect) himself.* *(He always works under pressure, and he is exhausted.)*

According to Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban (2010) and Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban (2014), which are the important guidelines for teaching Chinese language in other countries, the common complements of result in Chinese are as Table 2:

Table 2

The Common Complements of Result in Chinese

Predicate	Complement of Result	Example
Verb +	<u>Verb</u>：完，懂，见，会，开，成，掉，到，死，着，住，走	1.做完，看完，吃完，写完，听完 2.听懂，看懂，搞懂 3.听见，看见，碰见，遇见 4.学会，教会，练会，看会，背会 5.打开，分开，拉开，让开，走开，拿开，张开 6.翻译成，做成，写成，说成，修成，看成，听成，当成，改成，念成，变成 7.扔掉，忘掉，甩掉，丢掉，拆掉，卖掉，跑掉，走掉 8.碰到，遇到，见到，听到，买到，说到，写到，提到，看到 9.打死，冻死，杀死 10.找着，买着，借着，喝着，睡着 11.记住，拿住，贴住，抓住 12.带走，拿走，搬走，寄走，借走，偷走
	<u>Adjective</u>：好，对，错，干净，清楚，早，晚，累，饱，干，坏，光	1.做好，看好，吃好，写好，买好，听好，放好，学好，唱好 2.写对，做对，看对，回答对，买对 3.回答错，做错，看错，写错 4.洗干净，擦干净，整理干净，收拾干净，打扫干净 5.听清楚，看清楚，问清楚，写清楚，说清楚 6.来早，起早 7.来晚，起晚 8.走累，哭累 9.吃饱，喝饱 10.晒干，擦干 11.冻坏 12.吃光，喝光，拿光，用光，花光，卖光，忘光，走光
Adjective +	<u>Verb</u>：死	1.饿死，渴死，热死，瘦死，老死，累死
	<u>Adjective</u>：坏，弯	1.饿坏，累坏， 2.累弯

Li (1980) divided complements of result in Chinese into 5 groups as seen in Table 3:

Table 3

Complements of Result in Chinese Divided by Li (1980)

No.	Type of Complements of Result	Example
1.	SVC: (Subject + Verb + Complement)	我 变 胖 了。 *I changed fat (perfect aspect).* *(I became fat.)*
2.	SVOVC: (Subject + Verb + Object + Verb + Complement)	他们 走路 走 累 了。 *They walked on the street walked tired (perfect aspect).* *(They are tired from walking.)*
3.	SVCO: (Subject + Verb + Complement + Object)	我们 看 懂 了 这篇文章。 *We read understand (perfect aspect) this article.* *(We understood this article.)*
4.	SVO1VCO2: (Subject + Verb + Object1 + Verb + Complement + Object2)	你 打 题目 打 错 了 一个字。 *You typed the title typed wrong (perfect aspect) one word.* *(You typed a wrong word in the title.)*
5.	S 把 O1VCO2: (Subject + 把 + Object1 + Verb + Complement + Object2)	他 把 树枝 砍 成 了两段。 *He (disposal marker) the branch chop become (perfect aspect) two pieces.* *(He cut the branch into two pieces.)*

In aspect of semantics, Liu (2001) divided complements of Result in Chinese into 2 kinds: 1. Complement which represents the result of an action or state; 2. Complement which represents the evaluation and judgment of the action.

There are Chinese researchers and educators who proposed and grouped semantic meanings of Chinese resultative construction as follow:

Researchers	Categories	Examples
Fan (1985)	1. indicating result of an action	打死了 *(hit to death)*
	2. indicating tendency of an action	跑进去 *(run in)*
	3. indicating degree of an action	买多了 *(buy too much)*
	4. indicating state of an action	哭起来 *(cry)*
Li (1994)	1. indicating expected result of an action	烤熟一块肉 *(roast a piece of meat)*
	2. indicating diverged result of an action	这张桌子买大了。 *(This table is too big. / You bought a table that's too big.)*
	3. indicating natural result of an action	天慢慢地黑了。 *(It's getting dark slowly.)*
Ma and Lu (1997)	1. indicating realization of expected result of an action	打扫干净了 *(cleaned up / clean cleanly)*
	2. indicating appearance on unexpected result	弄丢了 *(lost)*
	3. indicating appearance of natural result of an action	长胖了 *(became fat)*
	4. indicating divergence of respected result	挖深了 *(dig deep)*

Additionally, Mei (1994) points out 3 rules of resultative construction in the aspect of semantics: 1. The expression object of the complement related to the semantic characteristics of the predicate verb; 2. In Verb-Object sentence with subject and object co-occurrence, the expression object of the complement is also related to the semantic characteristics of the complement. When the complement is a certain verb that expresses human's cognitive activity, the complement expresses the object. When the complement is a certain verb that indicates change and disappearance, the complement also expresses the object complement as some state verbs or state adjectives, and the complement points to the object semantically. 3. The expression object of the complement is also related to the object. Mei also thought that

when the complement expresses the object, the object expresses the following semantics: 1) The thing referred to the object changes in character due to the action. 2) The object referred to the object which is ordered to act due to the action. 3. The thing referred to the object which is made by the action.

In terms of pragmatics, Wang (1999) states that the action or state represented by the predicate is the presupposition of the verb-resultative construction, which conveys a piece of given information. The action or state represented by the complement-predicate is based on the presupposition. The new situation always conveys new information, so it is the semantic core of the dynamic result.

Research on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language

Orton and Scrimgeour (2019) have proposed three main areas in which teaching Chinese as a second language (CSL) needs to develop in order to improve learning outcomes. The first area is continuing analysis and description of the language in use, of itself and in relation to the first language of the major groups studying Chinese; the second area is focusing on the nature of learning that Chinese demands of foreign students; and the third area is the preparation of knowledgeable and able teachers.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted to examine acquisition of Chinese complement of result of second language learners at the International University in Thailand. The complements of result in this study were collected from those which appeared in Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban (2010) and Confucius Institute Headquarters/Hanban (2014), the important guidelines for teaching Chinese language in other countries as mentioned above.

Participants' Information

The participants were comprised of 165 students who were studying Chinese at an International University in Thailand, using the medium of English language in teaching and learning.

Based on the questionnaires, the demographic information of the participants is shown as follows:

1. Gender of participants

Gender		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male		35	21.21
Female		130	78.79
	Total	165	100

The table shows that there was a total of 165 participants. The majority of participants (78.79%) were female, and the minority of participants (21.21%) were male.

2. Age of participants

Age		Frequency	Percentage (%)
16-17 years old		6	3.63
18-19 years old		20	12.12
20-21 years old		71	43.04
Over 21 years old		68	41.21
	Total	165	100

The table shows that ages of the majority of participants (43.04%) were between the ages of 20-21, 41.21% of participants were aged over 21, 12.12% of participants were between ages of 18-19 and 3.63% of participants were between ages of 16-17.

3. Students Status of participants

Students Status		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Freshman		20	12.12
Sophomore		34	20.60
Junior		54	32.73
Senior		57	34.55
	Total	165	100

The table shows that 12.12% of participants were freshmen, 20.60% of them were sophomore, 32.73% of them were junior students and 34.55% of students were senior students.

4. Native Language of participants

Native Language		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Thai		147	89.09
Korean		7	4.25
Myanmar		5	3.03
English		2	1.21
Japanese		2	1.21
Vietnamese		2	1.21
	Total	165	100

In the context where students' first languages (L1s) are concerned, participants declared their first language as Thai (89.09%), Korean (4.25%), Myanmar (3.03%), English (1.21%), Japanese (1.21%) and Vietnamese (1.21%).

5. Chinese Learning Background of participants

Chinese Learning Background	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	5	3.03
1-2 years	24	14.55
3-4 years	52	31.52
5-6 years	31	18.78
7-8 years	22	13.33
9-10 years	7	4.24
Over 10 years	24	14.55

Chinese Learning Background	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Total	165	100

The table shows that majority of the participants (31.52%) have learned Chinese for 3-4 years, whereas 18.78% of students have studied it for 5-6 years, 14.55% for over 10 years, 14.55% for 1-2 years, 13.33% for 7-8 years, 4.24% for 9-10 years, and few of them (3.03%) have learned Chinese less than 1 year.

Data Collection

The research questionnaires were designed to examine the acquisition of Chinese complement of result of second language learners. The questionnaires were divided into 4 parts. In part 1 of the questionnaire, participants were requested to provide their general information, such as gender, age, student status, native language, and Chinese learning background. In part 2, participants were asked to choose the suitable complements of result to fill in the space provided. In part 3, participants were asked to complete sentences by using suitable complements of result. In part 4, participants were requested to translate English sentences into Chinese, and Chinese complement of result were required to be used.

The questionnaires were distributed to freshman, sophomore, junior and senior students who currently were studying Chinese as their major or minor courses at an International University in Thailand. The distributors gave clear explanation for filling out the questionnaires to the participants. The filled-out questionnaires were then collected. There were 165 questionnaires to be returned.

Result and Discussion

The collected data have been analyzed, and it was found that the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by foreign language learners was classified into 4 kinds; omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering.

1. Omission Error

The required complement of result, necessary particles, or other elements were omitted or have disappeared. Examples of omission error made by participants have been shown below.

Table 4

Omission Error Made by Participants

No.	English sentences	Chinese sentences	Errors made by participants	Details of errors
1.	*Please tidy up the room.*	请把房间收拾好。	*请把房间收拾。	Disappearing complement of result 好
2.	*It's raining outside. Please close the door.*	外面下着雨呢，请关上门。/ 请把门关上。	*外面下着雨呢，请关门。	Disappearing complement of result 上
3.	*Please open your book.*	请打开你的书。/ 请把你的书打开。	*请开你的书。	Disappearing predicate verb 打
4.	*David read this character incorrectly*	大卫把这个字读错了。	*这个字大卫读错。	Disappearing particle 了
5.	*He moved that table to outside.*	他把那张桌子搬到外边了。	*他把那张桌子搬到外边。	Disappearing particle 了

2. Addition Error

It was found that there were unnecessary words or elements added into well-formed sentences as in the examples which have been shown below.

Table 5

Addition Error Made by Participants

No.	English sentences	Chinese sentences	Errors made by participants	Details of errors
1.	*Tidy up the house.*	把屋子整理干净。	*把屋子整理干净一下。	addition error: 一下
2.	*David read this character incorrectly.*	大卫把这个字读错了。	*这个字大卫读得错了。	addition error: 得
3.	*She spoke very fast, so students couldn't understand it*	她说得非常快，所以学生听不懂。	*她说得非常快，所以学生听得不懂。	addition error: 得 de

3. Misinformation Error

The study has shown that students used irregular complement of result, misuse of negation, or other grammatical elements in place of well-grammatical form.

Table 6

Misinformation Error Made by Participants

No.	English sentences	Chinese sentences	Errors made by participants	Details of errors
1.	*She spoke very fast, so students couldn't understand it.*	她说得非常快，所以学生听不懂。	*她说得非常快，所以学生听不明白。 *她说得非常快，所以学生听不清楚。	Using wrong complement of result
2.	*What did he say? I did not hear it.*	他说的什么？我没听见。	*他说的什么？我不听见。	Misuse of negation
3.	*He didn't say clearly.*	他没说清楚。	*他不说清楚。	Misuse of negation
4.	*Can you remember this character?*	你能记住这个汉字吗？ / 你记得住这个汉字吗？	*你会不会记得那个汉字？ *你可不可以记得这个汉字？ *你可以把这个汉字记住吗？	Grammatical error: using wrong form and auxiliary word

No.	English sentences	Chinese sentences	Errors made by participants	Details of errors
5.	*It's raining outside. Please close the door.*	外面下着雨呢，请关上门。/ 请把门关上。	*外面下着雨呢，请关好门。	Using wrong complement of result
6.	*He moved that table to outside.*	他把那张桌子搬到外边了。	*他 拿/带/搬/动 那 张 桌子搬到外边。	Grammatical error: using wrong form

4. Misordering Error

Misodering error is another kind of error made by foreign language learners. Students put words or grammatical elements in the wrong position as shown in the examples below.

Table 7

Misordering Error Made by Participants

No.	English sentences	Chinese sentences	Errors made by participants	Details of errors
1.	*David read this character incorrectly.*	大卫把这个字读错了。	*大卫读这个字错了。	Position error: complement of result 错
2.	*He went to sleep after finishing his homework.*	他写完作业就睡觉了。	*他写作业完就睡觉了。	Position error: complement of result 完
3.	*She spoke very fast, so students couldn't understand it.*	她说得非常快，所以学生听不懂。	*她说得非常快，所以学生不听懂。	Position error: negative word 不

Further study of these erroneous sentences revealed that there were many reasons causing errors in process of learning and using complement of result by Chinese language learners, such as learners' Chinese language background, Chinese level, teaching and learning strategies, all of which will affect the acquisition of Chinese complement of result of Chinese language learners. Additionally, it was found that the most common barrier to learning in an international college is interlanguage, the transitional language in the acquisition process, the second language acquisition which will be influenced by native language transfer, learning

strategies, communication strategies and the overgeneralization of language materials (Selinker, L, 1972).

In the study, it was found that English was a medium of instruction in foundation and pre-intermediate level of Chinese courses at the college, whereas intermediate and advanced level courses used the medium of Chinese language in teaching and learning activities. Most of the freshmen and sophomore students who were studying in foundation or pre-intermediate level courses, were those who were enrolling in basic or intermediate level English courses. It was revealed that these students had limited proficiency in English, and might face difficulties in learning their third language at the university. The acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by these students was divided as omission error (Freshman 20.7%, Sophomore 10.1%), addition error (Freshman 8.8%, Sophomore 6.7%), misinformation error (Freshman 18.2%, Sophomore 14.4%), and misordering error (Freshman 20.4%, Sophomore 11.5%). As mentioned above, Chinese language was used as a medium of instruction in the intermediate and advanced Chinese courses at the college, so junior and senior students were more experienced and gained exposure to Chinese language environment. This is to say, the environment plays an important role in students' language acquisition. However, this study shows that the second language acquisition of junior and senior students was influenced by their native language as well. Percentage number of the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by junior and senior students has shown the following: omission error was made by 5.7% of junior students and 2.5% of senior students, addition error was made by 4.3% of junior students and 2.1% of senior students, misinformation error was made by 6.8% of junior students and 3.3% of senior students, and misordering error was made by 5.1% of junior

students and 2.3% of senior students. It can be concluded that misinformation is the major

error made by foreign language learners.

Based on data resources, the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by

participants in different levels has been shown in the table below.

Table 8

Acquisition Error of Chinese Complement of Result by Participants in Different Levels

Student Status	Categories of Error			
	Omission (%)	Addition (%)	Misinformation (%)	Misordering (%)
Freshman	20.7	8.8	18.2	20.4
Sophomore	10.1	6.7	14.4	11.5
Junior	5.7	4.3	6.8	5.1
Senior	2.5	2.1	3.3	2.3
Total	39	21.9	42.7	39.3

In the study, there were 6 different languages that the participants declared as their

native languages: Thai (89.09%), Korean (4.25%), Myanmar (3.03%), English (1.21%), Japanese

(1.21%) and Vietnamese (1.21%). It has proved that the second language acquisition was

influenced by native language transfer. The acquisition error of Chinese complement of result

by different native language learners has been shown in the table below.

Table 9

Acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by different native language learners

Native Language	Categories of Error			
	Omission (%)	Addition (%)	Misinformation (%)	Misordering (%)
Thai	10.9	5.6	11.4	10.6
Korean	9.6	5.3	10.2	9.8
Myanmar	6.7	4.1	7.3	6.5
English	4.0	2.3	5.1	4.9
Japanese	3.8	2.3	4.4	3.7
Vietnamese	4.0	2.3	4.3	3.8
Total	39	21.9	42.7	39.3

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies. The above table shows that the most common errors of Chinese complement of result made by Thai students is misinformation for which the percentage number of errors is 11.4%. The percentage of omission errors is 10.9%, misordering errors' is 10.6% and addition errors' is 5.6%. Wang (2010) stated that Thai students might make misinformation errors, and the errors found are in the cases in which Thai students used improper complement of result and incorrect negative form, which caused a high percentage of errors.

Liu (2017) and Yin (2017) agreed that Korean learners produced errors that were caused by native language transfer: interligual transfer and intralingual transfer. They also proposed that Korean students might produce omission errors, addition errors and misuse errors when they used Chinese complement of result. In this study, 10.2 percent of errors that Korean students made is misinformation, 9.8 percent is misordering, 9.6 percent is omission and 5.3 percent is addition.

According to the above table, 7.3% of misinformation errors were made by Myanmar learners. Other errors were omission (6.7%), misordering (6.5%) and addition (4.1%). The common errors include misuse of negative form, using improper complement of results, and disappearance of complement of result and necessary elements. Li (2011) stated that Myanmar students also often made omission errors, such as omission of resultative complements and grammatical elements. It was found that Myanmar learners might add some irregular elements into the sentences which caused addition errors, such as *走路累了*zǒu lù lèi le *(tired of walking)*. Misinformation errors were found in sentences made by Myanmar learners; students

used incorrect words and sentence patterns. Misordering was another kind of error that Myanmar learners might make, as students put complement of results in the wrong position.

In addition, 5.1 percent of misinformation errors were made by English native speaking students, 4.9 percent of errors is misordering, 4.0 percent of errors is omission and 2.3 percent of errors is addition. Guo (2017) demonstrated that errors of Chinese resultative complement made by English native speaker were collocation, component deficiency, misuse of negative words, misordering, syntactic hybridity, component redundancy and misinformation.

The common errors made by Japanese students were misinformation (4.4%), omission (3.8%), misordering (3.7%), and addition error (2.3%). Yang (2018) proposed that there is no concept of complement of result in Japanese language. Moreover, most of the grammatical patterns in Japanese are totally different from Chinese. This may cause Japanese learners to make errors when they use complement of result in Chinese.

Furthermore, Wu (2012) and Wang (2012) also proposed that the result of the study has shown that the errors made by Vietnamese students were omission errors (4%), such as disappearing of complement of result, headwords, particle 了 le and 得 de, addition errors, such as superimposed of complement of result and misuse errors, such as misuse of Chinese resultative complements, using wrong headwords, using irregular complement and misuse of negation.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that the acquisition error of Chinese complement of result by foreign language learners could be divided into 4 kinds: omission, addition,

misinformation and misorder, the most common error being misinformation. The interference of native language, which is call interlingual, caused students to produce errors while using Chinese complement of result. Richards (1974) agreed that another source of errors was intralingual interference. Errors occur during the learning process of the second language when the learners have not really acquired the knowledge. However, language environment also plays an important role in students' language acquisition, hence, the researcher proposes suggestions to help students overcome barriers of learning Chinese and make them masters in Chinese language. Firstly, more Chinese language environment should be provided in foundation Chinese courses to let students have more exposure to Chinese language. Secondly, select proper and potential resources for Chinese language teaching. Lastly, provide variety teaching activities and encourage students to practice using Chinese in real situations. The more chances students practice, the better they will be able to use Chinese language.

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