

A Study on the Acquisition of Chinese Classifiers by Vietnamese Learners

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Abstract : In the field of language study, classifier is an interesting research feature. In the world's languages, some languages have classifier system, some do not. Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese languages are a rich classifier system, however, because of the language system, the cognitive, cultural differences, so that the syntactic structure of classifier of them also dissimilar. When using Mandarin Chinese classifiers must collocate with nouns or verbs, in the lexical category it is not like nouns or verbs, belong to the open class. But some scholars believe that Mandarin Chinese measure words are similar to English and other Indo European languages. The word hanging on the structure and word formation (suffix), is a closed class. Compared to other languages, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and other Asian languages are still belonging to the classifier language's second type, this type of language is classifier, it is in the majority of quantity must exist, and following deictic, anaphoric or quantity appearing together, not separation between its modified noun, also known as numeral classifier language. Main syntactic structure of Chinese classifiers are as follows: 'quantity+measure+noun', 'pronoun+measure+noun', 'pronoun+quantity+measure+noun', 'prefix+quantity+measure+noun', 'quantity+adjective+measure+noun', 'quantity (above 10 whole number), + duo (多)measure+noun', 'quantity (around 10) + measure + duo (多) +noun'. Main syntactic structure of Vietnamese classifiers are: 'quantity+measure+noun', 'measure+noun+pronoun', 'quantity+measure+noun+pronoun', 'measure+noun+prefix+quantity', 'quantity+measure+noun+adjective', 'duo (多) +quantity+measure+noun', 'quantity+measure+adjective+pronoun (quantity word could not be 1)', 'measure+adjective+pronoun', 'measure+pronoun'. In daily life, classifiers are commonly used, if Chinese learners failed to standardize this using category, because the negative impact might occur on their verbal communication. The richness of the Chinese classifier system contributes to the complexity in the study of the system by foreign learners, especially in the inter language of Vietnamese learners. As above mentioned, Vietnamese language also has a rich system of classifiers, however, the basic structure order of two languages are similar but both still have differences. These similarities and dissimilarities between Chinese and Vietnamese classifier systems contribute significantly to the common errors made by Vietnamese students while they acquire Chinese, which are distinct from the errors made by students from the other language background. This article from a comparative perspective of language, has an orientation towards Chinese and Vietnamese languages commonly used in classifiers semantics and structural form two aspects. This comparative study aims to identify Vietnamese students while learning Chinese classifiers may face some negative transference of mother language, beside that through the analysis of the classifiers questionnaire, find out the causes and patterns of the errors they made. As the preliminary analysis shows, Vietnamese students while learning Chinese classifiers made some errors such as: overuse classifier 'ge' (个); misuse the other classifiers '*yi zhang ri ji'(yi pian ri ji), '*yi zuo fang zi'(yi jian fang zi), '*si zhang jin pai'(si mei jin pai); homonym words 'dui, shuang, fu, tao' (对, 双, 富, 陶), 'ke, li' (可, 李).

Keywords : acquisition, classifiers, negative transfer, Vietnamese learners

Conference Title : ICCLL 2017 : International Conference on Chinese Language and Linguistics

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : August 28-29, 2017