

Problematic Grammar of Chinese Sentences Faced by Students Having Indonesian as Their Mother Tongue

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ABSTRACT

This paper examine the grammatical problems faced by Surabaya students having Indonesian as their mother tongue when constructing Chinese sentences. A qualitative descriptive method consisting test materials made by 30 students learning Chinese as a second language was used. Some grammatical errors in the Chinese sentences were found. Problematic in writing Chinese sentences consists of: sequence errors of place and time determinant words; grammatical errors about the Modifier and Head norm in arranging words; errors using the three kinds of words *de*, “的 *de*”, “得 *de*”, and “地 *de*”. All these errors were influenced by their Indonesian mother language, while in arranging Chinese sentences, it was also interferences by the English grammatical norm *to be*. To overcome these problematics, the best solution is using contrastive analyses, which expose the differences between these two languages, and thereby clarify the point of differences.

Key words: Problematic Grammar error Chinese Indonesian

INTRODUCTION

Mother tongue Indonesians at the early stage of learning Chinese, frequently face problematic situations. These difficulties happened because a different grammatical rule exists between the two languages. Among others, in combination words, Indonesian language adhere an Indonesian law of Head and Modifier. For example “*ibu saya*” (meaning ‘my mother’), the word “*saya*” (I) explained the word “*ibu*” (mother). While Chinese adheres an inverse law of Modifier and Head, so this word combination in Chinese will be “*wǒ māma* 我妈妈, the word *wǒ* explained the word *māma*. Another problematic is the application of the particle “*de*” whose latin spelling is the same but possesses three different Chinese characters “的”, “得”, and “地.”. These three “*de*” words have a different kind of application, which cause the student frequently making mistakes. Also in writing the sequence of the time and place determinants, the Chinese language adhere a system from a bigger condition toward the smaller, meanwhile in Indonesia these determinants follow the writing rule from a smaller condition towards the bigger.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sequence Norm of Writing Time and Place Determinants.

Common errors in writing the sequence of time and place determinants from a bigger condition toward the smaller condition according the research of Huang (2009:3) can be shown in the next table.

Table 1: Chinese Sentences with Correct and Wrong Writings of Time or Place Determinants (Huang 2009:3)

Indonesian sentence	Wrong translation	Correct translation
(1) <u>Hari</u> <u>Senin</u> <u>17</u> <u>Agustus</u> <u>tahun</u> <u>2009</u> . 1 2 3 4	<u>星期</u> <u>一</u> <u>十七</u> <u>日</u> <u>八月</u> <u>二〇〇</u> <u>九</u> <u>年</u> 4 3 2 1	<u>二〇〇</u> <u>九</u> <u>年</u> <u>八月</u> <u>十七</u> <u>日</u> <u>星期</u> <u>一</u> . 1 2 3 4 <i>2009 nián 8 yuè 17 rì xīngqī yī</i>
(2) <u>Surabaya</u> <u>Jawa</u> <u>Timur</u> <u>Indonesia</u> 3 2 1	<u>泗水</u> <u>东</u> <u>爪</u> <u>哇</u> <u>印</u> <u>尼</u> 3 2 1	<u>印</u> <u>尼</u> (国) <u>东</u> <u>爪</u> <u>哇</u> (省) <u>泗水</u> (市) 1 2 3 <i>Yinni (guó) dōng zhǎo wā (shěng) sì shuǐ (shì)</i>

Table 2: Chinese Sentences with Correct and Wrong Writings of the Word “*de* 的.” (Huang 2009:3)

Indonesian sentence	Wrong translation	Correct translation
(3) <u>Taman</u> <u>yang</u> <u>di</u> <u>tengah</u> <u>lapangan</u> <u>sekolah</u> . 4 3 2 1	<u>公园</u> <u>的</u> <u>中央</u> <u>广场</u> <u>学校</u> . 4 3 2 1	<u>学校</u> <u>广场</u> <u>中央</u> <u>的</u> <u>公园</u> 1 2 3 4 <i>Xuéxiào guǎngchǎng zhōngyāng de gōngyuán</i>

The example in sentence (3) is rather special because it contains the word “*de* 的”. When in a sentence contain this word, the translation from Indonesian sentences to Chinese must alter the gramatical structure. The word behind “*de* 的” must translated first. As in the above example, the word “*taman*” (garden) has to be written in front of the sentence.

Sequence Norm of Time / Place Determinants with Verbs

Time /place determinants must be written in front a verb. Usually in Indonesian sentences, these determinants is placed at the end of sentence, but may also be written in the middle or at the beginning of the sentence (Alwi et al, 2003:367). Next is a comparison example of these determinants in Indonesian and Chinese.

Table 3: Comparison of Indonesian and Chinese Sentences

Indonesian sentences	Chinese sentences
(4) Mereka makan <i>di kantin sekolah</i> (They are eating at the school's canteen)	他们 <u>在</u> <u>学校</u> <u>食堂</u> 吃饭 <i>Tāmen zài xuéxiào shítáng chīfàn</i>
(5) Dia memotong rambutnya <i>kemarin</i> (He cut his hair yesterday)	<u>昨天</u> 他 剪 他的头发 <i>Zuótiān tā jiǎn tā de tóufa</i>

The Law of Modifier and Head in Chinese Word Structure

Chinese words combination adhered the law of Modifier and Head, in the understanding that the word explaining is written in front, while Indonesian adhere an oposite Law of Head and Modifier.

Table 4: Comparison of Indonesian and Chinese Sentence According the Head and Modifier Law

Indonesian sentence structure with the Modifier and Head Law	Chinese word structure <i>dìngyǔ</i> 定语 with the Head and Modifier Law	
	Correct sentence	Wrong sentence
Majalah baru	<i>Xīn huàbào</i> (新画报) Baru majalah (in Indonesian) Magazine new	<i>Huàbào xīn</i> (画报新) Majalah baru (in Indonesian) New magazine

The norm using the three words *de* “的”, “地”, “得”

Words added behind the word *de* “的” are noun adverbs or called *dìngyǔ* 定语 (atributive). While not all *dìngyǔ*'s 定语 used the word *de* “的”. This is because there exists a connection with the word characteristic of the adverb and grammatical meaning considered (Liu and Pan, 2001:475). Following table shows the norm in writing the word *de* “的”. The key problem is that after the word *de* “的” has to be a noun.

Table 5: Chinese Word “*de*的” Writing Norm

Noun/pronoun	Adjective	<i>de</i> 的	Noun	Indonesian meaning	English meaning
Xuéxiào 学校		<i>de</i> “的”	Lǎoshī 老师	Guru sekolah	School teacher
Huā 花		<i>de</i> “的”	Cì 刺	Duri bunga	Flower’s thorn
Tā 他		<i>de</i> “的”	Kǒu 口	Mulut dia	His mouth
	Cōngmíng 聪明	<i>de</i> “的”	Rén 人	Orang (yang) pandai	Clever man
	Dà 大	<i>de</i> “的”	Mǎ 马	Kuda (yang) besar	Big horse

This word *de* “地” is used after an adjective, then followed by a verb. The following table shows the writing norm of the word *de* “地”. According Qian (1995: 284-285) the word *de* “地” is usually used to explain the subject and picturing the effort in progress. Like the following example.

Table 6: Chinese Word “*de*地” Writing Norm

Adjective	<i>de</i> “地”	Verb	Indonesian meaning	English meaning
Jī dòng 激动	<i>de</i> 地	shuō 说	Berkata dengan terharu	Excitedly speaking
Jī dòng De Shuō 激动地说				

The word “*de*得” is used after a verb, then followed by an adjective. The following table shows the writing norm of the word “*de*得” in a sentence example in Table 7. According Xing (2001: 279) the word “*de*得” is written between the centre word called *zhōngxīnyǔ* (中心语) and the complement word called *bǔyǔ* (补语) Liu and Pan (2001:590) explicated that the word “*de*得” which is written behind a verb, is to show the condition of the verb done by someone / animal / object, like in Table 7.

Table 7: Chinese Word “*de*得” Writing Norm

Verb/centre word	<i>de</i> “得”	Adverb/adjective	Indonesian meaning	English meaning
Duō 多 (centre word)	<i>de</i> “得”	Hěn 很 (Adverb)	Sangat banyak	Very much
Duō de hěn 多“得”很				
Pǎo de kuài 跑得 快			Larinya cepat	Running quickly

Research Method

This paper uses a qualitative descriptive method. The basic thinking using this method is because data consists of sentences. According Miles & Huberman (1992:1) and Moleong (2007:157) analyses result of sentences is more suitable by qualitative descriptive method. Sunarto (2001:132) also explicated that a qualitative paradigm research possesses a phenomenal analogic character, not numeric. Meanwhile, the descriptive explanation is descriptive, meaning as it is, and no experimentations were done. A similar remark was also made by Bogdan & Biklen (1992: 10) by stating that datas have a descriptive character when the discourse as a specific qualitative approach have a natural character. Besides that, the instrumental research was done by the researcher herself.

Subject research were selected according time learning, that is between two and three years, and not differentiated by place of learning. The age of the subjects were also not restricted. 30 subjects were observed. Research datas were obtained by distributing tests containing appropriate difficulties to the theory norm described in the literature observation section. Observation was done during answering the questionnaire, so an objective result according the students competence was obtained.

Errors made by the 30 students were categorized according kind of errors , then sorted in a table to analyse the reasons of the errors, and finally discover the problematic causes. For legitimation, similar data from other subjects were observed and compared.

Appearing Problematics

Table 8: Grammar Errors of Time Determinant in Chinese Sentences Sequence

<p>“Saya pergi ke bank hari Selasa bulan Agustus tahun 2009” “I go to the bank on Tuesday, August 18th 2009” 2009 nián 8 yuè 18 rì xīngqī èr wǒ qù yínháng 2009年8月18日星期二我去银行</p>		
Subject	Student’s sentences (dotted underlined Chinese words are wrong)	Error analyses
S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S10, S11	<u>Xīngqī èr</u> 2009 nián 8 yuè 18 rì wǒ qù yínháng 星期二 2009年8月18日我去银行	Word “Tuesday / Xīngqī èr 星期二” is not written after the word of date determinant.
S4 S8	Wǒ 2009 nián 8 yuè 18 rì qù yínháng 我 2009年8月18日去银行 2009 nián 8 yuè 18 rì Wǒ qù yínháng 2009年8月18日我去银行	. The word of “Tuesday / Xīngqī èr 星期二” was not written.
S9	Wǒ qù yínháng zài 2009 nián 8 yuè 18 rì xīngqī èr 我去银行在2009年8月18日星期二	Sequence of time determinant is correct, but the place determinant word must be written behind the verb “qù” , and it is also excessly written with a word zài
<p>“Kantor pos yang disebelah kiri bank jauh” “Post office at the left hand side of the bank is far” “Yínháng zuǒbiān de yóujú yuǎn” 银行左边的邮局远</p>		
S1, S2, S10, S11, S12, S30	Yóujú zài yínháng de zuǒbiān hěn yuǎn 邮局在银行的左边很远	The use of the word “de 的” is wrong. The words “the left hand side of the bank “ should be written at the beginning of the sentence, followed by the word de
S2 S7	Yóujú zài zuǒbiān yínháng 邮局在左边 银行 Yóujú zài zuǒbiān yínháng hěn yuǎn 邮局在左边 银行 很远	The words “the left hand side of the bank/ yínháng zuǒbiān /银行左边” should be written inverse the Indonesian spelling, but here is written just the same.
S3	Zuǒbiān de yóujú yuǎn 左边的邮局远	The word “bank”/yínháng /银行 is not written
S5	Yóujú Yínháng 邮局 银行	The sentence is not complete, only written the word of “Post office/ Yóujú/邮局” and “bank/Yínháng/银行”
S6	Zuǒbiān de yóujú yuǎn 左边的邮局远	The word “bank 银行” is not written.
S8	Yóujú zuǒbiān de Yínháng yuǎn 邮局左边的银行 远	It should be written “Post office at the left hand side of the bank /银行左边的邮局/ Yínháng zuǒbiān de yóujú”, but here is written “bank at the left hand side of the post office”
S 15	Yóujú zài yínháng de zuǒbiān hěn yuǎn 邮局在银行的左边很远	Position of the word “bank” and “post office” is wrong
S 16	Yóujú zài zuǒbiān de yínháng shì yuǎn de 邮局在左边的银行 是远的	Position of word “de” and “ zài” is wrong. When predicate is an adjective there is no need to write the verb “ shì/是”
S17	(The student does not write anything)	The student does not understand the norm

		<p>“Saya lahir di Surabaya, Jawa Timur, Indonesia” “I was born in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia” 我在印尼, 东爪哇, 泗水出生。 <i>Wǒ zài yìnní, dōngzhǎowā, sishuǐ chūshēng</i></p>
S12	<p><i>Wǒ zài sishuǐ, dōngzhǎowā, yìn ní chūshēng</i> 我在泗水, 东爪哇, 印尼, 出生。</p>	<p>Here the sequence of writing place determinant is contrary, it should be written: country first, followed by province East Java, then city Surabaya.</p>
S29	<p><i>Wǒ chūshēng zài yìnní, dōngzhǎowā, sishuǐ</i> 我出生 在印尼, 东爪哇, 泗水。</p>	<p>Position of place determinant words must written in front of the verb, but here it is written behind. While place determinant sequence is already correct.</p>

Table 9: Grammar Errors of Place Determinant Words

	<p>“Saya makan di kantin sekolah” “I am eating at the school’s canteen” 我在学校食堂吃饭 <i>Wǒ zài xuéxiào shítáng chīfàn</i></p>	
Subject	Student’s sentences (dotted upperlined Chinese words are wrong)	Error analyses
S1, S8	<p><i>Wǒ chīfàn zài xuéxiào shítáng</i> 我吃饭 在 学校 食堂</p>	<p>Place determinant word is written behind the verb, it should be in front.</p>
S2, S3, S23	<p><i>Zài shítáng wǒ chīfàn</i> 在 食堂 我 吃饭</p>	<p>The word “school” is not written, so considered the student does not understand the norm.of Head and Modifier.</p>
S4, S5, S6, S7, S12, S14, S15, S17, S20, S21, S24, S26, S28	<p><i>Wǒ zài shítáng chīfàn</i> 我 在 食堂 吃饭</p>	<p>The word “school” is not written, so considered the student does not understand the norm.of Head and Modifier.</p>
S9	<p><i>Wǒ chī zài shítáng</i> 我 吃在 食堂</p>	<p>The word “school” is not written, and place determinant word is written behind the verb. So the student does not understand the norm.of Head and Modifier and also the norm position of place determinant words..</p>
S10	<p><i>Wǒ zài cāntīng chīfàn</i> 我 在 餐厅 吃饭</p>	<p>“School canteen” is wrong translated into “dining room”, The student cannot write the word “school”, and does not understand the norm of Head and Modifier.</p>

Table10: Grammar Errors of Head and Modifier Law

Subject	Words with correct Head and Modifier Law	Words with wrong Head and Modifier Law
S11	<p>Kuda besar (meaning ‘big horse’) <i>dàmǎ</i> 大马</p>	<p><i>mǎdà</i> 马大</p>

Only one student 11 (S11), is still influenced by the Indonesian norm of his mother tongue arranging the law of Head and Modifier. When this law is randomed in a sentence “saya makan di kantin sekolah / 我在学校食堂吃饭 *Wǒ zài xuéxiào shítáng chīfàn* “ means ‘I am eating at school’s canteen’, as shown in Table 9, a confusing problem happened in applying the Chinese norm of Modifier and Head. The phrase “kantin sekolah” means ‘school’s canteen’ in the Indonesian sentence when translated in Chinese should be written *xuéxiào shítáng* 学校食堂, while a student wrote it inversely as *shítáng xuéxiào* 食堂学校, an evidence of grammatical interference of his mother tongue.

Solution to Solve Grammatical Problematics

To overcome syntax errors, a taxonomy classification according Dulay and Burt (in Yulianto, 2008a:8) or a comparative taxonomy or contrastive analyses can be used. Lado (in Liu, 2005:17) stresses that in mastering the mother tongue structure can have a positive or negative effect. If the target language structure is identical as their mother tongue language it will give a positive influence, and the opposite if it is different. With comparing the grammatical law of the two languages, the student will be more easy to remember. While applying the three kinds of *de*, can be done by contrasting the using of these three kinds of “的”, “地”, and “得”.

CONCLUSION

Errors in applying the three kinds of the word *de*, which are “的”, “地”, and “得”, are caused by their same spelling *de*. While the Chinese character is different and the method for applying them in a sentence is also different. About the law of Modifier and Head in Chinese, when students were asked to write combination of two words, they master it correctly, but if it is randomized in a sentence, a problematic start happening. Time and place determinants which must be written in front of a verb in Chinese, are frequently mistakenly written. Students sometimes add the verb “*shi*/是” before the adjective, this is because of interferences by the English grammatical norm *to be*. Most of these problems can be solved by contrasting their mother tongue language against Chinese.

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