

Comparative Analysis of Chinese “Bei” Construction and Japanese Passive Tense Based on the Type of Patient

Chenyue Zhu^{1,a,*}

¹*Macau University of Science and Technology, UIC University International College
Avenida Wai Long, Taipa, Macau, China*

a. 13088071227@163.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Comparative analysis has always been a hot topic in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), however most studies focus more on comparing language structures between Chinese and English, with less attention to the Chinese and Japanese. Therefore, the present study will do a comparative analysis between Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense based on the type of patient to firstly find the interaction between structure form and function, then analyze the differences and similarities, finally using examples from the HSK dynamic composition corpus to discuss the underlying reason for causing acquisition errors by Japanese Chinese learners.

Keywords: comparative analysis, Chinese “Bei” construction, Japanese passive tense, patient, Japanese Chinese learners

1. Introduction

Variety research of comparative analysis of languages has been done. As Polio and Wen suggested, the first and the basis of comparative analysis research is the interaction of both form and function for grammar structure itself [1-2], therefore it's worthy to focus more on the differences and similarities on fundamental sentence structures. For teaching Chinese as a foreign language, “Bei” construction is always accounts for the key and difficult part, as is frequently used by native speakers of Chinese, which represents the most typical construction from the passive sentence in mandarin Chinese [3]. Lu classified Mandarin Chinese passive sentences into 3 categories: clearly marked, quasi-marked, and no-marked [4]. Clearly marked passive sentence refers to “Bei” construction. The markedness dominates the biggest part of passive sentence in mandarin Chinese [5], so only “Bei” construction will be discussed in the present study. From the second language teaching perspective, based on the prototype theory, the most prototypical construction should be taught firstly [6], in order to make linguistic description becomes learner-friendly, and reduce bias or error in the further study.

2. Literature Review

The existing research for “Bei” construction were mostly from English Chinese learners and took a big account for focusing on the language comparative Study [7-8]. Comparing to the English Chinese learners and other languages Chinese learners, the less attention is paid to the Japanese Chinese learners, with no more than ten papers (to 2023.01) about analyzing “Bei” construction for Japanese

Learners in China National Knowledge Internet (CNKI). While Chinese and Japanese are different in the fundamental language structure, as Chinese is an SVO language, the markedness is in the middle of the sentence, before the object, in “Bei” construction; however, Japanese is a SOV language, in which the markedness for the passive tense is at the end of the sentence, after the object. Besides, Chinese is an isolating language, using the independent functional word “Bei” to reflect the passive sentence construction. On the contrary, Japanese is an agglutinative language; it is the typical representative of using inflection of words to change their construction of sentences, that is, using the affix “れる” or “られる” to represent the passive tense.

From existing comparative analysis for “Bei” construction in Chinese and passive tense in Japanese, the research perspective is from comparing the overall passive sentence in Chinese and passive tense in Japanese, then choosing the predicate verb [9] and agent [10] as the analysis perspective in Chinese “Bei” construction. To note, the analysis from Agent perspective is not comprehensive as the Patient is lack the type of animate. Therefore, a systematic summary of the different usages of “Bei” construction in Chinese and passive tense in Japanese still needs to be provided. The present study is inspired to do a comparative analysis of Chinese “Bei” construction based on the type of patient, also giving some error examples from the HSK dynamic composition corpus to enrich the comparative statements. As Chinese is a topic-predominant language, patient is the topic in the Chinese “Bei” construction, especially the emphasis on “Bei” construction [11]; and Japanese is a subject-predominant language, where the patient is the subject in the Japanese passive tense. Therefore, it’s worth doing comparative analysis from the patient perspective to investigate Chinese “Bei” construction by Japanese Chinese learners.

The research questions in this study will be: Based on the type of patient, what similarities and differences are there between the Chinese “Bei” construction and the Japanese passive tense for sentence pattern selection?

3. Comparative Analysis Between “Bei” Construction in Chinese and Passive Tense in Japanese

In general, “Bei” is the most representative one for markedness in Chinese passive sentence, the function of the “Bei” construction is to express meaning that somebody or something influenced by somebody or something, especially for the feelings for suffering, then a certain change takes place and produces certain results [12]. The usual structure from “Bei” construction is “A + “Bei” + B + VP + C,” where, in the semantic relation, A is the patient before the markedness “Bei,” B is the agent before the action, and C is the result produced by the relation from B to A. In Japanese passive tense, although the function for using markedness “れる” or “られる” in passive tense is the same as in Chinese passive sentences, the meaning and grammar structure are not always matched. The common structure in Japanese passive tense is “A は/が B に/から/によって +V- “れる” or “られる” , A is the Patient at the beginning of the sentence, B is the Agent before the action, however the markedness “れる” or “られる” is at the end of the passive tense, so, the word order for markedness is different between the passive structure in Chinese and Japanese basically.

According to the classification by Liu, she uses the view from the agent as the research basis, keeps the patient at the same status of “non-animate,” and then divides the agent into three categories in both Chinese and Japanese, that is, animate, non-animate, and absence [10]. From this point of view, the present study will also follow this classification for the agent, but this study is based on the perspective of the patient, so the patient will be classified into 2 categories, animate and non-animate, as Liu states that the animacy for the patient in Chinese passive sentences and Japanese passive tenses is the same [13]. The situation for the patient and agent is different from the absence, which means the patient cannot be absent in passive sentence structure since the patient is the topic and subject in

both Chinese and Japanese. However, one thing should be mentioned: because the first person as subject is always omitted from Japanese grammar structure, so does it in passive tense, which causes the difference from Chinese grammar structure in that Chinese cannot omit the subject in the sentence structure, particularly since the subject is the patient in Chinese passive sentences. Referring to that, the following examples of Japanese content will include a first-person situation to reflect the Japanese specificity.

Therefore, as our analysis will be based on the patient perspective, first the patient will be divided into animate and non-animate as the animacy in Chinese and Japanese is the same [13], and then the agent will be divided into the new 3 categories from Liu, that is, animate, non-animate, and absence [10]. Then using the examples under different situations to demonstrate the similarities and differences in sentence pattern selection of Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense based on the type of patient. Here, the correspondent relationships between Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense are: 1: same in Chinese and Japanese; 2: use “Bei” construction in Chinese but not passive tense in Japanese; 3: not use “Bei” construction in Chinese but use passive tense in Japanese.

3.1. Animate Patient

A: When the patient and the agent are both animate, three different situations will happen:

A1: The correspondences for Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense are the same.

But there is one difference between “entirety” and “part” from the patient perspective, which is that Japanese does not use “part” as the subject in passive tense [14], hence the situation will be separated into two parts.

a: When the patient is “entirety”, the situation is the same in Japanese and Chinese:

(1) Chinese (C): 他被老师骂了。(He was scolded by the teacher.)

Japanese (J): 彼は先生にしかられました。(他被老师骂了。)

Because the first person is always omitted in Japanese, when the patient is the first person in Japanese:

(2) C: 我被他打了。(I was hit by him.) J: 彼に殴られました。((我) 被他打了。)

b: When the patient is part, Chinese can use part as a subject, and “Bei” must be used, but Japanese cannot use part as a subject:

(3) C: 他的脚被旁边的人踩了。(His foot was stepped on by the man next to him.)

J: 彼は隣の人に足を踏まれました。(He was stepped on by the man next to him. 他被旁边的人踩了脚。)

A2: Use “Bei” construction in Chinese, but not use passive tense in Japanese:

Including “逗” (amuse), “惹” (offend), “弄” (make) etc. verb or appear the emotional verbs, for example: “感动” (touch), 感染 (affect), “惊吓” (shock) etc. in Chinese, use “Bei” construction in Chinese, but use Causative tense in Japanese rather than passive tense [15].

(4) C: 经理被他惹怒了。(The manager was annoyed by him.)

J: 彼は社長を怒らせた。(他让经理生气了。)

(5) C: 妈妈被女儿的行为感动了。(Mother was touched by her daughter’s behavior.)

J: 母は娘の行動に感動した。(女儿的行为让妈妈感动。)

A3: Not use “Bei” construction in Chinese but use passive tense in Japanese:

a: When verb is one-valence verb, and include “死” (die), “来” (come), “哭” (cry) etc. Chinese use active sentence structure instead of using “Bei” construction, but Japanese use passive tense [16].

(6) C: 他死了母亲/他母亲死了。(His mother is dead.)

J: 彼は母親に殺されました。(他被死了母亲。)

b: When the passive tense is indirect in Japanese, to express suffering from an uncomfortable state of mind, which means subject is not directly influenced by the predicate verb (Japanese Descriptive Grammar Research Institute, 2009).

(7) C: 我旁边的人在吸烟。(The man next to me was smoking.)

J: 隣の人にタバコを吸われました。(我被旁边的人吸烟。)

B: When the patient is animate, the agent is non-animate:

B1: The correspondences are the same.

(8) C: 他被这件事影响了心情。(He was affected by the incident.)

J: 彼はこのことに気分を害されました。(他被这件事影响了心情。)

C: When the patient is animate and the agent is absent, two situations will happen:

C1: The correspondences are the same.

(9) C: 他被打了。(He was beaten.) J: 彼は殴られました。(他被打了。)

C2: Chinese uses “Bei” construction, but Japanese does not use the passive tense.

When stating objective facts, “考えられる”, “思われる” etc. this kind of thought verb is placed at the end of the sentence; otherwise, they are the same.

(10) C: 男人被认为是家庭中的顶梁柱。(Man are supposed to be the breadwinners of the family.)

J: 男はうちの大黒柱と思われる。(男人是家庭中的顶梁柱(认为)。)

3.2. Non-animate Patient

D: When the patient is non-animate and the agent is animate:

D2: Use “Bei” construction in Chinese, but not use Passive tense in Japanese:

(11) C: 牛奶被弟弟喝了。(Milk was drunk by the brother.)

J: 弟はミルクをのみ飲みました。(弟弟喝了牛奶。)

E: When both the patient and the agent are non-animate:

E1: Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense are matched in order to describe the natural phenomena [17].

(12) C: 月亮被云遮住了。(The moon was hidden by clouds.)

J: 月が雲に隠れた。(月亮被云遮住了。)

F: when the patient is non-animate and the agent is absence, two scenarios will happen:

F2: Chinese uses “Bei” construction, not use passive tense in Japanese:

When stating the objective facts, the situation is same as when Patient is animate, “考えられる”, “思われる” etc. this kind of thought verb is placed at the end of the sentence.

(13) C: 同性恋在美国被认为是合法的。(Homosexuality is considered legal in America.)

J: アメリカでは同性愛は合法とされています。(美国是同性恋合法的(认为)。)

F3: Chinese does not use “Bei” construction, but Japanese use passive tense:

(14) C: 昨天举行了婚礼。(The wedding ceremony was held yesterday.)

J: 昨日結婚式が行われました。(昨天婚礼被举行了。)

4. Conclusions

In order to have a better understanding for the comparative analysis above, using the error from HSK dynamic composition corpus in “Bei” construction used by Japanese Chinese learners as an evidential material to explain the reason for causing the error. When Patient is animate, the most errors happen from type of C, that is Patient is animate, Agent is absence. There are 10 error sentences happens for

omitting the “Bei” before 罚款(fine) or 罚,惩罚,判(be sentenced to), e.g.: “有的城市边走边吸烟的人要罚款”, the right sentence should be “有的城市边走边吸烟的人要被罚款” (In some cities, people who smoke while walking are fined.). Although this is a situation in which both Chinese and Japanese should use passive voice, in Chinese, when 罚款(fine) is the role for the verb, using the “Bei” construction is expressing the uncomfortable situation or suffering feelings that the patient is in by doing something wrong, so they must be fined or sentence to. The “fine” in Japanese word structure is about receiving voice for the most part, so Japanese can choose to not use the passive tense in 罚款, that is, “处罚を受ける” (受到了处罚), so the different meaning of words and cultural differences for expressing uncomfortable feelings are different from Chinese and Japanese.

When Patient is non-animate, half of errors happens under the type of F, that is when Patient is non-animate, Agent is absent, and situation for using “Bei” construction in Chinese and passive tense in Japanese are different, the negative transfer of target language for causing error in F3 happens, e.g.: “他挑水回来了, 但马上就喝完了”, the correct sentence is “他挑水回来了,但是水马上就被喝完了” (He returned with water, but the water was soon drunk up), the omission of “Bei” happens, Japanese Chinese learners indeed does not use “Bei” construction, but also omit the Patient water in the sentences, as Japanese always omit the subject in sentence structure, so the negative transfer will cause misunderstanding of the Chinese sentences. Furthermore, in this sentence, the result of drinking water is not the key point; the underlying meaning may be that someone will be angry because they have not drunk, and the implicit uncomfortable feelings indicate that “Bei” should be used [18].

Overall, after comparing the Chinese “Bei” construction and Japanese passive tense, although there are some similarities between the two language sentence structures, the diversity of culture, different grammar structure, different sentence order rules, and negative transfer of both native and target languages may be causing the acquisition errors for Japanese Chinese learners. Therefore, in the future study and the area of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, we should first focus more on the form and function itself in the different language structures, then use the errors from Chinese learners to expand our analysis and thinking.

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