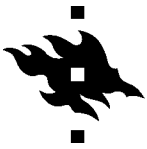


Error analysis of the written Chinese of Finnish university students

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract Tässä Pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastellaan suomalaisten Kiinan kieltä opiskelevien yliopisto-opiskelijoiden kielivirheitä heidän kiinan kirjoitelmissaan. Tässä tutkielmassa Kiinan kielellä viitataan Kiinan kansantasavallan viralliseen kieleen, sen puhuttuun standardimuotoon ja yksinkertaistettuja merkkejä käyttävään kirjoitusjärjestelmään. Kiinan kielen kirjoitusjärjestelmä on opiskelijoille erityisen haastava erityispiirteidensä takia ja siksi lukemaan ja kirjoittamaan oppiminen kiinaksi kestää kauemmin kuin vastaavien taitojen saavuttaminen Suomessa yleisimmin opiskelluissa indoeurooppalaisissa kielissä. Kiinan lukemisen ja kirjoittamisen tukemiseksi on kehitetty <i>Pinyin</i> -tarkekirjoitusjärjestelmä, joka helpottaa Kiinan kielen tuottamista ja ymmärtämistä. Varsinaisen lukutaidon saavuttamiseksi on kuitenkin opetettava tunnistamaan tuhansia kirjoitusmerkkejä ja niiden eri yhdistelmiä. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää millaiset virheet ovat tyypillisiä suomea äidinkielenään puhuville opiskelijoille ja mitkä Kiinan kielen ominaisuudet ja rakenteet ovat heille erityisen haasteellisia. Tutkielma pohtii syitä korpuksessa esiintyvien virheiden taustalla niiden esiintymisympäristön, ortografian ja välikielen kautta. Suomea äidinkielenä puhuvien Kiinan kielen opiskelijoiden Kiinan kielen oppimisesta ei vielä tiedetä paljoa ja tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on kartoittaa niitä kiinan kieliopin ja sanaston solmukohtia, joiden kanssa opiskelijat erityisesti joutuvat ponnistelemaan. Tutkimuksen viitekehiksenä käytetään virheanalyysin ja välikielen teorioita ja tutkitaan kielenoppijan ja tämän virheiden välistä suhdetta. Tutkielmassa on sovellettu Selinkerin (1972) ja Corderin (1966) luomaa virheanalyysin viitekehystä Kiinan kielen kontekstissa. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan kielitaidon kahta eri osa-aluetta, sanastoa ja syntaksia, sekä niissä esiintyviä virheitä. Leksikon analyysin pohjana on käytetty Nationin ja Hunstonin (2013) mallia. Syntaksin analyysiin tukea on haettu Corderin viitekehiksestä ja Lun (1994) mallista Kiinan kielen syntaksivirheiden analysointiin. Tutkimuksen aineistona käytettiin pääosin ensimmäisen vuoden yliopisto-opiskelijoiden kotitehtävinä kirjoittamia esseitä ja lyhyitä käännöstehtäviä. Osa opiskelijoista oli Kiinan kielen pääaineopiskelijoita ja tutkimukseen osallistui yhteensä 14 opiskelijaa. Osalla opiskelijoista oli jo aikaisempia kiinanopintoja, kun taas osalla ei ollut Kiinan kielestä juuri mitään aikaisempaa kokemusta. Opiskelijat olivat eri ikäisiä ja osasivat eri kieliä. Osalla opiskelijoista oli kotikielenään suomen lisäksi vielä jokin toinenkin tai kolmas kieli. Tutkimuksen aineistona käytettiin 28 opiskelijoiden kirjoittamaa esseetä ja samaa määrää lyhyitä käännöstehtäviä. Aineisto kerättiin keväällä 2019. Opiskelijoiden tekstit olivat pituudeltaan noin 200-320 merkkiä ja suurin osa opiskelijoista kirjoitti samoista aiheista. Osa teksteistä oli käsinkirjoitettuja, kun taas osa oli kirjoitettu tietokoneella. Opiskelijoiden virheet laskettiin ja analysoitiin niiden kielipiillisten ominaisuuksien mukaan. Luokittelun perusteena käytettiin erilaisia jaotteluja, eikä kirjoitus- ja lyöntivirheitä laskettu mukaan. Tutkimuksessa selviää, että suomea puhuvat opiskelijat kamppailevat melko lailla samojen rakenteiden kanssa kuin muitakin kieliä äidinkielenään puhuvat kiinanopiskelijat. Erityisen vaikeita ovat rakenteet, jotka ovat uniikkeja Kiinan kielelle tai rakenteet, joita ei varsinaisesti löydy suomenkielestä. Selvästi suomenkielestä johtuvaa kielivaihtoa löytyi aineistosta vähän, mutta koska Kiinaa opiskellaan Suomessa pitkälti englannin kielen kautta, esiin tuli joitakin mitä luultavimmin englanninkielestä siirtyneitä yksityiskohtia. Opiskelijat tekivät joitakin varsinaisia leksikkovirheitä. Opiskelijat tekivät huomattavasti enemmän syntaksiin kuin sanastoon liittyviä virheitä. Virheitä oli kokonaisuudessaan niukalti, mutta niiden perusteella saattoi tehdä johtopäätöksiä opiskelijoiden virheiden laadusta ja syistä. Tutkielma antaa viitteitä suomea puhuvien kiinanopiskelijoiden tyypillisimmistä virheistä ja välikielestä, sekä käyttökelpoisen pohjan ja hyödyllistä tietoa jatkotutkimuksen, opetuksen ja oppikirjamateriaalien kehittämisen käyttöön.			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords kiina vieraana kielenä, virheanalyysi, soveltava kielitiede, leksikologia, syntaksi			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited Helsingin yliopiston kirjasto			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			

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Abbreviations

BA the 把 bǎ-sentence

BEI the 被 bèi-sentence

CL classifier

COMP comparative

DUR durative aspect

EXP experimental aspect

GEN genitive

NEG negative

PFA perfective aspect

PL plural

SFP sentence final particle

SG singular

STR structural particle

1 Introduction

The standard Chinese language which is often referred to as *mandarin* or by its Chinese name, *Putonghua (standard Chinese)*, is gaining popularity around the world as a useful choice for foreign or second language studies as businesses and workplaces, institutions and educators react to China's increasing influence on the world economy, market and politics as its role in the balance of power has been acknowledged. Finland is no exception. Although Chinese language still lags far behind the more traditional foreign languages like English, French and Spanish both home and abroad, it is not only becoming a trendy language choice for students but also finding more government support as a need for domestic Chinese language teaching resources have been recognised. Due to a recent government key project to reform the Finnish comprehensive school followed by an initiative to advance the start of the foreign language teaching, as of the beginning of 2020 (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018) Chinese language has been added to the Finnish national curriculum and it is possible for Finnish elementary schools to arrange teaching of Chinese as second language starting as early as the first grade. Chinese, among other influential Asian and African languages such as Japanese and Arabic, was added to the national high school curriculum in 2016 and can now be studied as a B3-languages in several high schools around the country (Opetushallitus 2015: 118).

Thus, due to the increased interest in the Chinese language studies both in formal and informal settings, and the rising demand for pedagogically qualified Finnish speaking Chinese language teachers, there is a need for a greater understanding of the differences and similarities between the Chinese and Finnish languages. Until recently, the majority of Chinese teachers in Finland has consisted of native Chinese speakers with little or no Finnish language skills. More importantly, it is necessary to understand how Finnish speaking students of different ages learn Chinese, and how this knowledge could be effectively used to benefit the Finnish language teaching tradition in order to offer high quality Chinese language teaching in a Finnish speaking learning environment.

Despite Chinese has been taught in the University of Helsinki and in Finnish adult education centres, such as Työväenopisto and the Chinese Government supported Confucius Institute, as well as in some primary and lower secondary schools for relatively long, there is very little

research on Finnish students' Chinese language learning. Efforts to develop and promote Chinese language teaching have been made despite the lack of research, most notably through government funded projects. In the autumn 2011 *Yanzu – kiinan kieltä lukioissa* project (Yanzu 2014) financed by the Finnish National Agency for Education was launched to promote and develop Chinese language education in Finnish high schools, followed by another Chinese language education promotion project called *POP kiinaa* (POP kiinaa 2015) aimed at primary and secondary schools. After the completion of the Yanzu project in 2017, Chinese language teaching promotion was taken online in a form of a yet another, nationwide internet-based project, the *Lezhi* project. In 2018 the Finnish National Agency for Education granted funding for a joint two-year project to promote Asian and African languages under the title *Aasian ja Afrikan kielten hanke* (Aasian ja Afrikan kielten hanke 2018). The project's four key objectives are to promote Arabic, Japanese and Chinese language studies in Finland and build a network between the language educators of these languages, to create a consistent basic and advanced syllabus for these languages as electives in secondary school education, as well as to pinpoint new teaching and study solutions with an aim to add Chinese and Japanese languages to the national high school matriculation examination. However, despite the growing interest towards Chinese language teaching and learning in general, none of the projects have resulted in significant increase of related research which most likely signals more about the difficulty of the task of teaching Chinese language, and the insufficient resources or funds to produce related research simultaneously, than of the lack of interest in doing so.

This study is an error analysis, with a focus on mostly native Finnish speaking students' errors in their written Chinese to pinpoint the grammatical features that students struggle with and locate the reasons why certain persistent errors occur. There is plenty of similar research between Chinese and English or other European languages, but not much research has been done with the language pair Chinese and Finnish, specifically in regard to language teaching and learning. The theoretical background of this study draws from the interlanguage and language transfer theories by outlining the theories of Larry Selinker and Stephen Pit Corder. It is also necessary to define and investigate what is meant by Chinese as foreign or second language, and explain the complexity of the Chinese writing system with a direct link to the development of the students' reading comprehension capabilities, and the challenges writing and reading in Chinese presents to Chinese as foreign language learners (CFL).

The aim of my research is to analyse, describe and interpret what types of errors Finnish speaking students produce in written Chinese. The focus is on grammatical and lexical errors and the research will not place great emphasis on the errors aroused by the Chinese orthography, i.e., typos, as irrelevant to the actual analysis. As a language teacher, I believe such study would benefit Chinese language teaching as awareness of the differences between the two languages and knowledge of the typical errors of Finnish Chinese learners would not only help teachers to plan classes, classroom activities and study materials accordingly to answer the needs of Finnish speaking students, but also be of use in developing effective teaching methods specifically for Chinese language teaching and, to a degree, in the process of Chinese teachers' training.

Through this error analysis I aim to investigate and find answers to the following two research questions:

1. What kind of errors are typical to Finnish Chinese language learners?
2. Why these errors might occur in terms of context, orthography and interlanguage?

My hypothesis is, that students struggle the most with Chinese syntax and grammatical features alien to Finnish, such as different aspectual complements used to define the quality and complement of an action, or aspectual particles used to indicate the aspect and time of an action. For native Finnish speakers who are used to a flexible word order, it can be difficult to stick to the rules of a language with a rigid word order, such as Chinese. Due to Chinese language's lack of conjugation it can be difficult for a non-native speaker to tell which lexical categories certain words belong to. Failure to classify words correctly can result in errors in word order and misuse or misplacement of words. I also expect to find plenty of evidence of the challenge that the Chinese writing system presents and will look into the acquisition of reading and writing in Chinese, as the Chinese writing system is known to be very challenging for students who are more familiar with an alphabetical orthography.

Finnish language education is well known for its effectiveness and Finns themselves have long been well known for their language skills in multiple foreign languages. Traditionally languages have been popular subjects of study for Finnish students of all ages. However, a recent source of concern in the field of education has been the popularity of English language

learning at the cost of other languages which has significantly narrowed down the language proficiency of the Finnish students at large (Opetushallitus 2019). The recent reform of high school examination has resulted in a drop of language variety as students are showing less interest towards learning new languages but rather focus on the ones they already know well in order to concentrate in studying the currently highly regarded natural sciences instead. Almost all of Finnish high school students choose English as their compulsory foreign language in addition to the other two compulsory languages, Swedish and Finnish (Tilastokeskus 2017). During the past 10 years the basic language skills of students in university language programmes has dropped and the spectre of languages has narrowed. English is without a doubt the most popular language and the students' English level is generally well above average in national and global comparisons. Therefore, evidence of language interference and transfer can be expected in the data, especially in regard to the influence of the English language.

Because the terms related to non-native language acquisition, mainly *second language* (L2) and *foreign language* (FL), are often treated as mutually interchangeable in the research literature and general discussion in Finland, I will use the term *foreign language* to refer to any language other than the learner's native language (NL) spoken at home. To clarify, FL can be used to refer to languages that the subject has no natural contact with, or generally to all languages other than the subject's NL. While L2 also contains this broader meaning, it can also be used to refer to language(s) that the subject has contact with but that is not their first acquired language (L1). In instances where FL needs to be distinguished from L2 in the context of this study, for example when citing research literature or referring a study where L2 is used in its narrow meaning, I will use the term that appears in the original source or use the term which better correlates with the source context.

2 Background

I start this chapter by briefly presenting an overview of the history of Chinese language teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in Finland. I will also describe the government's recent key project to advanced foreign language teaching, and what it means in relation to CFL and the Finnish national curriculum. I will proceed to look into the term "Chinese" in the context of this research, followed by a peak into the characteristics and history of Modern Chinese language and the development of its distinctive writing system.

To understand the challenge that the Chinese writing system presents to language learners, I will also look into the acquisition of reading and writing in a foreign language, followed by an explanation of what it requires to gain literacy in Chinese.

2.1 Chinese language teaching in Finland

Although foreign language learning has long been highly appreciated within the Finnish educational field, government approved university level Chinese language teaching did not formally begin until 1973 when sinology got its own discipline in the University of Helsinki (Lasse Lehtonen et al. 2012: 34). In the recent years, as the general interest towards China has grown, the Chinese language education has witnessed a growing interest towards the language. China has gained a steady standing in the world economy and is recognized as a key player in the global politics, and as a result the Chinese language has gradually made its way to Finland's national curriculum. The turn of the century saw an increase of interest towards Chinese language studies and currently many high schools offer courses in Chinese. Meilahden ala-aste elementary school has pioneered in Chinese language education by offering both bilingual and FL classes in Chinese since 2008. In 2018 standard (mandarin) Chinese was chosen as one of the languages to be promoted by the Government's key project for reforming the comprehensive school by—among other things—advancing the start of foreign language teaching (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018).

Traditionally, the University of Helsinki has been the only university in the country offering degrees in sinology, and only as recently as 2017 the option to major in Chinese language degree programme with the possibility to study pedagogical studies as a minor was added. However, following the growing interest towards Chinese language studies, the University of Turku will have undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Chinese language available in Language and Language Specialist Degree Programmes starting in autumn 2021 but with a modern twist offering more communication, business and technology oriented courses which will open more study opportunities for those interested in sinology and the Chinese language at a university level in particular (Turun yliopisto 2019).

2.2 Definition of the Chinese language

Because “Chinese” is a generic term for any language spoken in China or overseas Chinese communities, the term needs a little clarification as to avoid confusion caused by the use of different terms referring to the language utilized by different people (Hannas 1997: 6–7). Thus, depending of the person who uses the term, “Chinese” may refer to any of the half a dozen or more languages, with each of them having multiple dialects within geographic areas traditionally, seen as Chinese in terms of culture, history and language. In this research I use the term “Chinese” to refer to the modern standard northern variety of the language spoken as a native language by the majority of the population in the People’s Republic of China. The standard language of China is defined as the standard spoken and written Chinese language or *Putonghua* (a common speech) with pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect, that utilizes the standardized vernacular characters in its script (Wang 1995). Standard Chinese is also one of the five official languages of the United Nations and for that reason, it is by and large the most widely used linguistic framework for the language pedagogy and pedagogical grammars used in Chinese as foreign language teaching around the world (Xing 2006: 26). There is not only confusion in defining the term “Chinese” linguistically but also in selecting an appropriate term for the language in a historical and sociolinguistic setting (see Norman 1988: 135–138). Thus, I shall refrain from using the terms *mandarin*, *hanyu*, *Guoyu*, etc., names used of the standard Chinese and stick with the term Chinese as to avoid making any political connotations or adding up to the confusion of an already tangled up array of different terms.

2.3 Written Modern Chinese

Chinese as a fully matured written script dates back to around 1250 BCE in the late Shang dynasty and has the longest history of continuous use in the world. Due to the habit of rigorous record keeping in Imperial China and the Confucian tradition, as well as China’s vast literary resources with the addition of general appreciation for the written word, factor that also prevented Modern Chinese from diversifying into several distinct codes based on different dialects (Chen 1999: 82), the developments of Old Written Chinese to the Modern Chinese of our days are fairly well known. It is not in the scope of this research to investigate the development and different stages of the Chinese writing system from its early origins to modern times to any greater length, however, it is necessary to explain what written script is

used in Finnish Chinese as foreign language teaching (CFLT) and what is required in terms of reading and writing from the students of the Chinese language.

Currently two different types of Chinese script are used in Chinese language teaching, the complex traditional characters that are mainly used in Taiwan and Hong Kong and in overseas Chinese communities, and the simplified Chinese characters that are in use in the People's Republic of China. Generally, the use of simplified characters has been widely adapted in CFLT around the world. The Chinese script has seen many reforms or attempts of reform in its long history but the need to create a nationwide standard for both written and spoken language was not realized as something politically urgent until it gained momentum during the decline of the Qing dynasty before the birth of the republic in the beginning of the 20th century. At the time literacy was rare amongst the majority of the population and most Chinese only knew their own local dialect which usually could not have been employed outside their regional borders (Norton 1989: 133). After the rise of the communist rule the project to simplify the writing system was actively enforced along with the reform for a spoken standard. The simplified script was formally adopted in 1958 in order to make written Chinese accessible to the masses, enable universal education, demolish the idea that literacy belonged to the upper classes or government officials but also to ease the implementation of government policies.

Chinese language is perhaps best known for its' hard-to master writing system which does not fail to cause anxiety for both Chinese as foreign language (CFL) learners and native Chinese speakers alike. As Chinese is written with characters, the writing system adds a so called third dimension to Chinese language learning and teaching, in addition to the other two dimensions of linguistic and cultural knowledge. The language competence of adult Chinese language learners does not only include orthographic competence and literacy but also writing system competence that one will have to acquire to master the other two.

Understanding an average written text requires the ability to automatically identify some 2000 characters and their different combinations that form thousands of words with diverse meanings in different contexts, syntactical rules, stylistics and the cultural appropriateness of utterances (Guder 2000: 25). Needless to say, learning Chinese requires more time than learning a language written with an alphabetic system. According to the linguist and educator John DeFrancis (1984: 153), Chinese language experts estimate that it takes 7 to 8 years from a native Chinese speaker to learn to read and write Chinese characters when it only takes

about half of the time from Spanish or French students to achieve the same level in their native languages. While this might not be completely accurate in the current global language learning environment, it is nevertheless estimated that learning to read and write Chinese takes on average two years longer than it would take to learn to read and write a language that uses an alphabetic system (Wu and Ma 1988: 74–75). In comparison, the often cited US State Department’s language learning timeline for native English speaking foreign language learners places Finnish in the category of *hard languages* which require approximately 1100 class hours to gain a working proficiency. Chinese is placed in Category 4 for *super-hard languages* that require on average 2200 class hours of study to reach professional working proficiency (FSI’s Experience with Language Learning). Despite the digital development in language learning and the growth of free access online study resources during the recent years, Chinese remains *a damn hard language* to learn as put by David Moser, whose essay “Why Chinese is so damn hard” (Moser 1991) has offered both consolation and amusement for Chinese as foreign language learners ever since its publication, and will most likely keep doing so until the indefinite future.

It should be noted, that the writing system is only one of the many challenges of learning Chinese as a foreign language. Another source of anxiety for many a Chinese language learner is the tonal quality of the language. Chinese is a tonal language that utilizes four tones (*high, rising, falling-rising* and *falling*) with the addition of the *neutral* tone. Chinese characters do not provide tonal cues and thus there is no need to investigate the tonal system any further as the acquisition of tones, intonation or pronunciation is not in the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the tonality of Chinese also increases the students’ overall workload.

2.4 Writing in a Foreign Language

As anyone who has ever tried writing a story, essay or any coherent text longer and more complex than simple, unconnected sentences in their mother tongue knows—to say nothing of a foreign language—that writing is difficult and requires more skill than simply putting one word after another. Writing in a foreign language presents a great challenge to the learner because it does not only require acquiring proficiency in the use of the language, i.e., remembering the vocabulary and morpho-syntax and familiarity with the rules and writing conventions of another language but also the ability to compose, i.e. to be able to express

ideas and create complex text within the socio-cultural context these actions take place in (Cumming 1998: 61).

Writing abilities are not acquired naturally, but they are always culturally transmitted through education (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 6). Writing complex text requires skills that are gained through conscious effort and persistent practise. To be able to engage in the process of producing text, the student has to master the age or language level appropriate structures of the FL. It is not only necessary to know the basic lexical items of a language, but it is also necessary to know how to use these items in correct forms and accurately indicate the syntactic relationships between different items (Ringbom 1987: 51).

As students write, they try to put everything they have got into their writing, but even advanced and trained L2 writers have a limited syntactic, lexical and stylistic repertoire (Hinkel 2005). Prior to Hinkel, Silva (1999) summarized in his research that L2 writers in general use shorter and vaguer words and the texts L2 writers produce are less sophisticated and show less lexical variety than texts of L1 writers.

Different orthography also plays a significant role in both reading and writing in a foreign language. It was long generally believed that literacy in one's native language helps the development of literacy in another language and skills developed in one language can be transferred to another. The complexity of literacy development between orthographically distant L1 and L2/FL writing systems was, perhaps due to then prevailing anglophone emphasis, mostly left out of the general discussion of L1 influence on L2/FL. However, it should be noted that established scholars like Ringbom did point out the lack of taking orthographic distance into account in the research of L1 interference in his criticism towards fellow researchers (see Ringbom 1987: 48). Findings in biliteracy suggested that not all aspects of the native language will ease the learning process of a foreign language (Hornberger, 1989: 288-289). In a similar vein, Odlin (1989: 124) states that in addition to the challenge that rhetorical, lexical and syntactic patterns present to the development of reading and writing abilities, one also has to be able to encode and decode different symbol systems. Echoing Odlin's arguments, Bell (1995) found through her own experiment in learning to read and write Chinese, that the learning strategies she had acquired in studying languages with phonographic writing systems did not help her to achieve the same results in Chinese. On the contrary, she found that the patterns that had helped her before, hindered her

progress in Chinese literacy and caused considerable anxiety. Thus, Bell argued that L1 literacy can sometimes complicate the development of literacy in L2, which I believe, can be applied to the literacy of L3s and FLs in general as well. Furthermore, according to Koda (1999: 51–52), it can be presumed that beginner learners of a foreign language do not necessarily possess the specific aspects of orthographic or phonological linguistic knowledge of the target language in relation to word recognition. When two languages share similar features, the student can benefit from the transfer but when learners encounter L2 or structures that are not familiar from their L1, interference will keep students from gaining literacy and they make errors (Genesee et al. 2006: 179).

As demonstrated above, writing in a language that utilizes a completely different writing system from the learner's native language affects the overall process of writing (and reading). I shall investigate the specifics of the Chinese writing system and reading and writing in Chinese in greater detail in a separate chapter.

2.5 Reading and writing in Chinese

To understand the challenge Chinese writing system presents to CFL learners and the errors they make in their written coursework, a closer look at the specifics of the writing system has to be taken to establish how the writing system works and how students of Chinese, both native and non-native, acquire literacy.

Despite the general disagreement over whether to categorize Chinese script as “pictographic”, “ideographic”, “logographic”, “morphosyllabic” or other variations in typological terminology, I will use the term “morphographic” in the lack of a more representational and precise term (Joyce 2016: 294). Although it is believed that no language can be purely logographic or morphographic (DeFrancis and Unger 1994), Chinese is oftentimes classified as a handbook-like example of an morphographic script because each grapheme (Chinese character) maps onto an individual morpheme and syllable in the spoken language (DeFrancis 1984). Finnish, on the other hand, often represents the other end of the spectrum as a close to pure phonographic system which makes the NL and TL languages of this research a particularly interesting pair.

Like Everson (1998:194) points out, Chinese as foreign language students with an alphabetic language background are often excited about learning to read and write Chinese characters,

perhaps due to the aesthetic appeal or the novelty of an unfamiliar script. Excitement for Chinese characters usually comes from a place of unawareness of the actual process and the amount of effort, time and study capabilities gaining literacy in Chinese requires.

As Chinese does not utilize an alphabet but is written with characters (*Hànzì*) instead, a few words need to be said about the characters themselves. A character consists of different *strokes* varying from a single stroke to as many as sixty-four strokes in a rare dictionary item (DeFrancis 1984: 75). However, the most commonly used characters tend to consist of about 8 strokes on average (Wang 1995: 148). There are three general categories for strokes: dots, lines (both vertical and horizontal), and hooks. In addition, each category consists of different variations of the basic strokes. When writing a single character by hand, a stroke sequence is applied as to avoid confusion, disproportionateness or smudging. In handwriting this means, that a poorly written character can be easily misinterpreted if the writer has written the different strokes carelessly or in the wrong order. For example, characters 何 *hé* and 向 *xiàng* get easily mixed up in handwriting if the writer ignores the writing rules. While carelessness in one's handwriting might not cause great confusion to a teacher but in real life situations it can turn out to be a nuisance, to say the least. Also, the writer themselves might not be able to return to their produce because they simply cannot read it due to the poor quality of the characters they have written or because they have not memorized the characters well enough to be able to return to their text and read what they had written.

Sometimes the same character has two different pronunciations and meanings (e.g., 行 reads both *xíng* 'conduct' and *háng* 'line') and some characters can have multiple meanings but only one pronunciation (e.g., 花 *huā* which can mean, for example, 'a flower' or 'to spend' depending of the context). Characters like this are known as *homonyms* and they can be further divided into *homographs* and *homophones*. As these features were not enough to make decoding Chinese characters hard, in text the characters are written without spaces so for an untrained eye it is difficult to tell, where one word ends and another begins, as a word in Chinese can consist of single or multiple characters.

To ease the process of CFL learner's literacy development in Chinese, a two-step process is often implemented. First, to learn the pronunciation and be able to get a grasp of the spoken language, the language must be presented in a consistent and efficient manner (Everson 1998: 197). Thus, the first step is to learn spoken language through a system that the students are

already familiar with to an extent, such as the romanization of the Chinese language with diacritical markings used to represent the tones. The perhaps most prevalent system of romanization used in CFL is *Hànyǔ pīnyīn*, or just *pīnyīn* in short, a system designed in mainland China during the mid-50's to standardize the spoken modern Chinese language (Chen 1999: 188). In CFL *pīnyīn* serves the learners as a tool to help them learn the pronunciation and the correct tones and make it easier to start using the language communicatively. The second step is to slowly substitute the romanization with Chinese characters as the students make progress and gradually reach a language level where it is not necessary to rely on the romanization in the course of building up one's language skills (Everson 1998: 198).

There are two types of characters, simple characters that contain a single meaningful component, and complex characters that contain two or more meaningful components. Most simple characters are either *pictograms* or *ideograms* depending whether they are derived from the objects they represent or from iconic illustrations of abstract ideas (Taylor and Taylor 2014: 56). Complex characters can be further divided into different categories most of them belonging to the category of *semantic-phonetic compound* characters. Semantic-phonetic compound characters with a frequency of about 81% (Zhou 1992:179), consist of a semantic component (radical) which gives a cue to the meaning of the character by pointing to a certain category, and a phonetic component which provides the reader a phonetic cue. For example, the character 清 *qīng* 'to clear up' consists of a radical on the left side meaning "water" (氵, often referred to as 三点水 *sān diǎn shuǐ*, 'three drops of water') and a phonetic part (青 *qīng*) which as an individual character means *green* but as a phonetic simply gives the character its pronunciation. It should be noted, that although the tone happens to be the same for both *to clear up* and *green*, this is not the case with most characters. The phonetic component is not tone sensitive and thus it does not indicate the tone, but it is merely a cue of the pronunciation. Therefore, the correct pronunciation of the character might differ remarkably from the phonetic cue it utilizes, both in regard to the tone and pronunciation, as the cue often corresponds only to a partial, if any, pronunciation of the character. Even with the tonal differences left out, only about 26% of phonetic radicals can be considered reliable cues to pronunciation (Shen and Ke 2007: 98). However, characters with even partial phonetic cues provide useful information to an advanced learner (Shu et al. 2003). Thus, it can be said, that contrary to some claims (e.g., Moser 1991) about the non-

phonetic qualities of the Chinese script, whether Chinese script proves phonetic or not, depends on the reader's language level. To a novice learner the Chinese script offers hardly any help, but to a more advanced learner even the less significant cues can well prove helpful in learning and memorising new characters or words.

The purpose of this lengthy explanation of what it requires to be able to read and write Chinese is to emphasize the language specific challenges that the CFL learners are faced with and how it affects their language acquisition and quality of the written course work they produce. Research shows, that the cognitive load is greater when the FL writing system is orthographically distant from the writing system of L1 or when the FL writing system is not phonologically transparent. The students may encounter difficulties in finding phonological information directly from written text, if the FL is distant or phonologically opaque (Koda 2012). Learning to read a language such as Chinese, which has one of the most visually complex and phonologically opaque writing systems, is challenging for learners whose L1 orthography is unrelated to Chinese script. Thus, Chinese characters are often considered a major obstacle for language acquisition for beginner level learners of Chinese as foreign language (Everson 1998).

2.6 Mistake, error and interlanguage

Learning a language is a time and effort consuming process where the ability to use the language correctly increases as knowledge of different aspects of the language builds up through learning and practicing in a trial and error kind of manner (Brown 2007:146). To err is universal in language learning as both native speakers and foreign language learners make mistakes in the process of learning a language. In foreign language learning practise might not always make perfect but the process and the errors made along the way are valuable in understanding how a language is learnt. According to Corder (1981:10–11), errors do not represent incompetence but are rather significant in three respects: (1) the teacher can monitor the progress of a student through their errors, (2) errors provide evidence to the researcher of how a language is learned, and (3) the language learner can engage themselves in hypotheses testing, because the act of erring can well be employed as a learning strategy.

It is the intention of language teaching to help the students to build their knowledge of the target language so that they will be able to produce language that is close to the norms that

define the target language. When errors occur, the teacher usually aims to correct them through pedagogy. In order to correct the learner's language, it has to be defined what an error is. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) defines an error as a systematic "simplified or distorted representation of the target competence" which has developed characteristics that are different from the target language norms (CEFRL, 2001: 155). According to Brown (2007: 22), an error is a noticeable anomaly from the matured grammar of a native speaker which reflects the competence of the learner. Therefore, an error can be a violation of the grammatical or semantic norms of the language in spoken or written form.

As stated by Lado (1957), individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings of their native language to the foreign language they are learning and attempting to comprehend. This leads to deviances as the norms of different languages do not tend to be mutually interchangeable. Errors can be divided in two types, *interlingual* errors attributed to the interference of the native or other learnt languages, and *intralingual* errors attributed to the interference by two different structures of the target language and those that are caused by the instruction, i.e., previously learnt norms interfere with more recently taught norms.

In identifying errors, it is necessary to draw a distinction between those errors which are unsystematic products of chance circumstances, *lapses* or *slips of tongue*, i.e., *errors of performance*, and those which are systematic, and reveal the learner's current knowledge of the language, i.e., *errors of competence* (Corder 1981: 10). While errors of performance can be self-corrected by the learner, errors of competence cannot because they are a result of the learner's inadequate knowledge of the language. As the learner makes progress and their knowledge of the language increases, they will make fewer errors or do not make the same errors again but have learnt from their errors. Thus Corder (1981) argues, that errors of performance can be referred to as *mistakes*, and the term *error* should be reserved to refer to errors of competence which can be studied to reconstruct the learner's up-to-date knowledge of the language or, in other words, their *transitional competence*. However, it might not be easy to determine whether the deviances in learner's language are errors of performance or errors of competence due to inconsistency in the learner's language.

James (1998: 83–84) divided the types deviances further into four different categories:

- (1) *Slips* which are caused by carelessness such as a slip of tongue or a typo, which can be easily detected and self-corrected by the learner unaided.
- (2) *Mistakes* which can be self-corrected if the deviances have been pointed to the learner.
- (3) *Errors* which cannot be self-corrected until further relevant instruction (*input*) has been provided and acquired (converted into *intake*) by the learner.
- (4) *Solecisms* that are breaches of the rules of language correctness taught at schools and they might contradict the perception or intuition of a native speaker.

It is not always easy to determine, into which category the deviances in the learner's language fall, and thus deviances should always be examined carefully. Mistakes are not significant to the process of learning a language but errors, on the contrary, provide important information of the system of the language that the learner is using at a certain point in the process. This learner's language system known as *interlanguage* is not identical with the system used by native speakers, yet it is not identical with that of the learner's either but shows some formal characteristics of both (Selinker 1972: 214). Neither is the interlanguage invariable, but it is constantly changing, and thus systematically variable (Ellis 1985). It can be concluded, that learners create their own self-contained linguistic systems which are neither the system of the native language or the system of the target language, but an dynamic, mixed system of the languages known to the learner build on their efforts to make sense of the structure of the linguistic stimuli surrounding them. A learner's language is individual, and each learner has their own interlanguage with its own linguistic features, i.e., a 'personal grammar' (Corder 1984: 73–74). Therefore, interlanguage is "a separate transitional linguistic system that can be described in terms of evolving linguistic patterns and rules and explained in terms of specific cognitive and sociolinguistic processes that shape it" (Tarone 2013: 1).

2.7 Lexical and syntactic knowledge

In order to analyse the learner's errors and language transfer systematically, one has to find a suitable framework for error categorization which can be applied as a base for the analysis. Traditionally, language transfer has been identified either by comparing the linguistic patterns between the learners' native language, target language and interlanguage, or by

comparing the interlanguage performance between two learner groups with a different native language (Odlin 2003: 445-452).

This research focuses on investigating transfer errors by applying the first of the two different approaches. Although the chosen approach fails to exclude those patterns common to learners of the same TL with different native language backgrounds, which may be caused by the TL system itself or by language universals, it is currently the only feasible approach to investigate language transfer between Finnish and Chinese in Finland because majority of CFL students are native Finnish speakers and the numbers of CFL learners are scarce to begin with. Despite the existence and accessibility available corpus databases¹, I chose not to include any data drawn from open corpuses, as I find them too heterogenic to fit the scope of this study since Finnish language data is rare in the corpuses.

Transfer can be examined on different levels of language. The categories applied in this research are the lexical and the syntactic. However, differentiating between transfer effects is not an entirely straightforward task as transfer is a phenomenon that might influence both levels of language simultaneously. Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 72) defined lexical transfer as “the influence of word knowledge in one language on a person’s knowledge or use of words in another language”. Generally, it can be said that FL learners’ lexical knowledge varies through different dimensions i.e., morphophonological, semantic, collocational, grammatical and associational aspects of the word (e.g., Ringbom 1987: 35-36).

According to Nation and Hunston (2013: 48), knowing a word involves three different aspects, the knowledge of the word form, meaning and use. Word form consists of knowing the spoken form, i.e., recognizing the word upon hearing it and knowing the pronunciation of the word, the written form or the orthography and knowing the parts of the word, i.e., morphological knowledge of radicals or affixes. The second aspect, knowing the meaning, consists of three sub-categories: the relationship between form and meaning, i.e., how to correctly combine the form and the meaning, knowing the concept and the referents of the word, i.e., knowing the different meanings of the same word form, and knowing the word’s

¹ L2 Chinese Interlanguage corpus (汉语中介语语料库系统), HSK Dynamic Composition Corpus HSK(动态作文语料库) and National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU)(國立台灣師範大學漢語學習者漢字偏誤數據資料庫), Chinese as a Second Language Spoken Corpus (漢語為第二語言口語語料庫) and TOCFL Learner Corpus (漢語學習者語料庫).

associations with other words, i.e., how the lexicon is arranged, including synonyms and antonyms or hyponyms and hypernyms. The third aspect of knowing the word use, includes the categories of knowing the grammatical functions, i.e., how the word occurs in a sentence, and sentence patterns that it typically occurs with, collocations, i.e., knowledge of the words that typically occur with the chosen word, and constraints of use (register, frequency), i.e., the suitability of the chosen word in context (Nation and Hunston 2013: 48-50).

Learners' syntactic knowledge is far less investigated than the lexical knowledge and it lacks a common framework comparable to that of investigating learners' lexical knowledge. As no commonly accepted model for learner's syntactic knowledge has not been systematically developed, the scholars' views on native language influence in the acquisition of the FL syntax have been controversial and the concept of syntactic transfer has been questioned altogether (Meriläinen 2010: 23). As explained by Meriläinen (2010), different approaches have been investigated in the study of syntactic influence, most notably within the Competition Model (CM) framework by Bates and MacWhinney and the Universal Grammar (UG) framework. The CM seeks to explain how TL sentences are processed by speakers of different languages through seeking different cues, such as word order agreement, case and animacy as they attempt to interpret the relationships between sentence elements (MacWhinney 2005: 52-54). The UG framework's connection with the study of syntactic influence has mostly been addressed in relation to the UG access debate concerning the availability, or partial availability, of UG for FL learners, or in other words, the extent to which UG is available to FL learners of all ages and backgrounds (Gass, 2013: 163-179).

According to Odlin (1989: 85), there is considerable evidence of both positive and negative syntactic transfer in studies of word order, relative clauses and negation and many studies indicate that syntactic transfer interacts with other factors in language acquisition. Syntactic transfer does not always manifest itself easily, as students of foreign languages are known to avoid syntactic structures that they find difficult (Odlin 1989: 37). Also, it has been argued that due to globalization and the recent growth in the popularity of social networking, most people are in fact multilingual, and apply multiple grammars in communication on a daily basis (Angelovska and Hahn, 2017: 37-38). Thus, syntactic influence does not always present itself in terms of the learner's native language but may involve influence from other languages the student has previously learnt, with emphasis on those that in the learner's mind seem structurally closer to the TL.

I find Nation's and Hunston's model of the learners' lexical knowledge applicable in the classification of the learners' lexical errors and will apply it when analysing the learners' errors for this thesis. Syntactic knowledge will be investigated by applying multiple approaches but nevertheless, through fairly general terms as violations against the syntactic rules and principles of the TL as described in pedagogical grammars.

3 Research Design

In this chapter I will present the group and data in more detail and describe the method used in the analysis section.

3.1 Participants

The majority of the subjects of my research for this study were undergraduate beginner or intermediate level Chinese learners studying different majors in a Finnish university. The students had enrolled in a beginner level Chinese course that lasted throughout a whole academic year. As part of their coursework they attended three 90-minute Chinese lessons weekly for the duration of the course. The aim of the course was that the students will be able to produce simple Chinese sentences and pronounce them accurately with correct intonation (tones) upon the completion of the course. The students were expected to be able to handle everyday communication situations in Chinese as well as understand short texts, consisting of approximately 1000 Chinese characters, words or expressions, and can write about 500 Chinese characters by hand or using a computer. They were also expected to be able to write simple short essays or stories with appropriate use of vocabularies and structures. By the end of the course the students were expected to have achieved Common European Framework of Reference for Languages A2² level skills in Chinese language³.

Prior to executing the error analysis, the participants were asked to fill a background information questionnaire. By filling the questionnaire, the subjects gave permission to the use of their written text as material for this study. In the questionnaire the students were asked to give information in regard to their name, age, gender, mother tongue or tongues, languages they speak at home and other languages they know. They were also asked to

² <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>.

³ <http://www02.oph.fi/ops/taitotasosteikko.pdf>.

include information of how long they had been studying Chinese, had they studied or spent time in Chinese speaking countries or had they studied in Chinese by participating dual language education. Although the students were asked to include personal information (name, gender, age), the data is used anonymously, and none of the given information can be traced back to any specific participant. Students were asked to identify themselves only because I was also working as their teacher on the course, and as the written assignments they produced were part of their normal coursework which needed to be marked and corrected accordingly, it was necessary to know who had written what.

Altogether 19 students of the total of 25 students on the course gave permission to use their coursework as data. The data provided by 5 of the participants was excluded from this research due to different reasons: the work of two students' was ruled out because the homework they provided did not include any deviances except for an insignificant number of typos, one student quit the course after the first half of the course, one did not submit the required homework within the timeframe for data collection and one student's homework was excluded due to suspicion of the use of automated translation tools in producing their written assignments. The remaining group of 14 consisted of students from 19 to 31 years of age and they studied different majors in both bachelor's and master's degree programmes in a Finnish university. 6 of the students were freshmen in a BA level Chinese language programme. 7 of the students identified as female, 4 as male, 2 as non-binary and 1 did not enclose this information in the background information form.

Although all of the students in the group were Finnish nationals, they came from different backgrounds. 10 students spoke Finnish as their mother tongue and 4 were bilingual (Finnish/Swedish, Finnish/English, Finnish/French, Finnish/Armenian). In the beginning of the course, some of the students had started to study Chinese only recently, some had already studied Chinese for some time, from 6 months to 2 years. Some students had been studying Chinese in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong or had lived in one of the mentioned places. All had studied more than one foreign language before, and several had additional knowledge of other East-Asian languages i.e., Japanese and/or Korean.

The Chinese course that the subjects were taking started as a beginner's course. Due to the intensive nature of this specific Chinese course, the students were expected to be able to produce longer texts (100-300 Chinese characters per text) and have a vocabulary of at least

500 Chinese characters by the end to the course. As an assistant teacher on the course, I had a natural access to data and the assignments were administered and collected according to the syllabus plan. I also had a natural access to all of the students written homework throughout the course and could monitor their progress on a weekly basis. Weekly written assignments were a part of the students' normal coursework and thus the collected data is reliable and

Table 1. *Students background information*

Student	Gender	Age	Native language(s)	Languages spoken at home	Other languages	Length of CFL studies	Chinese language in Chinese	Time spent in Chinese speaking environment	Errors
St.1	M	31	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish	6 months	–	5 months in China	10
St.2	M	21	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish, Japanese	over 2 months	–	–	6
St.3	F	21	Finnish, French	Finnish, French	English, Swedish	1 year	–	–	7
St.4	Non-binary*	19	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish, Japanese, French, Korean	3 months	–	–	12
St.5	F	25	Finnish, Armenian	Finnish, Armenian, English	Japanese	9 months	–	–	10
St.6	F	21	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish	1 year	–	–	8
St.7	F	15	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish	3 months	–	–	15
St.8	–	22	Finnish	Finnish	English, French, Korean, Swedish	3 months	–	–	14
St.9	M	26	Finnish	Finnish	Chinese, Japanese, Korean, English, Swedish	1 year	–	–	8
St.10	F	20	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish, Japanese	3 months	–	3 weeks in Taiwan	4
St.11	Non-binary	19	Finnish	Finnish, English	Swedish	2 years	–	–	9
St.12	F	19	Finnish, Swedish	Finnish, Swedish	English, Russian, German, Spanish	3 months	–	–	7
St.13	M	21	Finnish, English	Finnish, English	Swedish, German, Korean	4 months	–	–	15
St.14	F	21	Finnish	Finnish	English, Swedish, Korean	3 months	–	2 years in Hong Kong (Cantonese)	6

* Open ended questions were used and Finnish language answers translated to English. Finnish utilizes the word "other" to refer to genders that are other than female or male. Thus the term "non-binary" is used in the English translation of the questionnaire.

and represents accurately the students' language level at the time of collection. Each student was expected to have produced approximately 39 short essays by the end of the course, as well as an equal amount of simple sentence translation exercises. To rule out beginner's mistakes due to general lack of knowledge of the Chinese language, and its orthography, only texts produced during the final weeks of the course are included in this research. The hand-picked texts for this particular research were selected based on teacher's assessment of the students' writing skills in standard Chinese, i.e., students at this level were able to recognise, write and use correctly commonly used Chinese characters and possessed knowledge of simple sentence structures and phrases appropriate to their expected language level.

3.2 Data

The data used in this study is composed of 28 assignments that each consist of a short essay and 5 short translation sentences produced by the group of Finnish university students described in the previous chapter. The essays investigated for this paper are each approximately 200-320 characters in length. The students wrote about the same essay topics, except for one student. Their handwritten assignment in one of the chosen topics was replaced with an assignment from a previous lesson due to poor scan quality. The topics were directly related to the lessons in the study book that was used on the course, and students often copied sentences, or even short passages straight from the lesson associated with the topic. Thus, there was some inconsistency in the students' work as the sentences or passages copied directly from the coursebook were flawless, yet there were errors in the sentences very similar to the ones found in their course book but which they had produced on their own.

The compositions were written at home, and the students had access to different study materials in addition to their coursebooks, such as dictionaries, grammar books and the Internet. It is likely that some students received help from Chinese speaking friends, i.e., language partners or more advanced Chinese language learners with some of the homework. Halfway through the course the students were allowed to submit computer typed essays which resulted in a significant rise in the number poorly written characters or more accurately, typos. Some students handed in only handwritten assignments, some submitted only typed assignments and a few students experimented with both handwritten and typed text.

Typos were ruled out as they are a by-product of the alphabetical input system and not relevant to this study. The most frequently mistyped character by far was the character 把 *bǎ* (21 per 18 sets of homework), as presented in example (1). 把 *Bǎ* is often used in the 把 *bǎ*-sentence as a preposition. The 把 *bǎ*-sentence is one of the main grammar points in CFL learning due to its uniqueness to the Chinese language. As explained by Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington (1997: 119), 把 *bǎ* as a preposition (*coverb* in Yip and Rimmington) can shift the object of the verb to a pre-verbal position: subject+把 *bǎ*+object+verb. Thus, the structure “implicates that an action is applied to somebody or something with the emphasis that the action will bring about a result or influence” (Li and Cheng 2008:461.)

- (1) 吧 地球 保护 好。
 ba diqíu bǎohù hǎo.
 BA the Earth protect well

‘The Earth should be well protected.’

Without looking at the Chinese script, there is nothing wrong with this sentence, but closer examination shows that the character for *bǎ* is not the correct one (the 吧 *ba* used in the example is a suggestive modal particle used in the end of a sentence). Chinese characters are typed out by using special input methods designed for Chinese, such as the *Pinyin Input Method*, that utilizes the phonetic syllables that are first typed in and then converted to characters. After the syllable has been typed in, a selection of different characters with the same lettering is presented and the correct character(s) must be selected manually. Thus, there is no difference between the input of 把 *bǎ* and 吧 *ba*, as the input method is not tone-sensitive but simply presents a selection of commonly used homonyms that share the same pronunciation.

Another type of typo presented in example (2) is a simple spelling mistake. The student has misspelled the syllable for 和 *huo* as *hou* and ended up with a completely different character than the intended.

- (2) 天气 越来越 暖后。
 tiānqì yuèláiyuè nuǎnhou.
 weather more.and.more warm

‘The weather is warmer and warmer.’

Novice learners of Chinese are likely to pick whatever characters the input programme suggests first, as their orthographic awareness and ability to read Chinese script is still at the elementary level, and even students who usually perform well in handwritten assignments are prone to mistakes when they type. Although typos are excluded from the actual analysis of this study, they should not be completely neglected in the research of Chinese as foreign language, as they also provide important information about the manifold challenges of learning Chinese.

All of the essay topics and translation sentences were taken from the coursebook series “Learning Chinese Overseas Textbook” (Peking University Press, 2013-14) compiled by Yuzhen Cen and University Lecturer Mingming Gao, who was also the Lead Teacher in charge of the course that the subjects of this research were enrolled in. There are altogether four volumes to the book series. According to the original course plan, students were required to study through all four textbooks as the course advanced, but to ease the students’ workload the course requirements were revised and the last volume of the series was excluded. As the students were allowed to hand in their coursework in their own pace, some students submitted texts on weekly basis, when others preferred to submit their essays in bulks. Due to this, some imbalance might occur in the final analysis, but I believe it safe to say, that this has little impact on the nature of the errors, as the group’s performance based on written test evaluation was rather even, and thus the results represent the group’s overall language acquisition and error distribution fairly accurately. It should also be noted, that the most diligent students who submitted all their homework timely, represent both ends of the spectrum as diligence is not necessarily automatically linked to better performance.

A text of 200-320 characters is already quite long for Chinese language students of the beginner level. Although the students had reproduced many sentences directly from the course books, a text of this length requires creating authentic content because the material provided in the study books has its limitations due to repetition, limited vocabulary and predictable content that cannot necessarily be applied to more varied text.

3.3 Methodology

In this study, I apply the methodology of Corder (1974) in executing the error analysis by comparing and analysing the linguistic patterns between the learner's NL, IL and TL with frameworks presented by Selinker and Odlin. I have also used Jianji Lu's (1994: 49–64) model for categorizing the errors according to their lexical and syntactic qualities. I follow Nation's and Hunston's model to analyse the lexical errors. The guidelines are followed within the limitations set by the material and the target language. First, I detected and classified the errors by applying the TL norms to the students' produce. Then, I classified the errors according to their grammatical features either as lexical or syntactic errors. Next, I counted the frequency of occurrence of different types of errors per each student and the total of occurrences within the corpus. Last, I analysed the errors more qualitatively.

According to Lu (1994: 34), foreign Chinese language students' errors can be roughly divided into two categories, to those which appear due to the interference of the student's mother tongue and to those which appear due to failure to apply the previously learned knowledge of the Chinese sentence structure correctly in a different context, as new grammar points are learned. In both categories, the errors present themselves in four different ways described by Corder (1981: 36–37) as word omission, addition, wrong selection and wrong ordering. *Omission error* refers to the omission of a certain element that should be present; *addition error*, on the contrary, refers to an element that is present when it should not be; *selection error* is applied when a wrong element has been selected instead of the correct one; and *ordering errors* are those that occur when the presented elements are correct but the sequence is not (1981: 36).

Based on this simple categorization, Lu (1994) explains further that omission errors in Chinese are typically found in relation to adverbs and conjugations, particularly when used in complex sentences or conjunctive structures, due to the indefinite meaning of the said parts of speech. Omission is also common in sentences with nouns that require *measure words*, i.e., classifiers indicating units. The measure words may be omitted due to insufficient knowledge of the specific nouns, for example, the nouns of time. Addition, on the other hand, is common in learners' sentences where they apply one rule faultily to test the hypothesis with another structure without knowledge of the rules that govern it. For example, the multifunctional and versatile structural particle 了 *le* is often added in sentences where it does not belong to.

Errors of selection can be detected in sentences where the meaning and appearance of two different elements are similar, but the qualities and use of the words are not. In Chinese, errors of selection often appear in relation to negation which can be expressed by using two different negation adverbs 不 *bù* or 没有 *méiyǒu* that share the same meaning but are used in different sentence structures. Last, errors of ordering appear in sentences, where the learner has misplaced different elements so that the outcome violates the grammatical norms. According to Lu (1994), foreign students of the Chinese language often misplace adverbial adjuncts by placing nouns that function as adverbial adjuncts, such as nouns of time, in the end of a sentence when their proper placement would be in the beginning. As argued by Lu, this can be seen as evidence of L1 transfer, or transfer from another foreign language that in the learner's mind structurally resembles Chinese.

As this study focuses on errors, I use descriptions of Chinese as a base to determine whether the examined constructions are errors or parts of the standard language. I draw the descriptions largely from descriptive grammars, such as *A Practical Chinese Grammar for Foreigners* (Li and Cheng 2008), *Chinese: An Essential Grammar* (Yip and Rimmington 1997) and *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar* (Li and Thompson 1981). Even with the help of descriptions of standard Chinese grammar rules, it is not entirely without problems to make the distinction between standard and colloquial Chinese or differentiate what is an error and what is not. It also does not make the task any easier to know that CFL students often misplace different characters in sentences which results in faulty words or ungrammatical sentences and it is sometimes difficult to work out which phenomenon is in question. Word boundaries are not distinctively clear in Chinese sentences which makes it more difficult to analyse the students' texts and different possibilities of the intended meaning need to be weighed before making a final interpretation of an error. It should also be borne in mind, that what is considered erroneous in a formal setting, such as university language instruction, may well be acceptable in a less formal environment. This makes it challenging to stick to the grammar rules laid out in pedagogical grammars, but I will nevertheless strive to apply standard grammar rules in executing the analysis.

I counted the number of the errors in the 28 sets of homework produced by the students, dividing the errors by their lexical and syntactic qualities. I included the most satiable and frequent errors. I neglected punctuation altogether because the students had not properly

studied it at the time of data collection, and generally excluded typos as *mistakes* due to their mechanical nature, except for deviances in relation to a few word categories (personal pronouns, some adverbs and structural particles) that I consider crucial in terms of the course syllabus, and expect the students to master both in written and spoken form, as well as recognize the characters in text.

4 Results and Analysis

In this chapter, I will first present the total frequency of errors in the corpus and then move on to analysing the different types of errors. The analysis applies different methods depending on the qualities of the errors and is based on the methodologies described and explained above. I will use example sentences drawn from the corpus without alterations to accompany the analysis and attempt to present them in a form that provides adequate information of the language norms when thought necessary. The full-sentence translations of the students' erroneous sentences and the attached corrections are based on what I gathered to be the intended meaning within the context of the produced text. Finally, I will make conclusions of the error types and their frequency in the students' produce and attempt to find evidence of either L1 transfer or transfer from other learnt languages within the limitations of my own linguistic background and knowledge of foreign languages.

4.1 Frequency of errors

I counted in total 130 errors in the corpus, on average 4,7 errors per a single assignment. The highest number of incorrectly formed sentences in a single piece of homework was 13 and the lowest number per piece was 1. First, I singled out the errors by comparing them to the target language norms. I classified the errors according to their grammatical features and counted the frequency of occurrence of different types of errors per student to see if the errors represented the whole group or single individuals. I focused on the most frequent and salient errors in the corpus. In the following section I will present the lexical errors found in the corpus in more detail. As many sentences in the students' assignments were sourced from the course book, I've only chosen the most representative examples of the errors to avoid repetition.

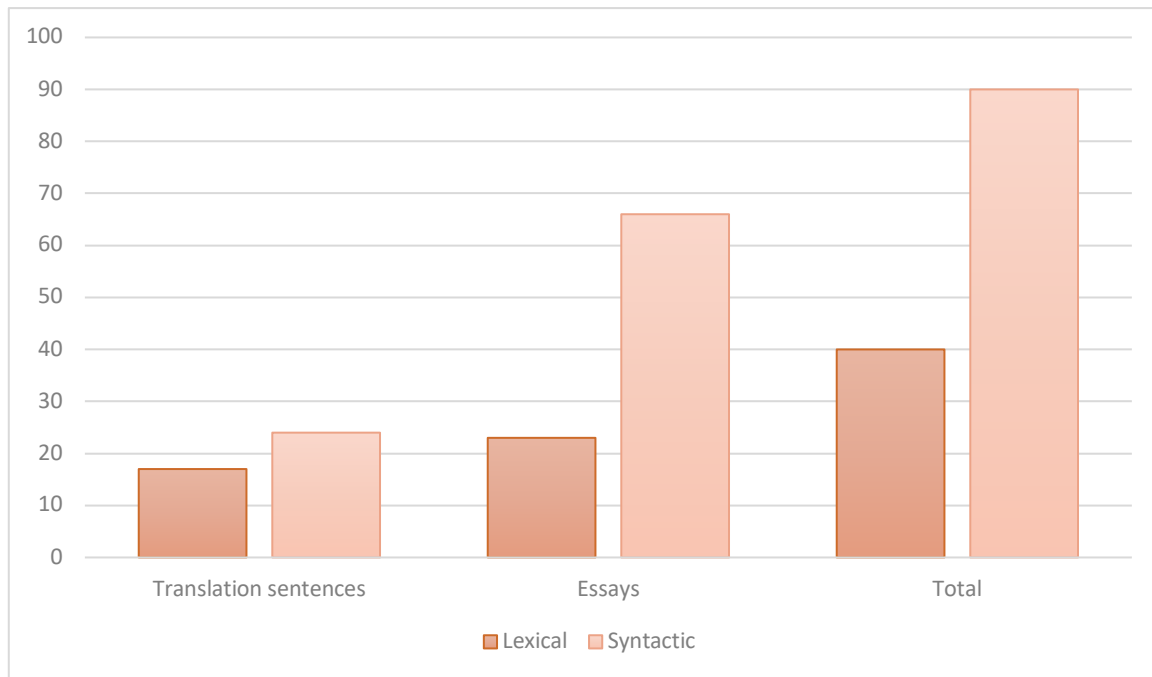


Figure 1. *The frequency and types of errors in the texts*

Figure 1 presents the distribution of errors per category and their frequency in the texts. Lexical errors were scarce and similar in quality. Most syntax errors occurred in relation to word order, especially in language specific structures.

Next I will proceed to present the lexical errors in more detail.

4.2 Lexical errors

Of the two error categories the lexical were the least frequent ones. Only x percent of the total amount of errors were distinctively lexical in nature. The analysis was conducted based on the model outlined by Nation and Hunston (2013) as presented in chapter 2 (see 2.7).

As this study is based on written data, errors in the spoken form were undetectable and thus excluded from the analysis. Errors in knowing the word orthography were neglected as irrelevant as explained in chapter 3. Most lexical errors occurred in the second and third category of Nation's and Hunston's (2013) model in relation to knowing the word meaning and use with a special emphasis on knowing the word class. The subjects studied Chinese through English which was also a foreign language to most of the students participating the course. Also, the most accessible and comprehensive reference materials for students of the

Chinese language, such as electronic dictionaries (i.e. Pleco) and other online resources, are typically in English as there is a general lack of Finnish language study material of Chinese. Thus, the word meaning may remain somewhat elusive due to both inadequate knowledge of the metalanguage terms or inability to make out the different meanings of English homonyms.

In examples (3)–(13) the student has chosen a word based on its dictionary entry meaning without adequate knowledge of the intended word meaning. As a result, the word class is acceptable, but the actual meaning is not. For example, in example (3)–(4) the student has used the word *shìwù*, or the more colloquial *shì'er*, to refer to physical items or articles of use. However, the chosen word refers to things as abstract objects.

(3) 人们 把 旧 的 事物 [] 垃圾箱里 里。

rénmen bǎ jiù de shìwù [] lājīxiāng lǐ.
 people BA old STR things bin inside

‘People through old things into the bin.’ (pro *dōngxī*) (S7)

(4) 也 把 更 多 事儿 扔 到 垃圾箱里 里。

yě bǎ gèng duō shì'er rēng dào lājīxiāng lǐ.
 also BA more many things throw CMP bin inside

‘[they] also throw more and more things into the bin.’ (pro *dōngxī*) (S8)

(5) 他们 根本 不 了解 英文。

tāmen gēnběn bù liǎojiě yīngwén.
 3PL at all NEG comprehend English

‘They do not understand English at all.’ (pro *dǒng*) (S5)

(6) 我们 还 有 过分 的 旅行。

wǒmen hái yǒu guòfèn de lǚxíng.
 1PL still have excess STR travel

‘We also have the overtourism.’ (pro *guòdú*) (S1)

(7) 地球 是 我们 的 家, 我们 没有 中策。

dìqiú shì wǒmen de jiā, wǒmen méi yǒu zhōngcè.
 the Earth is 1PL GEN home 1PL NEG have Plan B

‘The Earth is our home, we do not have a Plan B.’ (pro *dì èr ge fāng'àn*) (S2)

(8) 地 [] 应该 把 保护 好。

dì [] yīnggāi bǎ bǎohù hǎo.
ground must BA protect well

‘The Earth should be protected well.’ (pro *dìqiú*) (S3)

(9) 我 会 厉害 地 吹。

wǒ huì **lihài** de chuī.
MP AUX fierce STR blow

‘I can use force to blow.’ (pro *yòng lì*) (S11)

(10) 现代, 在 第一世界 的 人 (可能 也 在 全球

xiàndài, zài dìyīshìjiè de rén kěnéng yě zài quánqiú
modern be 1st.world STR people maybe also be global

范围 内) 越来越 方便。

fànwei nèi yuèláiyuè fāngbiàn.
scope inside more.and.more convenient

‘Nowadays, the people of the first world countries (maybe globally) lead comfortable lives.’

(pro *rújīn*) (S8)

(11) 今天 环境 问题 非常 大。

jīntiān huánjìng wèntí fēicháng dà.
today environment problem very big

‘Nowadays, there are big environmental problems.’ (pro *rújīn*) (S12)

(12) 也 根本 不 认为 地球。

yě gēnběn bù **rènwéi** dìqiú.
also at all NEG think the Earth

‘[they] do not think about the Earth either.’ (pro *kǎolǚ*) (S11)

(13) 这 个 人 不 绝望。

zhè ge rén bù **juéwàng**.
this CL person NEG desperate

‘This person does not give up.’ (pro *fàngqì*) (S8)

In some sentences the chosen word is close to the intended either in meaning or in form, yet not quite there, as the student has confused the meaning or form of the two different words. Below in example (14) the word *nature* (zìrán) was used instead of *environment* (huánjìng), which was the topic of the essay. In example (15) the student has chosen the word *nándù* which refers to the *level of difficulty* instead of using the word *nántí* which refers to a *difficult problem*. In example (16) the intended word is *to be able to* (kěyǐ), but another word that means *perhaps* (kěnéng) which utilizes the same syllable *kě*, was used instead.

(14) 如果 我们 不 考虑 我们 的 自然。

rúguǒ wǒmen bù kǎolù wǒmen de zìrán.
if 1PL NEG consider 1PL GEN nature

‘If we do not think about our environment.’ (pro *huánjìng*) (S6)

(15) 地球 大 难度 之一。

dìqiú dà nándù zhī yī.
the Earth big degree of one of
difficulty

‘One of the world’s difficult questions.’ (pro *nántí*) (S13)

(16) 可能 买 越来越 多 东西。

kěnéng mǎi yuèláiyuè duō dōngxi.
perhaps buy more.and.more many things

‘Can buy more and more things.’ (pro *kěyǐ*) (S9)

In examples (17)–(18) the students have used the general singular classifiers *ge*, and *tiáo*, a classifier for long and narrow pieces, instead of the plural classifier *xiē*. As a result, the sentence does not meet the requirement of the translation sentence “these rivers have been polluted” but reads as a singular “this river”. In example (19) the classifier has been omitted thus producing a singular instead of the intended plural form.

(17) 这 个 河 被 污染 了。

zhè ge hé bèi wūrǎn le.
this CL river BEI pollute SFP

‘These rivers are polluted.’ (pro *zhè xiē*) (S2) (S11)

(18) 这 条 河 被 污染 了。

zhè tiáo hé bèi wūrǎn le.
this CL river BEI pollute SFP

‘These rivers are polluted.’ (pro *zhè xiē*) (S5)

(19) 这 [] 河 被 污染 了。

zhè [] hé bèi wūrǎn le.
this river BEI pollute SFP

‘These rivers are polluted.’ (pro *zhè xiē*) (S6)

In the following examples (20)–(21) the meaning of the selected word is acceptable but as the selected word’s use is restricted and thus violates the basic S+V+O word order revealing that the students do not know enough of the word’s grammatical functions. In both examples the student has used the word *change* that is both a noun and a verb, but in the student’s sentences it is used in its more commonly used noun form instead of using the correct verb form.

(20) 天气 变化 暖和 了。
tiānqì biànhuà nuǎnhuo le.
weather change warm SFP

‘The weather has turned warm.’ (pro *biàn*) (S11)

(21) 天气 变化 越来越 冷。
tiānqì biànhuà yuèlái yuè lěng.
weather change more.and.more cold

‘The weather turns colder and colder.’ (pro *biàn*) (S6)

Two errors were found in negative sentences. There are two commonly used words that are used to form negative sentences in Chinese, the adverb 不 *bù* that can be used before verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs but never before the verb 有 *yǒu* that indicates possession or existence, but is also used in expressions of comparisons (Po-Ching and Rimmington 1992: 35). Negation in sentences that utilize 有 *yǒu* is expressed by using the negative adverb 没 *méi*. The negation 没 *méi* is often used to indicate that an action has not been conducted or finished. A sentence that is negated with 没 *méi* cannot take an object that is an adjective but a sentence negated with 不 *bù* can. Similarly, auxiliary verbs, such as 能 *néng* (can do), 会 *huì* (to be able to) and 该 *gāi* (should be) can only be negated with 不 *bù* (Li and Cheng

2008). Thus, the two negative adverbs are not interchangeable. Yet, in the students' assignments the two are often mixed up as the difference of proper use is not clear to novice CFL learners resulting in errors of use due to insufficient knowledge of the word collocations.

(22) 我 没 够 厉害 了。
 wǒ **méi** gòu lìhai le.
 1SG NEG enough fierce SFP

'I am not fierce enough.' (pro *bù*) (S7)

(23) 小文 没 能 参加。
 Xiǎo Wén **méi** néng cānjiā.
 Xiao Wen NEG can join

'Xiao Wen cannot participate.' (pro *bù*) (S4)

4.3 Syntactic errors

Despite the limitations of the corpus both in size and variation, there were far more syntactical errors than there were lexical errors in the assignments. According to Ringbom (1987), typological distance influences the acquisition of the target language. Chinese, much like English, employs a rigid word order while the word order of Finnish is flexible. Thus, a great deal of the errors found in the students' texts were errors of word ordering. In Chinese, grammatical relationships are shown by word order or by the use of grammatical particles instead of the use of affixes or internal word changes that is more in the nature of the Finnish language. Chinese also utilizes classifiers, or *measure words* with numerals and determinatives that cannot be used alone with a noun (Norman 1988: 10). The basic SVO word order is easy for Finnish students to learn, but it is not as easy to grasp all the rules of the different phrase types, sentences with special verb predicates, complex sentences and how different aspects of action are used to form sentences that refer to past events or experiences.

Figure 2 presents the distribution of the most salient syntactic errors in the corpus.

I counted a total of 90 syntactic errors in the corpus, of which 24 were found in the translation sentences and 66 in the essays. The most frequent types of errors could be identified as errors in the use of adverbs, aspectual particles, complements and the 把 *bǎ* sentence. I will present the errors in the following sections with examples of the most

representative error types. Not all errors are included due to repetition – as mentioned, many students used the course books as source material for the written assignments.

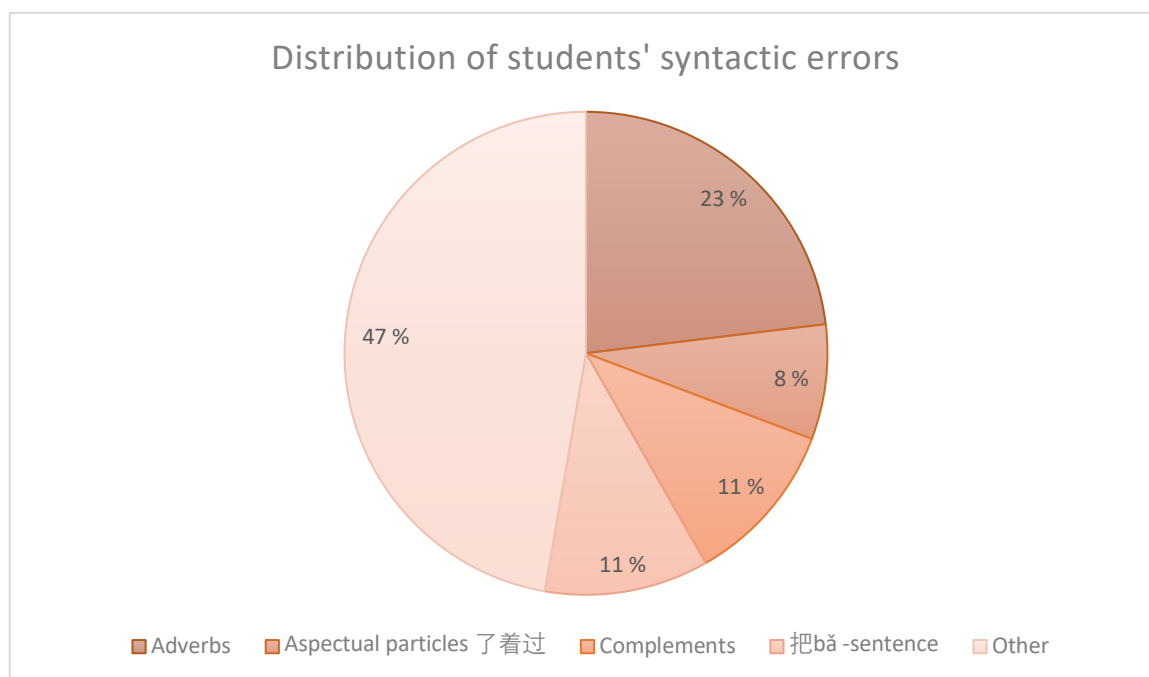


Figure 2. *Distribution of most salient syntactical errors in the texts*

Different adverbs, but most notably the adverb 就 *jiù*, made up 23% of the syntactic errors found in the corpus, followed by errors in the use of the 把 *bǎ* -sentence which makes 11% of the total amount of errors. Another 11% of the errors was found in complement structures, and errors in the use of the aspectual particles 了 *le*, 着 *zhe*, 过 *guo* made the remaining 8% of the total. Various different grammatical errors were found in small numbers in the corpus and the most representative will be examined in a separate section.

4.3.1 The 把 *bǎ*-sentence

As explained above, the 把 *bǎ*-sentence is unique to Chinese and it indicates that an action is applied on something or someone emphasizing the resultative or influential nature of the action (Li and Cheng 2008). Students had trouble applying the correct word order in their sentences and sometimes 把 *bǎ* was omitted in sentences where it should not have been omitted. Students also had difficulties in grasping the grammatical function of the 把 *bǎ*-sentence which resulted in attempts in utilizing the structure in sentences where the use of 把

bǎ was not necessary. In example (24) the incorrect use of 把 *bǎ* has resulted in wrong ordering. In examples (25)–(27) 把 *bǎ* has been omitted.

(24) 地[求] 应该 把 保护 好。
 dì [qiú] yīngāi bǎ bǎohu hǎo.
 the Earth must BA protect well

‘The [Earth] must be protected well.’ (pro *yīnggāi bǎ dìqiú bǎohu hǎo*) (S3)

(25) 那 个 人 不 [] [] 脱 大衣 下来。
 nà ge rén bù [] [] tuō dàyī xialai.
 that CL person NEG take.off coat go.down

‘That person is not taking his overcoat off.’ (pro *xiǎng bǎ dàyī tuō xiàlái le*) (S13)

(26) 你 难道 能 [] 吹 他 的 大衣
 nǐ nándào néng [] chuī tā de dàyī
 2SG ADV can blow 3SG GEN coat
 下来 吗 ?
 xialai ma?
 go.down Q

‘You think you can blow off his overcoat?’ (pro *bǎ tā de dàyī chuī*) (S7)

(27) 如果 你 不会 [] 脱 他 的
 rú guǒ nǐ bú-huì [] tuō tā de
 if 2SG will-not take.off 3SG GEN
 大衣 下来。
 dàyī xialai.
 coat go.down

‘If you cannot undress his overcoat.’ (pro *bǎ tā de dàyī tuō*) (S7)

There were other errors in 把 *bǎ*-sentences, too, as sometimes the use of 把 *bǎ* appeared to result in omission of another element somewhere else in the sentence. In example (29) a verb is omitted. In example (30) the adverb 就 *jiù* is misplaced and the noun after 把 *bǎ* is omitted.

(28) 那 个 人 把 大[衣] [] 下来 了。

nà ge rén bǎ dà[yī] [] xialai le.
 that CL person BA coat take.off SFP

‘That person took of his coat.’ (pro *dà yī tuō xialai*) (S1)

4.3.2 Adverbs

The students did not generally make many errors using adverbs, but 就 *jiù* stood out as an exception. Usually 就 *jiù*, in its function as an adverb, is placed in front of a verb, not unlike many other adverbs. The students had a tendency to place 就 *jiù* in the beginning of a sentence before a noun or a personal pronoun which may indicate that the students are thinking of the Finnish equivalent for the word *so* (*niin*) as they write because the use of the word *niin* would allow the word order the students incorrectly applied to the adverb 就 *jiù*. In example (35) the student has added 就 *jiù* into a structure that does not require it. In example (36) 就 *jiù* appears to have been mistaken to mean *after a moment* which may be due to the unspecific meaning of 就 *jiù* and thus this error might as well be treated as lexical. However, it is difficult to say what the student meant, as the sentence was placed in the middle of a theatrical script-like dialogue.

(29) 既然 你 喜欢, 就 我们 把 [] 买 了。
 jìrán nǐ xǐhuan, jiù wǒmen bǎ [] mǎi le.
 since 2SG like just 1PL BA buy SFP

‘Since you like it, let’s just buy it.’ (pro *women jiù bǎ tā*) (S3)

(30) 既然 你 喜欢, 就 我们 买 []。
 jìrán nǐ xǐhuan, jiù wǒmen mǎi [].
 since 2SG like just 1PL buy

‘Since you like it, let’s buy [it].’ (pro *wǒmen jiù*) (S5)

(31) 因为 我 没 办法 了, 就 我们 看一看。
 yīnwei wǒ méi bànfǎ le, jiù wǒmen kàn yī kàn.
 because 1SG NEG means SFP just 1PL have.a.look

‘Because I can’t do it, let’s have a look.’ (pro *wǒmen jiù*) (S7)

(32) 如果 人们 和 动物 不得不 离开 自己 的 家
 rúguǒ rénmen hé dòngwù bùdébù líkāi zìjǐ de jiā
 if people and animal cannot.but leave self STR home
 就 社会 很 乱。
 jiù shèhuì hěn luàn.
 just society very in.disorder

‘If people and animals have to leave their homes, the society will become unstable.’ (pro *shèhuì jiù*) (S7)

(33) 就 那 个 人 自己 把 大衣 脱 下来 了。
 jiù nà ge rén zìjǐ bǎ dà yī tuō xialai le.
 at once that CL person self BA coat take.off CMP SFP

‘That person took off his coat by himself.’ (pro *nà ge rén jiù*) (S5)

(34) 人们 越来越 多 就 地求 上 的 垃圾
 rénmen yuè lái yuè duō jiù dì qiú shàng de lājī
 people more and more many at once the Earth on STR rubbish
 也 越来越 多。
 yě yuè lái yuè duō.
 also more and more many

‘As there are more and more people, there is also more and more garbage.’ (pro *lājī yě yuè lái yuè duō*) (S7)

(35) 就 一会儿。
 jiù yī huìr.
 just moment

‘After a moment.’ (pro *guò le*) (S9)

A few errors were made in the use of the adverb 都 *dōu* which can be translated as *all*. In example (36) the error is revealed by the use of the pronoun 一切 *yīqiè* which often pairs with 都 *dōu* or 很 *hěn* when followed by a verb.

(36) 可是 一切 有 都 好处 和 坏处。

kěshì yīqiè yǒu dōu hǎochu hé huàichu.
but everything have both benefit and disadvantage

‘But everything has benefits and disadvantages.’ (pro yīqiè dōu yǒu) (S3)

4.3.3 Complements

The concept of complements is difficult to comprehend as there are many different types of complements, and they are not characteristic to the Finnish language in the same way as in Chinese. According to Li and Cheng (2008: 271), a complement is “a word or phrase attached to a verb or adjective predicative to complete meaning of the sentence”. In short, complements can be described as verb markers or attachments. Complements in a sentence come after the verb and either describe the action of the verb or express the result (Yip and Rimmington 1997: 69). There are different types of complements and they are usually classified into 5 categories: the *complement of result*, the *complement of degree*, the *complement of quantity*, the *complement of direction* and the *complement of potentiality*. In the students essays the most common types of complements were the complements of degree and complements of direction. The structural particle 得 *de* is often used between the headword and the complement. In examples (37)–(38) 得 *de* has been omitted.

(37) 他 把 大衣 裹 [] 更 紧 了。

tā bǎ dàiyī guǒ [] gèng jǐn le.
3SG BA coat wrap more tight SFP

‘He wrapped the coat tighter around himself.’ (pro guǒ de gèng) (S4)

(38) 他 一定 把 大衣 裹 [] 紧紧 的。

tā yídìng bǎ dàiyī guǒ [] jǐnjǐn de.
3SG must BA coat wrap tight STR

‘Surely he will wrap the coat tighter around himself.’ (pro guǒ de) (S5)

(39) 他们 根本 不 听 懂。

tāmen gēnběn bù tīng dǒng.
3PL at all NEG hear understand.

‘They do not understand at all.’ (pro tīng bù dǒng) (S3)

(40) 他们 根本 不 听 得 懂 英语。
 tāmen gēnběn bù tīng de dǒng yīngyǔ.
 3PL at all NEG hear STR understand English

‘They do not understand English at all.’ (pro *tīng bù dǒng*) (S7)

Interestingly, in example (41) the student has paired the verb incorrectly with a complement of degree when a complement of possibility should have been used. This reveals that the student’s knowledge of the meanings of the different complements is still at the developing level.

(41) 等 不 极了。
 děng bù jí le.
 to wait NEG extremely

‘Can’t wait.’ (pro *liǎo le*) (S1)

4.3.4 Structural particle 了 *le*

Arguably one of the most elusive, if not the most elusive, grammar points of the Chinese grammar is the use of the structural particle 了 *le*. 了 *le* has multiple functions and it is sometimes difficult to work out the difference between its functions in a sentence as it is difficult to put in words what the particle exactly is, and what it does. As an aspectual particle the use of 了 *le* is defined as “an aspectual particle suffixed to a verb indicating the completion of an action” (Li and Cheng 2008:135). It is often used with the adverb 已经 *yǐjīng*, *already*, which helps to grasp the function of the particle. 了 *le* cannot be affixed to any verb, as there are restrictions to its use. It cannot be affixed to verbs that refer to psychological activities, i.e., *to love*, *to miss* or *to hate*, and it cannot be used with verbs that do not express actions, such as *to be*, or verbs that take auxiliary verbs, such as 要买, *yào mǎi*, *want to (or will) buy*; 想去 *xiǎng qù*, *want to go*; and 会说 *huì shuō*, *can speak*. The structural particle 了 *le* can also be used as a modal particle, in which case 了 *le* is placed at the end of the sentence to indicate change. In the students’ produce errors in the use of 了 *le* appear as erroneous placement or omission that is most likely due to uncertainty of the correct use of the structural particle. Sometimes the aspectual particle 了 *le* was confused with the structural particle 的 *de* as if the writer felt that something needed to be added but

just could not detect what it exactly was that the sentence was missing as presented in example (42).

(42) 结果, 也是很多的龙卷风病破坏的
收成。
收成。

jiēguǒ, yě shì hěn duō de lóngjuǎnfēng bìng pòhuài de
result also be very many STR hurricane illness destroy STR
shōucheng.
harvest

‘As a result, many hurricanes, illnesses destroyed the harvests.’ (pro *le*) (S2)

(43) 冰雪融化了雪水流进 [] 大海。
冰雪融化了雪水流进 [] 大海。

bīngxuě rónghuà le xuěshuǐ liú-jìn [] dàhǎi.
ice.and.snow melt PRF meltwater flow-into sea

‘Ice and snow melted, meltwater flowed to the seas.’ (pro *liújìn le dàhǎi*) (S6)

(44) 地球上有很多了垃圾。
地球上有很多了垃圾。

dìqiú shàng yǒu hěn duō le lājī.
the Earth on exist very many SFP rubbish

‘There is a lot of garbage in the world.’ (pro *hěn duō lājī le*) (S13)

4.3.5 Aspectual particles 着 *zhe* and 过 *guo*

Other structural particles that are usually thought to be difficult for CFL learners to master are the aspectual particles 着 *zhe* and 过 *guo*. When occurring after a predicative verb, the aspectual particle 着 *zhe* indicates the continuation of an action or a state as a result of an action. It can take place in the past, present, or future and time nouns and phrases are used to refer to the time of the action. In example (45) the student has mistakenly placed the particle after an auxiliary verb in a sentence that 着 *zhe* cannot be applied to resulting in an erroneous sentence.

(45) 你还要着试试吗?
你还要着试试吗?

nǐ hái yào zhe shìshi ma?
2SG still want DUR try Q

‘Do you still want to try?’ (pro *nǐ hái yào shìshi ma*) (S7)

The aspectual particle 过 *guo* is used to express a certain experience of the past by placing it after the predicative verb in a sentence. In the example sentence (46) the student has used 过 *guo* in a sentence that describes an event that is currently happening, thus resulting in an error.

(46) 你 不 相信 就 看 过!
nǐ bù xiāngxìn jiù kàn guo!
2SG NEG believe at once look EXP

‘If you don’t believe me, just watch me.’ (pro *zhe*) (S9)

It should be said, that I expected to find more erroneous sentences related to the use of aspectual particles. The scarcity of errors suggests that the students either avoid using aspectual particles or that they simply do not make many errors using them to begin with. However, the students who produced the most errors in the corpus were also the most adventurous ones, as they were not afraid to experiment with the language and wrote freely. Most of the students preferred to stick to what they already knew and used words and structures as they were presented in their course books.

4.3.6 Other types of syntactic errors

A variety of different kinds of Chinese grammar errors appeared in the students’ texts as a fairly even spread. The most representative error types consisted of the passive 被 *bèi*-structure, comparative structures and the use of the verbs 是 *shì*, *to be*, and 有 *yǒu*, *to have*. Persistent errors were also found in the formation of sentences with adjectives that represent terms of shape, colour, material or non-gradable qualities functioning as adjectival predicates that usually require the use of the copula 是 *shì* along with the particle 的 *de*.

The 被 *bèi*-structure is used to form a passive with a verb predicate which is modified by the passive preposition 被 *bèi* (Li and Cheng 2008: 470). It is used to express that a person or a thing is subject to a certain result with the influence of an action. Students seem to confuse the 被 *bèi*-structure with the 把 *bǎ*-structure as seen in example (47).

(47) 人类 被 地球 破坏 了。

rénlèi bèi dìqiú pòhuài le.
 humankind BEI the Earth destroy SFP

‘The Earth has been ruined by the people.’ (pro *dìqiú bèi rénlèi*) (S3)

(48) 地球 被 应该 好 保护 了。

dìqiú bèi yīnggāi hǎo bǎohù le.
 the Earth BEI must well protect SFP

‘The Earth should be protected.’ (pro *yīnggāi bēi bǎohu hǎo*) (S13)

Some students made errors when making comparisons of people or things. The 比 *bǐ*-phrase, or the preposition 比 *bǐ* and its object, i.e., the person or thing against which the comparison is made generally occurs before the predicate and the adverbial adjunct (Li and Cheng 2008: 515). A negative comparison can be formed in two ways: by placing the negative adverb 不 *bù* before 比 *bǐ* or by using the 没有 *méiyǒu* formulation. Example (49) shows that using negation in comparison is not always straightforward, especially when a complement is used and reveals the student’s inadequate knowledge of how to form comparisons.

(49) 你 [] 比 我 不 会 吹 得 强。

nǐ [] bǐ wǒ bù huì chuī de qiáng.
 2SG COMP 1SG NEG can blow STR strong

‘You do not blow as forcefully as I.’ (pro *nǐ chuī de bù huì bǐ wǒ chuī de qiáng*) (S9)

The adverb 越来越 *yuèlái yuè* can also be applied to form comparisons. It is used to show that a certain person or thing changes in a certain way. Thus, the adverb premodifies the predicative that specifies the aspect of change. The subject of a 越来越 *yuèlái yuè*-sentence can be a noun, a pronoun or different grammatical phrases referring to a person or thing (Li and Cheng 2008: 248). In example (50), the student has used 越来越 *yuèlái yuè* to say that one can come across more and more garbage out in the world but it does not quite translate to Chinese as effortlessly.

(50) 地球 上 有 很 多 了 垃圾, 也 越来越

dìqiú shang yǒu hěnn duō le lājī, yě yuèlái yuè
 the Earth on exist very many SFP rubbish also more.and.more

多 见 了。

duō jiàn le.

many meet SFP

‘There is a lot of garbage in the world, you can also come across garbage more often.’ (pro *jīngcháng néng jiàn dào*) (S13)

In Chinese, it is not always necessary to add the verb 是 *shì*, *to be*, when describing the shape or quality of a person or thing, as the adjective can function as a predicate. But this does not mean that the use of the verb 是 *shì* should be neglected altogether in relation to adjectives. However, the students made errors either by omitting or adding the verb 是 *shì*, most likely because they had not completely understood the grammatical rules that govern the use of 是 *shì* and may not recognize the word categories of the words they are trying to use in order to express complex ideas.. In example (51) 是 *shì* is added when it is not needed which could well be a result of transfer either from Finnish or English.

(51) 我 不 是 厉害, 可是 我 是 比 你 聪明。

wǒ bù shì lihai, kěshì wǒ shì bǐ nǐ cōngmíng.

1SN NEG be fierce but 1SN be COMP 2SG clever

‘I am not fierce, but I am cleverer than you.’ (pro *wǒ bù lihai, kěshì wǒ bǐ nǐ cōngmíng*) (S6)

Sometimes the students appear to be confused between the different verbs that all convey different aspects of expressing judgement, existence or possession and it is difficult for the students to choose the correct one. In Finnish only one verb is used to express both existence and possession which can lead to difficulties in the context of Chinese. This manifests either as overuse, incorrect use or as a total lack of use. In example (52) the student has chosen the verb 是 *shì* instead of 有 *yǒu*.

(52) 结果, 也 是 很 多 的 龙卷风 病 破坏

jiēguǒ, yě shì hěn duō de lóngjuǎnfēng bìng pòhuài

MP the Earth be very many STR hurricane illness destroy

的 收成。

de shōucheng.

STR harvest

‘As a result, many hurricanes, illnesses destroyed the harvests.’ (pro *yǒu*) (S2)

The students also had difficulties to form sentences with special predicative adjectives that require the use of the copula 是 *shì* in conjunction with the structural particle 的 *de*. Both 是 *shì* and 的 *de* have multiple functions and thus it is not easy to distinguish when they should be used and when they should be left out. In the examples presented below, the multifunctionality has resulted in the omission of both the verb 是 *shì* and the particle 的 *de*.

(53) 人们 的 消费 [] [] 不 可持续 []。
rénmen de xiāofèi [] [] bù kěchíxù []。
people GEN consume NEG sustainable

‘The consumer habits of people are not sustainable.’ (pro *xiāofèi fāngshì shì bù kě chixù de*) (S1)

(54) 每 个 东西 都 [] 红 的。
měi ge dōngxi dōu [] hóng de.
every CL thing all red STR

‘Every item is red.’ (pro *dōu shì hóng de*) (S3)

5 Conclusion

This study has examined the different types of errors that occur in the written Chinese of Finnish speaking beginner level university students. Prior to the analysis of the students’ errors the history and future prospects of CFL teaching in Finland were briefly presented and discussed, followed by a short introduction of the standard Chinese language that the subjects of this study are studying. To better understand the challenges of writing in a foreign language, research of reading and writing in foreign language was presented and the language specific challenges in relation to literacy in Chinese were investigated. As this study draws from the study of errors and interlanguage, the research in error analysis and interlanguage were presented along with an investigation into the two different categories of errors studied in this research, the errors in lexicon and syntax. Finally, the errors were studied and analysed based on the previous studies and categorisations in the field of error analysis. The aim of this study was to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What kind of errors are typical to Finnish Chinese language learners?
2. Why these errors may occur in terms of context, orthography and interlanguage?

The research questions were approached through both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the lexical and syntactic errors in the corpus of 28 texts written by Finnish university students. The research method was based on the models of Nation and Hunston (2013), Corder (1966), Selinker (1972) and Lu (1994). Errors were identified by comparing the students' produce to the target language norms.

In response to the research questions, it can be stated that the most frequent errors that the students made were syntactic and the students had difficulties with sentence structures unique to Chinese, and grammatical items that are non-characteristic to Finnish and require the implementation of a rigid word order. Among the total of 131 errors found in the corpus of which 40 errors were categorized as lexical and 91 errors as syntactic, the most salient errors were found in relation to the 把 *bǎ*-sentence, the word ordering of adverbs, and the use of different complements. The identified errors also manifest difficulties in the use of the verbs 是 *shì*, 有 *yǒu* and 在 *zài*. All of these verbs can be translated into a single Finnish word which explains the confusion in the use of these verbs. It appears that the students try to avoid the use of some difficult grammar points as to steer away from making errors. Such avoidance can be expected in relation to aspectual particles 了 *le*, 着 *zhe* and 过 *guo* as their appearance was noticeably scarce in the corpus. Other errors that stood out included errors in the 被 *bèi*-sentence structure, composing comparative sentences that require knowledge of the correct word order, in the use of the verbs 是 *shì*, 有 *yǒu* and 在 *zài*, and in the use of adjectival predicate constructions consisting of the copula 是 *shì* in conjunction with the particle 的 *de*. Most lexical errors occurred due to insufficient knowledge of the words' grammatical qualities and meaning in context. Due to the nature of the lexical errors it appears that L2 interference presents itself through the lexicon. As there is a general lack of Finnish language study materials of Chinese, the students used English language dictionaries to find words and meanings to suit their compositions. As a result, errors in word use and meaning occur as the students end up using words that are close in meaning but cannot be used interchangeably due to word specific restrictions or because the chosen words are homonyms and thus cannot be applied as the meaning does not correspond to the intended

one. Overall, the results confirm the hypothesis that Finnish students struggle with the word order, particularly the adverb placement, different complements and other structures that they are not familiar with as well as different aspectual particles. However, all of the said features should be investigated further due to the students' avoidance of difficult structures in the texts that were analysed for this research.

Interestingly, the students' background did not appear to have great influence on their performance. Previous study and linguistic background seemed to have little or no effect on the occurrence of errors. Although some students made more errors than others, it should be noted that those students who made the most errors were also the most experimental with the language and clearly tested their interlanguage hypothesis through their writing. As the group was rather heterogenic, it would be interesting to investigate the errors of a more homogenic group to find out if more evidence of direct language transfer from Finnish to Chinese could be detected. Reflecting on the results and the background research, it appears evident that the students are applying elements of other languages they know and find similar to Chinese in their produce as suggested by Odlin (1989). Clear evidence of transfer from Finnish was found in the incorrect use of the adverb 就 *jiù*. It appears that the students are connecting the adverb 就 *jiù* with the Finnish word for *so* ('*niin*') that allows the use of the word order characteristic to the erroneous sentences.

In the course of analysing the errors it was noticed that many of the sentences in the corpus were taken from the course books that the students had access to during the course. This explains the small number of the errors. However, the findings appear to be in line with related research, although it should be noted that due to qualities specific to the Chinese language, conducting an error analysis is challenging because it is not easy to define which errors can be categorized as syntactic and which as lexical. Also, there are differences in the ways in which the students are accustomed to express themselves in writing. Some prefer very formal language and others are used to write without much preplanning of the content or style. Thus, it is not always easy to distinguish between an error and a mistake, i.e., a typo or some other slip of tongue. In Chinese, some errors may also occur due to the student's inability to return to their text for revision and correction as Chinese is written with characters that are learned by memorization and, thus they are easily forgotten unless used on a daily basis.

Despite being a student of the Chinese language myself, and having received formal instruction in Chinese language in a Chinese University for several years, my actual knowledge of the language has been mostly acquired through using the language communicatively as a member of a society, and thus the distinction between standard and non-standard has become somewhat blurred. As a non-native speaker, there are limitations to my language skills that I might not be aware of because I, too, employ my own interlanguage in analysing the students' assignments and interpreting the language norms. Thus, this research is not only about the errors in the students' produce but also a study of my own language development and the skills acquired in the Chinese language. As a teacher, an investigation into interlanguage offers an intriguing opportunity for reflection in order to find effective methods to be applied in teaching vocabulary, the mechanics of the language, and generally improving the students' linguistic skills, as well as in passing on cultural knowledge of the language and the people who use it. Error analysis in itself is an effective tool to be utilized by teachers and SLA researchers. Therefore, further investigation to its use in regard to Finnish speaking students' acquisition of Chinese is an interesting subject of study and the results may be put in use in designing study materials and course planning.

The purpose of this study was to pinpoint the most salient Chinese grammar points that are challenging to the students and to present an overall account of the errors that are typical to Finnish speaking CFL learners. Despite the preliminary nature of the findings, as a pioneer research in the field of CFL teaching and learning in Finland, this study may be considered as a starting point for further investigation into the different types and variations of the persistent errors in the written produce of Finnish speaking CFL learners.

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Appendix

Background Questionnaire

By answering these questions you give permission to use your text as data in an MA thesis study currently being conducted at the University of Helsinki. All answers and texts will be handled anonymously and the writer cannot be recognized from the data. The material might also be used later in further studies. Thank you for your help!

Vastaamalla tähän kyselyyn hyväksyt tekstisi käyttämisen aineistona pro gradu -tutkielmassa Helsingin yliopistolla. Kaikki vastaukset ja tekstit tullaan käsittelemään nimettömänä eikä kirjoittajaa voi tunnistaa vastausten perusteella. Materiaalia voidaan käyttää myöhemmin myös lisätutkimuksissa. Kiitos avustasi!

If you have any questions about the research, please direct them at the researcher via email at hanna.holtainen@helsinki.fi

Tutkimukseen liittyvät kysymykset voi lähettää sähköpostitse tutkijalle osoitteeseen hanna.holtainen@helsinki.fi

Please answer the following questions/*Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin:*

1. Name (for data collection purposes only)/Nimi (vain datan keräämistä varten):
2. Age/ikä:
3. Gender/sukupuoli:
4. Mother tongue(s)/äidinkieli tai -kielet:
5. Language(s) spoken at home/kotona puhuttu kieli tai kielet :
6. Other languages you know/muut osaamasi kielet:
7. How long have you been studying Chinese? *Kuinka kauan olet opiskellut kiinaa?*
8. Have you ever studied in Chinese (For example, participated in Chinese-Finnish dual language tuition)? If yes, for how long? *Oletko koskaan opiskellut kiinaksi (esim. i osallistunut kiina-suomi kaksikieliseen opetukseen)? Jos kyllä, kuinka kauan?*
9. Have you spent long periods in Chinese-speaking countries? If yes, for how long and where? *Oletko viettänyt pidempiä aikoja kiinankielisessä maassa? Jos kyllä, kuinka kauan ja missä?*