

Comparison of Simple Sentences in Chinese and Myanmar Languages

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Abstract

This paper studies the comparison of simple sentences in Chinese and Myanmar languages. The data for parts of speech, simple sentences and forms, grammatical rules and sentence constructions for simple sentences are collected and studied. Some phrases in Chinese language can be regarded as simple sentences. Thus, researcher compiled the data to help basic-level students of Chinese and Myanmar language understand those usages clearly and imply them accurately. This paper compares Chinese and Myanmar simple sentences with the intention of helping Myanmar students who learn Chinese to be able to use those Chinese simple sentences which are the most basic of Chinese language.

Key words: Simple Sentences, Chinese Language, Myanmar Language.

Introduction

Language means connecting people with different sentences constructing under the limitations of respective grammatical rules. Grammar is a principle designing with units of languages such as words, phrases and sentences. It is a rule which is formed systematically with words and sentences for speaking and writing purposes. Sentence means a systematic formation of phrases convey necessary meanings. It can be divided into simple and compound sentences. Simple sentence means a meaningful unit of language, it can either be a word or a phrase, which can stand independently with their respective intonation and accent. In a book "Myanmar Grammar" published by "The Myanmar Language Team", it is defined that simple sentence is the one with 'Subject' and 'Verb'. However, in Chinese language, it can be found that simple sentences can be formed either with 'Subject' or 'Verb'.

Aims

This paper aims to help basic-level students of Chinese and Myanmar languages to be able to understand the different language structure of Chinese and Myanmar simple sentences, grammatical rules and studies, and apply them proficiently. This paper also intends to encourage students who learn Chinese language to use simple sentences the basic of Chinese language correctly.

Methodology

This paper implies comparative analysis method to compare and study the units of a sentence, and grammatical and sentence structural rules of simple sentences in Chinese and Myanmar languages based on the data of Chinese and Myanmar grammar reference book, vocabulary reference book, dictionaries and the information received from classroom practices.

Literature Review

Although there are grammar books for Chinese and Myanmar, it is found that there are no research papers focus on the comparison of Chinese and Myanmar languages in both Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Mandalay University of Foreign Languages.

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Research Questions

- (1) How many types of simple sentences are there in Chinese language?
- (2) How are Chinese and Myanmar simple sentences formed?
- (3) Are there any differences in Chinese and Myanmar simple sentences?

Findings and Discussion

Sentences can be compared and analysed from different perspective. Sentences can be classified as simple and compound ones based on their constructions. Simple sentences can be classified into five categories: declarative sentence, interrogative sentence, negative sentence, imperative sentence and sentence which conveys someone's wish. There is a difference in general principle for sentence constructions and sentence categories. Sentences with same sentence structures can fall into different categories.

1. Different types of Simple sentences

Simple sentence means a sentence with 'Subject' and 'Verb'. Various simple sentences can be formed with 'Subject', 'Verb' and suitable 'Phrases'. In both Chinese and Myanmar languages, there are simple sentences of 'Subject-predicate Sentence' and 'Subject less Sentence'. Simple sentences in Chinese language can be classified as follows.

单句

Simple Sentence

主谓句 (S-P Sentence)	非主谓句 Non-S-P Sentence)
1. 动词谓语句 S-P Sentence with a V-predicate	1. 无主句 Subjectless Sentence
2. 形容词谓语句 S-P Sentence with an Adj-predicate	2. 独词句 One- word Sentence
3. 名词谓语句 S-P Sentence with a N-predicate	3. 简略句 Elliptical Sentence
4. 主谓谓语句 S-P Sentence with a S-P phrase as predicate	

2. Subject-Predicate Sentence

This is a sentence formed with 'Subject' and 'Predicate'. Based on the formation of 'Predicate', Chinese sentences can be classified as 'S-P sentence with a V-predicate', 'S-P sentence with a N-predicate', 'S-P sentence with an Adj-predicate' and 'S-P sentence with a S-P phrase as a predicate'.

2.1. Comparison of “S-P Sentence with a V-Predicate”

‘Verb’ is used as ‘Predicate’ in this type of sentence and actions and movements, emotions and, changes and developments of human beings and objects are mainly stated.

Example (1)

Chinese - 妹妹 正在 玩儿。 (actions and movements)

V

Meaning - Younger sister in course of play

My younger sister is playing.

Myanmar - ပြိုင်ပွဲ စတင်သည်။

V

Example (2)

Chinese - 妈妈 很 担心 妹妹 的 健康。 (emotions)

V

Meaning - Mammy very worry younger sister’s health

My mother is worried about my younger sister’s health.

Myanmar - သူ ခွေးကို ကြောက်သည်။

V

Example (3)

Chinese - 粮食 生产 提高了。 (Changes and developments)

V

Meaning - Food product increase

The production of the foodstuff is increasing.

Myanmar - မိုးတွေ မဲလာပြီ။

V

S-P sentence with a v-predicate in Chinese language can be generally classified into three types.

(1) ‘Subject’ and ‘Verb’ sentence

Example (1) Chinese - 爸爸 回来 了。

S V Particle

Meaning - Father come back

Father is coming back.

Myanmar - ဖေဖေ ပြန်လာ ပြီ။

S V par

Meaning - Father come back
Father is coming back.

Example (2)

Chinese - 我 知道。
 S V
 Meaning - I know
 I know.
 Myanmar - ကျွန်တော် သိ သည်။
 S V par
 Meaning - I know
 I know.

There is a same sentence construction of Chinese and Myanmar language in 'Subject' and 'Verb' sentence. "Subject" and "Object" are next to each other in construction. However in Myanmar sentence, it can be "subject-preposition" follow after "subject" or the omission of "subject-preposition".

(2) 'Subject', 'Verb' and 'Object' sentence

Example (1)

Chinese - 学生们 正在 学习 英文。
 S Adv V O
 Meaning - Students in process of learn English.
 The students are learning English.
 Myanmar - ကျောင်းသားများ အင်္ဂလိပ်စာ သင်ယူနေ သည်။
 S O V par
 Meaning - Students English learn
 The students are learning English.

Example (2)

Chinese - 姐姐 去 学校。
 S V O
 Meaning - Ma Ma go school
 Ma Ma go to school.
 Myanmar - မမ (သည်) ကျောင်း သွား သည်။
 S (par) O V par
 Meaning - Ma Ma school go
 Ma Ma go to school.

Generally, the word order in Chinese language is 'Subject - Verb - Object' and Myanmar is 'Subject - Object - Verb' and the main part of a sentence is the verb behind 'Subject'. Different languages have different sentence constructions as well as the word order.

Example (1)

Chinese - 我 叫 他。

S V O

Meaning - I call he

I call him.

Myanmar - ကျွန်တော် သူ့ကို ခေါ်သည်။(or) သူ့ ကို ကျွန်တော် ခေါ် သည်။

S O Prep V par O Prep S V par

Meaning - I he call (or) He I call

I call him.

Example (2)

Chinese - 他 叫 我 。

S V O

Meaning - He call I

He call me.

Myanmar - သူ ကျွန်တော် ကို ခေါ် သည်။(or) ကျွန်တော် ကို သူ ခေါ် သည်။

S O Prep V par O Prep S V par

Meaning - He I call (or) I He call

He call me.

The preciseness of 'Subject' and 'Object' word order can be found in above Chinese sentences. The positions of pronouns which represent "subject" and "object" cannot be changed. If 'Subject' and 'Object' of Chinese sentences (Example: 1 and Example: 2) are changed in position, the meanings of both sentences will be changes as well. However in Myanmar sentences, there is usually a preposition follow each phrase of a sentence, readers can understand 'Subject' and 'Object' of their respective words. Thus, meaning will not be changed although 'Subject' and 'Object' are in alternative position. It is clear that Chinese and Myanmar languages have different sentence constructions.

(3) "Subject", "Verb" and "Two Objects" sentence

Example (1)

Chinese - 我 给 弟弟 书 。

S V Indirect-O Direct-O

Meaning - I give little brother book

I give the book to my little brother.

Myanmar - ကျွန်တော် သည် စာအုပ် ကို ညီလေး အား ပေး သည်။ (or)
 S Prep Direct-O Prep Indirect-O Prep V par
 Meaning - I book little brother give
 စာအုပ် ကို ကျွန်တော် သည် ညီလေး အား ပေး သည်။
 Direct-O Prep S Prep Indirect-O Prep V par
 Meaning - book I little brother give
 I give the book to my little brother.

Example (2)

Chinese - 他 教 温温 英语
 S V Indirect-O Direct-O
 Meaning - He teach Win Win English
 He teaches English to Win Win.
 Myanmar - သူ သည် ဝင်းဝင်း ကို အင်္ဂလိပ်စာ သင် ပေး သည်။ (or)
 S par Indirect-O par Direct-O V V par
 Meaning - He Win Win English teach give
 ဝင်းဝင်း ကို သူ သည် အင်္ဂလိပ်စာ သင် ပေး သည်။
 Indirect-O par S par Direct-O V V par
 Meaning - Win Win He English teach give
 He teaches English to Win Win.

In making Chinese sentences, like the above sentences containing two ‘Objects’, ‘Indirect Object’ comes first and ‘Direct Object’ comes later. However, in making Myanmar sentences, there is no differentiation between living thing (Indirect Object) and non-living thing (Direct Object) and sentences can be made by changing the order of objects. By looking at preposition after ‘Subject’, ‘Object’ and ‘Indirect Object’, the meaning can be acquired clearly. By observing these sentences, it can be comprehended that the sentence structures of Chinese and Myanmar are not the same.

2.2. S-P Sentence with a N-predicate

In Chinese ‘S-P Sentence with a N-predicate’, ‘Noun’, ‘Pronoun’, and ‘Noun groups’ are usually used as ‘Predicate’. At the end of Myanmar sentences, ‘Predicates’ are sometimes used as completions.

Example (1)

Chinese - 昨天 星期六
 S N
 Meaning - Yesterday Saturday
 Yesterday was Saturday.

Myanmar - မနေ့က စနေနေ့ ပေါ့။
S N Particle

Meaning - Yesterday Saturday
Yesterday was Saturday.

Example (2)

Chinese - 明天 国庆节。
S N

Meaning - Tomorrow National day
Tomorrow is National day.

Myanmar - မနက်ဖြန် အမျိုးသားနေ့ ပေါ့။
S N Particle

Meaning - Tomorrow National day
Tomorrow is National day.

Example (3)

Chinese - 我 十六 岁。
S Numeral N

Meaning - I 16 years
I am 16 years old.

Myanmar - ကျွန်တော်၊ အသက် ၁၆ နှစ် ပါ။
S N N Particle

Meaning - I age 16 years
I am 16 years old.

Example (4)

Chinese - 他 大 眼睛 长 头发。
S Attribute N Attribute N

Meaning - He big eyes long hair
He has round eyes and long hair.

Myanmar - သူ က မျက်လုံး ဝိုင်းဝိုင်း၊ ဆံပင် ရှည်ရှည် နဲ့။
S Prep N Adj N Adj Particle

Meaning - He eyes round hair long
He has round eyes and long hair.

Generally, 'Nouns' can't be used as 'Predicates'. They can only be used with the following limitations.

1. In Affirmative sentences only, not in Negative sentences.
2. Only in short sentences, not in long sentences.
3. Mostly used in spoken form.
4. Time, age, nationality, weather, occupation, festival, measurement, weight, etc. are frequently used as spoken forms.

In using Negative sentences, negative word ‘不’ can’t merely be used. Since ‘Verb’ ‘是’ is also needed to use as ‘不是’, it is actually a type of S-P sentence with a V-predicate.

Example (1)

Chinese - 昨天 不是 星期六。

S Adv V N

Meaning - Yesterday not was Saturday

Yesterday was not Saturday.

Myanmar - မနေ့က စနေနေ့ မ ဟုတ် ဘူး။

S N neg V Particle

Yesterday Saturday not was

Yesterday was not Saturday.

Example (2)

Chinese - 明天 不是 国庆节。

S Adv V N

Meaning - Tomorrow not is National day

Tomorrow is not National day.

Myanmar - မနက်ဖြန် အမျိုးသားနေ့ မ ဟုတ် ပါ။

S N neg V Particle

Meaning - Tomorrow National day not is

Tomorrow is not National day.

In Myanmar sentences, ‘S-P sentence with a N-predicate’ can be used in spoken form. It is resembling sentences omitting ‘Verb’s. There is a preposition follows after “subject”. It is also observed that sentence structures are also the same. Nevertheless, sentence structures are not the same in negative sentences.

2.3. S-P Sentence with an Adjective-predicate

They are type of sentences in which ‘Adjectives’ are used as ‘Predicate’ and they focus on ‘Subject’. Since the use of ‘S-P Sentence with an Adjective-predicate’ is similar with the use of ‘S-P Sentence with a V-predicate’ in both Chinese and Myanmar, it is mistakenly regarded that there is no ‘S-P Sentence with an Adjective-predicate’. Instead, there are distinctions between ‘Adjectives’ and ‘Verbs’. In sentences constructed by ‘Adjectives’, ‘Subject’ is mostly a person or a thing. Occasionally, it describes as changes of a thing.

Example (1)

- Chinese - 天气 很 冷。
 S Adv Adj
 Meaning - Weather very cold
 The weather is cold.
- Myanmar - ရာသီဥတု အေးသည်။
 S V
 Meaning - Weather cold
 The weather is cold.

Example (2)

- Chinese - 这本书 很 好。
 S Adv Adj
 Meaning - This book too good
 This book is good.
- Myanmar - ဒီစာအုပ် ကောင်း တယ်။
 S V Prep
 Meaning - This book good
 This book is good.

Example (3)

- Chinese - 这孩子 真 棒。
 S Adv Adj
 Meaning - This child real clever
 This child is clever.
- Myanmar - ဒီကလေး တော်တယ် နော်။
 S V Particle
 Meaning - This child clever
 This child is clever.

Example (4)

- Chinese - 西红柿 变 红 了。
 S V Adj particle
 Meaning - Tomato change red
 The tomato becomes red.

Myanmar - ခရမ်းချဉ်သီး နီ (လာ) ပြီ။
S V V article

Meaning - Tomato red come

The tomato becomes red.

In Chinese sentences, 'Adverbs' like “很 太 真 更 最 非常” are used before Adjectives. These 'Adverbs' do not normally label degree. When in speaking or in reading, they are pronounced in normal tone. Nevertheless, when focusing on degree, they are stressed. If 'Adverbs' are not used, it appears to have comparing meaning. In Myanmar sentence, sentence can be constructed only after the “adjective” is changed into 'Verb'. These grammar points are not the same in Myanmar sentences.

Example (1)

Chinese - 他 不 很 胖。(他不太胖)
S neg Adv Adj

Meaning - He not so fat
He is not so fat.

Myanmar - သူ သိပ် မ ဝ ဘူး။
S Adv neg V par

Meaning - He so not fat
He is not so fat.

Example (2)

Chinese - 这张桌子 很 不 好。
S Adv neg Adj

Meaning - This table so not good
This table is not so good.

Myanmar - ဒီစားပွဲ တော်တော် မ ကောင်း ဘူး။
S Adv neg Adj par

Meaning - This table so not good
This table is not so good.

In Chinese sentences, if the negative word '不' is used before 'Adverbs' 很 and 太, it shows lower degree and if it is after 'Adverbs', it shows higher degree. Nonetheless, in Myanmar sentences, it is observed that the negative word is used only after 'Adverbs'.

2.4. S-P Sentence with a S-P Phrase as Predicate

This is a kind of remarkable sentence in Chinese. The 'Predicate' for this type of sentence mainly focuses on describing 'Subject'. It can be formed with the use of 'Verb' and

‘Adjective’. However, such kind of sentence construction in simple sentence is not found in “Myanmar Grammar” published by “The Myanmar Language Team”.

Example (1)

Chinese - 他 身体 好。
 S S/ Predicate Adj/Predicate
 Meaning - He health good
 His health is good.

Myanmar - သူ ကျန်းမာရေး ကောင်းတယ်။
 S S/Predicate V/Predicate
 Meaning - He health good
 His health is good.

Example (2)

Chinese - 那个司机 态度 好。
 S S/predicate Adj/predicate
 Meaning - That driver mental good
 That driver is kind-hearted.

Myanmar - ဟိုဒရိုင်းတာ သဘော ကောင်းသည်။
 S S/predicate V/predicate
 Meaning - That driver mental good
 That driver is kind-hearted.

Example (3)

Chinese - 兔子 尾巴 短。
 S S/predicate Adj/predicate
 Meaning - Rabbit tail short
 The rabbit tail is short.

Myanmar - ယုန် အမြီး တိုသည်။
 S S/predicate V/ predicate
 Meaning - Rabbit tail short
 The rabbit tail is short.

Example (4)

Chinese - 他 任何困难都 能克服。
 S S/predicate V/predicate
 Meaning - He any difficulty can pass

He can pass any difficulty.

Myanmar - သူ ဘယ်အခက်အခဲမဆို ကျော်ဖြတ်နိုင်သည်။

S S/predicate V/predicate

Meaning - He any difficulty can pass

He can pass any difficulty.

Generally, can be found Myanmar sentences are constructed by 'Verb'.

Overview

By writing this paper, giving explanations of simple sentence structure and its different usages to students who are learning Chinese from the beginner level can be achieved. Furthermore, it is overviewed that this paper upgrades students' level of learning Chinese by asking students to be aware of important language usages and points, do a lot of practice by giving exercise, and allowing students have practice in using the language. By these ways, students will be able to use the language in daily life communication and understand meanings clearly in writing, likewise.

Conclusion

Simple sentence is simple in term of sentence structure. Simple sentence is mostly used in daily spoken usage and writing. Simple sentence is mostly used because of its unambiguousness, preciseness and compactness. This paper analyses the findings of simple sentence structure and its different usages in teaching Chinese, and compares Chinese simple sentence structure and Myanmar simple sentence structure. As a result, the researcher believes that this paper will give help to students who are learning Chinese from the beginner level in using the language accurately in real life situation both as in spoken and written form.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to Dr. Kyi Shwin, Rector, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Dr. Mi Mi Aung, Pro-rector, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Dr. Yin Myo Thu, Pro-rector, Yangon University of Foreign Languages, Dr. Khin May Cho, Professor and Head of Chinese Department, Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Dr. Naw San Mying, Associate Professor, Linguistics Department, Yangon University of Foreign Languages for encouraging to write this paper, and giving guidance and support in writing this paper. Special thanks also go to all who give help and provision.

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