

# Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language with Grammar Framework as the First Priority ---Taking the Primary Chinese Teaching of Confucius Institute in Karachi University of Pakistan as an Example

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**Abstract:** As one of the three elements of language, the study of grammar plays an important role in the field of linguistics and teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In the process of overseas teaching, the problem that Chinese learners think grammar is very difficult to learn, some teachers ignore grammar teaching or lack of effective teaching methods. Based on the practical problem, the authors try to explore a concise and clear Chinese grammar framework to help students build a knowledge structure that is easier to recognize and memorize, and improve the teaching quality of teachers of Chinese as a foreign language. This paper mainly tries to find out the principles of establishing the grammatical framework through the definition and research of the grammatical framework, and introduces the regularity, systematization and inspiration of scientific thinking into teaching, so as to open up a new way of thinking for Chinese grammar teaching. Using chart data analysis, understand students' background, learning difficulties and reasons. Through the comparison of teaching effects between the experimental group and the control group, it is found that students have a deeper understanding and improvement of Chinese cognition and learning after the construction of the grammar framework. However, how to construct a Chinese grammar framework that is more conducive to teachers and students should be created and developed in the long-term exploration and practice.

## 1. Background

The internationalization of English has greatly promoted the grammatical description of English<sup>[1]</sup>. Nowadays, the teaching and learning of Chinese is becoming more and more popular in the world, and the pace of its international dissemination is also accelerating. At present, many European and American countries, and even Saudi Arabia have offered Chinese courses. But as the language spreads faster and the number of learners grows, some voices come out as: "Chinese is too difficult. How can I learn more and more? I feel like I will never learn it again!", "Is there a system for Chinese learning, so that we can build our own learning network like English learning?". Taking the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi in Pakistan where one of the author worked as an example, the average number of students in each class of HSK1 standard course is 25, HSK2 standard course is 16, HSK3 standard course is 12, HSK4 standard course is 10, and HSK5 standard course is 5. With the deepening of HSK teaching level, the number of students gradually decreases to single digits..

The results are as follows:

① As shown in Figure 1, 51% of the students think

that Chinese is difficult to learn, 15% say that Chinese is difficult to learn, and only 7% say that Chinese is simple and easy to learn.

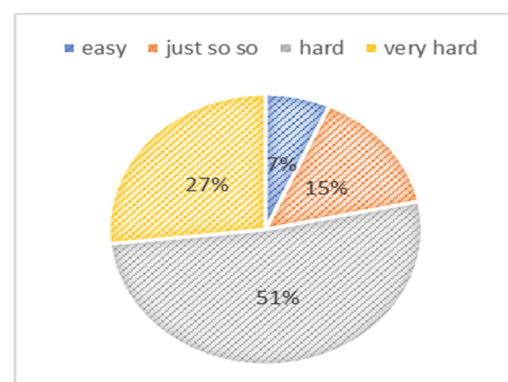
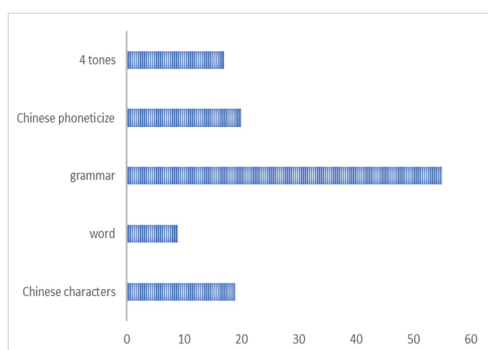


Fig 1. Do you think Chinese is difficult to learn?

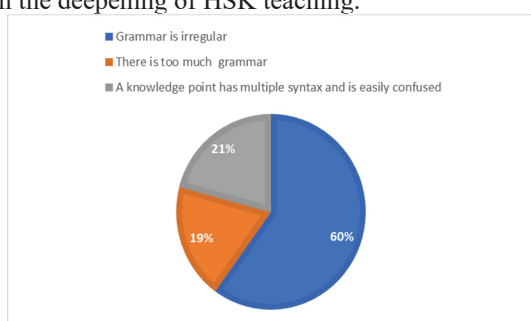
② As is shown in Figure 2, 55% of the students think that the difficult part of Chinese is the grammar of Chinese.

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**Fig 2** Which part of Chinese do you think is difficult to learn?

③ While pie Figure 3 shows that 60% of the students think that they can't find any rules in the learning of Chinese, which is just like fishing in the vast sea and never mastering the secrets of the sea. Students lose their enthusiasm and confidence to explore Chinese. This can explain why the number of students decreases with the deepening of HSK teaching.



**Fig 3** Why do you think Chinese grammar is difficult to learn?

The system of grammar and the quality and efficiency of grammar teaching directly affect the actual learning effect of students, and to a large extent determine how far students can go on the road of Chinese learning. Zhou Zumo pointed out that grammar knowledge must be taught to students no matter what kind of explanation is used<sup>[2]</sup>. So how do you make your students feel more confident as they learn? Based on the comparison between Chinese and Indo-European languages, a concise Chinese grammar framework should be established to fully show the characteristics of Chinese grammar, which conforms to the cognitive process of foreigners in learning Chinese grammar, and serves the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language<sup>[3]</sup>.

## 2.the Concept of Grammatical Framework

Frederick Bartlett, a psychologist, has proved with experiments that people's understanding and memory of events are affected by expectations, which are psychologically represented in the form of schemata<sup>[4]</sup>. The term "frame" can be used in a wide range of fields, including anthropology, linguistics, psychology and architecture. Experts in different fields hold different definitions of "frame". Anthropologist Bateson points out that frame is a psychological concept, which is used in anthropology to refer to a way for individuals to exchange information and is an abstract form of

information transmission<sup>[5]</sup>. Sociologist Goffman argues that frames enable its users to locate, perceive, determine, and name a seemingly infinite number of concrete facts<sup>[6]</sup>. Generally, we believe that grammar, as one of the three elements of language, is the combination of language (that is the structural rule of meaningful language units such as words, phrases and sentences)<sup>[7]</sup>. In the field of linguistics, the concept of "frame" is thought to come from the study of memory by psychologists in the 1930s<sup>[8]</sup>.

Ungerer indicates that Fillmore first introduced frame theory into linguistics and defined frame three times<sup>[9]</sup>. In 1975, Fillmore stated that a framework is any system of language selection the simplest is the combination of words but also the selection of grammatical rules and linguistic categories that can be related to archetypal examples of scenes. In 1985, he defined a framework as a specific unified network of knowledge or a coherent, consistent illustration of experience. In 1992, he proposed that frame is the knowledge presupposition of the concept of lexical implication. Fillmore's process of improving the definition illustrates that the framework is a linguistic construct and now has become a cognitive construct. Taylor defines the framework as "a knowledge network connecting multiple cognitive domains involved in a language form"<sup>[10]</sup>. According to the point of view by comprehensive multidisciplinary experts and scholars, grammar framework is the part of grammar selected in the teaching of special processing, it forms a grammar content involving multiple cognitive domain knowledge network, reflect meaning interpretation, information transmission, classified deduction, and some suggestions for dealing with complex problems. The grammatical framework should include two functions: selection and highlighting, and the four characteristics: foundation, extensibility, constraint and support.

## 3. Establishment and Selection Principles of Grammatical Framework

### 3.1. Grasp the key core parts of basic grammar

The Chinese grammar system is complex, various grammar books are complicated. Whether the grammar should be used or not should be given priority to practicability, and the core part of basic grammar should be grasped. To be specific, if a grammar is the first that Chinese beginners must understand and learn, and that has a significant impact on the learning of Chinese knowledge in the future and plays a role of foreshadowing and leading, it can be considered to be included in the grammatical framework.

### 3.2. The acceptable expression form by Pakistani students

The choice of grammar or the teaching of grammar should follow the principle of scientific and concise. The mother tongue of the students of Confucius Institute in Pakistan is composed of many languages, as shown in

Figure 4: Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto etc. are all involved. Under the premise of students' background of different mother tongues, the concise and scientific expression form of Chinese grammar can be more accepted and learned by students. Shao Jingmin indicates that grammar teaching in all stages of junior high school should be focused on, and the primary level can start with formal structure and then focuses on semantic interpretation<sup>[11]</sup>. For beginners of Chinese language, it is essential to keep the grammatical framework clear and definite while keeping it scientific.

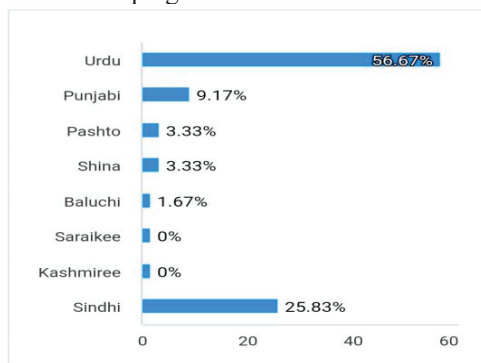


Fig 4 Native language of Confucius Institute students in Karachi University, Pakistan

### 3.3. The acceptable grammatical component by Pakistani students

What an adult Chinese learner needs most at the beginning of learning Chinese is not scattered knowledge of Chinese grammar, but a concise framework of Chinese grammar, with which he can learn Chinese in a targeted way<sup>[12]</sup>. Students studying Chinese at the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi in Pakistan include students who are still at school, workers, businessmen, housewives, retired aunts and uncles, etc. They are different in age, work experience and educational background, so they have different abilities and speed to acquire knowledge. Therefore, a proper amount of grammatical components can be accepted and absorbed by most people.

### 3.4. Operability principle

The purpose of the grammar framework is to serve the teaching and facilitate the use in the teaching, so the grammar framework established for Chinese beginners should be operational and acceptable in the teaching.

## 4. Building a Grammar Framework for Primary Chinese Students of Confucius Institute in Karachi University of Pakistan

The selecting principle of grammar framework based on the above, the writer reference to Zhao Jinming the teacher quoted Mr. Zhu Dexi for "Encyclopedia of China(language)" wrote "Chinese grammar items"<sup>[13]</sup>, including Zhao Jinming will be summed up as six, the

author will be extended to nine, as shown below:

① Morphemes and morphemes can form compound words.

② Most Chinese morphemes are monosyllabic.

③ Some morphemes are words themselves, and some morphemes are not words themselves, but can only form compound words together with other morphemes.

④ An important feature of word order is that all modifiers must be placed before the element being modified.

⑤ There is no strict morphological change in Chinese. In Chinese, because verbs and adjectives are not deformed, they have the same form no matter what grammatical position they appear in.

⑥ Chinese verbs do not have the opposite of finite and nonfinite forms, so the principle of constructing sentences is the same as that of constructing phrases.

⑦ The subject-predicate structure in Chinese is relatively loose, and the subject can be paused, or a modal word can be added, or even there can be no subject.

⑧ The subject-predicate structure can act as a predicate.

⑨ The dynamic complement structure is very important in Chinese. Simple verb complements are made of two verbs or a verb and an adjective.

## 5. The Development and Results of the Grammar Framework Teaching

### 5.1 Experimental Conditions

There were 15 subjects in the experimental group, including 8 males and 7 females. Age 22-49; The control group had 15 subjects, including 9 males and 6 females. Age 20-51 years old; The study time was 16 weeks. The experimental group and the control group used the same textbook (HSK1) and kept the same teaching schedule. After 16 weeks, they took the written test of the same paper. There was no significant difference in general data between the two groups after statistical treatment ( $P > 0.05$ ).

### 5.2 Teaching

1) The control group

New words - Grammar - Text

2) The experimental group

Article 9 was chosen Pakistan elementary Chinese students grammar teaching framework, and HSK1 standard course has a total of 12 classes, After the first three classes of teaching HSK1 grammar system, new lesson HS1 standard curriculum, and a syntax of grammar framework, completed in 9 lessons. Fifteen minutes before each class, the teacher introduced and explained one of the items to students. Of course, for beginners, the teacher used English as an interlanguage to explain part of the content. Fifteen minutes before the end of the class, the teacher discussed this grammar items again with the students and answered any

questions. Students finished the first three lessons of HSK1 before starting the study of grammar framework, one of the purposes was to increase students' familiarity with Chinese, the other was to enable students to master some basic vocabulary, which was conducive to the teacher's explanation of grammar examples. Finally, with the deepening of teaching and the improvement of students' Chinese proficiency, students were help build their own grammatical framework by using the new words and grammar they have learned.

### 5.3 Results

The test results are shown in Figure 5:

- ① Average score: experimental group 79.9, control group 75.8;
- ② Under 60 points: 1 in the experimental group, 3 in the control group;
- ③ 80 points and above: 9 in the experimental group, 7 in the control group;

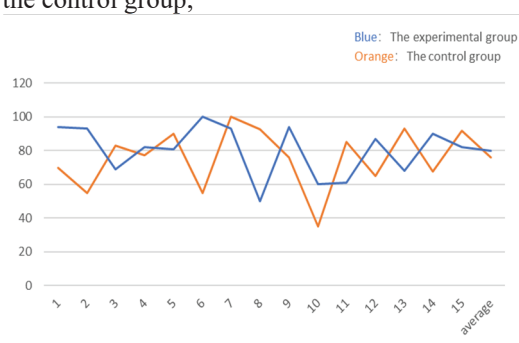


Fig 5 Scores of experimental group and control group

### 5.4 Discussion

Apparently, students in the experimental group had better overall grades than those in the control group and were less likely to get low grades. At the same time, after the test, the author had a discussion with the students in the experimental group about the learning of the grammar framework. 80% of the students thought that the learning of the grammar framework had a certain effect, which helped them establish part of the Chinese learning framework. Seventy percent of the students expressed confidence in their future Chinese study.

Han Lide argues that there are many contents that need to be explained in Chinese, and the only way to explain them is to locate them within the grammatical framework<sup>[14]</sup>. Adult learners need explanations, but they need correct explanations based on the patterns and laws inherent in the language itself. What Chinese teachers hope to see the most is to help students establish their own grammar framework and grammar system, which is also the direction of all Chinese teachers' continuous efforts.

### 6. Conclusions

How to build the grammatical framework in students' thinking and how to increase and decrease the amount of language in the framework are the core areas of grammar

teaching. It is believed that in the future, with the development of science and technology, teachers and researchers will innovate more in grammar teaching, and Chinese teaching will attract and retain more foreign students .

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