

The Use of the Chinese Negative Adverbs ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ by Secondary School Students in Yaoundé, Cameroon

Kenne Michel Olivier

Research Institute of Chinese language, Beijing Language and Culture University, Xueyuan Road 15, Haidian District, Beijing, China

Abstract—Negation is an indispensable grammatical category common to all languages in the world. It is used in a unique way by each language. In Chinese, negation is expressed using negative adverbs, the most common of which are ‘bù’ and ‘méi’. The usage of these negative adverbs in Chinese is different from that in French, so the difference in usage is a challenge for Yaoundé’s secondary-school students. To effectively analyse the use of the Chinese negative adverbs ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ by Yaoundé secondary-school students, this article divides the use of ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ into eight grammatical structures, and presents research gathered from questionnaires and interviews. The author then analyses the different types of mistakes made by Yaoundé secondary-school students in using ‘bù’ and ‘méi’, exploring the motivation and purpose of their use. Recommendations are also provided to advise local secondary schools on how to approach teaching negative words in Chinese.

Index Terms—comparison of Chinese and French, ‘bù’ and ‘méi’, analysis of errors

I. INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the “Chinese-language fever”, more and more Cameroonians have started to learn Chinese in China, and in Confucius Institutes in Cameroon. In 1996, Zhejiang Normal University established the first Chinese-language training centre for the Ministry of Education in Africa in Cameroon. In November 2007, Zhejiang Normal University established the first Confucius Institute in Cameroon in cooperation with the University of Yaoundé II. Thirteen teaching centres have been established since in Yaoundé Douala, Maroua, and Buea, with more than 30,000 people learning Chinese. In 2012 alone, 8,120 Cameroonians studied Chinese in Confucius Institutes, a 59% increase from 2011. The Cameroonian government also added Chinese to the national education system in 2012, further promoting the spread of Chinese culture in Cameroon.

Negative adverbs are both a focus and challenge in teaching every language. There are many negative words in modern Chinese, among which ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ play an important role. Although they are commonly used in Chinese, their use remains challenging for secondary-school students in Cameroon. The negative adverbs ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ are primarily used to negate sentences. As primary grammatical markers, ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ play an essential role in the structure of the sentence, thus deeply affecting the learners’ understanding of the sentence. There is little research on the usage of Chinese grammar in Cameroon, especially on Cameroon’s Chinese grammar. In particular, there has been little research on the use of negative adverbs. It is hoped that the analysis in this paper can help correct some learners’ mistakes in using the Chinese negative adverbs ‘bù’ and ‘méi’.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The use of negative adverbs in Chinese has attracted the attention of some grammarians, who have done a lot of research over the years to analyze the grammatical phenomena of ‘bù’ and ‘méi’. ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ are not only the most frequently used negative adverbs in Chinese, but they are also the most frequently used Chinese negating words by Cameroonian secondary school students at the third-grade level. This part describes the different methods used to conduct the research and gives some hints about the research target.

A. Investigation Method

In order to understand the situation of Yaoundé secondary school students learning to use the Chinese negative adverbs ‘bù’ and ‘méi’ in the classroom, a questionnaire was designed, and relevant data was collected from various academic and online sources. The questionnaire is mainly focused on the elementary level. In Cameroon, junior high school and high school are under the same school system. Junior high school is divided into grade one through four, and high school is divided into grade one through three; a total of seven grades. After finishing the second grade of junior high school, each Cameroonian student is required to choose one foreign language out of five optional languages to study: Spanish, Arabic, Italian, Chinese and German. A student in the third grade of junior high school can only be promoted to the next class if his/her grade point average is equal to or higher than 10 points (credit system). This paper

takes Cameroon-Yaoundé junior high school students in the third grade as subjects to participate in the questionnaire. It summarizes the study and use of 'bù' and 'mé' by Yaoundé secondary school students based on the results of the questionnaire, and analyzes the causes of the errors the students produced.

B. Test Paper Design

The questionnaire is particularly designed for the junior high school level, and the survey participants correspond to secondary school students in the third grade. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part contains basic information on the subjects, including the subjects' gender, HSK level, age, class, and the length of time they spent learning Chinese. The second part is a series of sentences about 'bù' and 'mé'. The test sentences were all selected from textbooks on Chinese as a foreign language, and were mainly focused on the negative structures of 'bù' and 'mé'. Typical sentences were chosen, and the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'mé' were removed from the sentences to allow the students to choose 'bù' or 'mé' to fill in the blank.

TABLE 1
INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEST SENTENCES OF THE THIRD GRADE

Category	Structure of negation	Sentences
a	bù+be/ mé+have	1.这__是我的电脑。 2.安娜__有汉语词典。
b	mé+verb/adjective+guo	18.有些汉语书我和丽丽以前都__看过。 21.妈妈以前从来__吃过中国菜,这是第一次。 30.从此,丽丽再也__停止过看书,学习了不少的汉语知识。
c	mé+verb+result complement	20.昨天的工作我还__做完,因为我太忙了。
d	verb+ bù +result complement	26.这个学校太广了,我转了几分钟就糊涂了,分__清东南西北。
e	bù/ mé +verb	12.我们的学校__在杜阿拉,在雅温得。 13.我__买鞋子,买了学习汉语的书。 15.妹妹__知道怎么打扮,所以让我教她。 22.昨天下午他身体不舒服,所以__去怕山。 29.他__懂得怎么照顾孩子,每天让他们看电视。
f	bù/mei+adjective	3.今天的讲座讲得__有趣。 4.他们的学校__大,但很远。 9.我觉得这个橘子一点儿也__甜。 11.我的手机__错,你看,那部手机也是六点半。 14.你们班的非洲学生多__多? 16.打太极拳__难,我已经会打了。 23.老师不知道哪个词典好用,哪个词典__好用。 25.姐姐的嗓子不舒服,所以这次唱歌比赛唱得__好。
g	bù/ mé +verbs of actions	5.我__会唱歌,但是我想学唱中国歌。 6.丽丽__想当医生,想当服务员。
h	bù/ mé +verb+ particle 'le'	7.我今天不舒服,__去博物馆玩了。 8.他决定__去旅游了。 17.爸爸告诉他,网上骗人的事情很多,__能太相信。 19.大卫和我已经五年多__见面了。 27.我刚刚把它递过去,他们脸上的微笑一下子就__见了。

Among the various structures of negation, the bias rates for the test are shown in the table below:

TABLE 2
THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER OF THE SENTENCES AND THE ERROR RATES FOR EACH CATEGORY OF THE THIRD GRADERS' TEST PAPER

Category	Structures of negation	Sentence numbers	Bias rate
a	bù+be/ mé+have	1, 2	0.00%
b	mé +verb/adjective+guo	18, 21, 30	11.40%
c	mé +verb+result complement	20	3.50%
d	verb+ bù+result complement	26	5.70%
e	bù/ mé +verb	12, 13, 15, 22, 29	20.61%
f	bù/ mé +adjective	3,4, 9, 11, 14, 16, 23, 25	16.22%
g	bù/ mé +verbs of actions	5, 6, 17	1.75%
h	bù/ mé +verb+particle 'le'	7, 8, 19, 27	18.85%

C. Test Participants

The test participants are Cameroon-Yaoundé secondary school students, mainly for the third grade of junior high school. The primary test paper was administered to students in the third grade of the Cameroon-Yaoundé secondary school. 50 questionnaires were distributed in the third grade, and the final sample size of the test paper was 30. French

is one of the most widely spoken languages in Cameroon and one of the languages of school education. French has a strong influence on the foreign language acquisition of French-speaking Cameroonians because of their high exposure to French. In view of the position French occupies in the daily life of Cameroonians, especially among students, the object of this study is French-speaking Chinese learners, who are secondary school students in the third grade. Corresponding to beginner Chinese learners this standard is defined according to the national syllabus of Cameroon.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many studies on the differences between 'bù' and 'méi' in modern Chinese grammar. Among them, the most representative and influential is the time decision theory advocated by Lu Shuxiang, Guo Rui, Xu Jianzhang, Liu Tonggui and Zhang Shiyang. The main difference between the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' is the concept of time. Lu (1980) believes that 'méi' can only be used for an objective narrative, limited to the past and present, not the future; 'bù' is used for subjective will, and can refer to the past, present and future. Guo (1997) thinks that in the "theory of process" and "non-process", 'bù' is a negation of time, and is a "non-process", which is used to deny the nature of the components of the predicate. 'méi' is used to negate the process and the existence of events. Xu (2004) believes that the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' with predicates should obey the general time that has been or has not been limited, in the state of something already existing. 'méi' can be used to negate, or 'bù' can be used to conditionally negate. In the non-state, only 'bù' can be used to negate. Liu (2008) distinguishes between the internal and external tenses of 'bù' and 'méi' in verbs, and considers that the negative forms of the dynamic predicates 'bù' and 'méi' can be used when the negative form of the non-temporal dynamic predicate uses 'bù', and the most complete predicate verb can be negated with 'méi'. From the subjective and objective point of view, some grammarians believe that the main difference between 'bù' and 'méi' is reflected in the subjective and objective. Xu (2004) believes that, in addition to being limited by time, the use of 'bù' and 'méi' is also subject to subjective and objective constraints. 'bù' can be used in subjective negation sentences, and 'méi' is mainly used in subjective negation sentences, or conditionally used in subjective negation sentences.

The use of negative adverbs in Chinese has always been a grammatical problem that is difficult for French-speaking countries to understand, because the content of negative adverbs in grammar textbooks is often not detailed and clear enough. In his book *Apprentissage du chinois par des adultes occidentaux au niveau débutant*, Li (2004) argues that the difference between 'bù' and 'méi' is in time. He thinks that if the negation is related to a past verb, the use of 'bù' and 'méi' depends on the nature of the action, and if the action is continuous and habitual, 'bù' must be used. 'bù' is used for current and future actions, but only the negative adverb 'méi' can be used if the verb "to have" is modified. 'bù' is used for ongoing and routine operations. 'méi' is used for a one-time action.

When French native speakers learn the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi', two phenomena seem to stand out, one is the difficulty to distinguish the function of the negative adverb, and the other is the difficulty to arrange the position of the negative adverb in the sentence. Arnaud (2007) devoted himself to the study of foreign language acquisition by French native speakers. He started from the definition of "foreign language acquisition" and pointed out the difficulties encountered by French-speaking countries in the process of Chinese acquisition. He analyzed the French native language from the perspective of syntax and semantics and highlighted the mistakes that readers make when using the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi'. According to his analysis, the difference between 'bù' and 'méi' in French and Chinese is not obvious. In French construction, 'bù' can mean "non" as well as "ne pas", depending on the meaning of the sentence. "méi" means "ne pas". Therefore, French learners tend to mix up 'bù' and 'méi' when learning Chinese.

In the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the research on 'bù' and 'méi' started late, and compared with ontology, the research results are limited. Li (2004) started from the acquisition process and used various methods to observe and record the use of negative structures of 'bù' and 'méi' in international students through case analysis and group research. Li Ying found that errors appeared when foreign students learned these two negative structures. Due to the difference in the familiarity of time words and lexical phrases, foreign students had a particular preference with using the negative structures of 'bù' and 'méi'. When the two are mixed, 'bù' has a certain dominance, and 'méi' is not usually generalized, which means that students will use 'bù' instead of 'méi' in most cases. Shen (2019) conducted a survey on the use of Chinese negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' by Korean native speakers, starting from the fact that Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family and Korean belongs to the Altaic language family. It was found that the differences between the linguistic families brought about differences in use of Chinese by students learning Chinese. Shen took Korean students who had studied Korean for more than three months as the participants of the survey. The proficiency of these survey objects in Chinese was very different. Therefore, she summarized the reasons behind the erroneous use of Chinese negation adverbials by Korean students, and proposed that teaching strategies are not always suitable for all students. The subjects of each learning stage are targeted. Li and Xu (2009) conducted a survey on two Australian international students (native English speakers), collected negative structures as corpus through free conversation, and analyzed deviations of learners' use of 'bù' and 'méi' negative structures from three learning stages. Research shows that the mixed use of 'bù' and 'méi' is extremely complex, and this bias does not diminish as the learning stage progresses, tending to use 'bù' when they deny the present or the future; Learners often use a mixture of "bù" and "méi" when referring to past behaviors or situations.

IV. SURVEY

Regarding the personal information of secondary school students in Yaoundé basic information, such as gender and class, will not be discussed. The test papers of the third-grade students were collected to count the deviations that occurred in each sentence. The statistical results of the “bù” and “mé” bias analysis of the Cameroon-Yaoundé secondary school students in the third grade are as follows.

TABLE 3
STATISTICS OF ERRORS IN THE TEST PAPERS FOR THE THIRD GRADE

Sentence numbers	Category	Bias	Sample size	Bias rate
1	a	0	30	0,0%
2	a	0	30	0,0%
3	f	0	30	0,0%
4	f	1	30	3.3%
5	g	1	30	3.3%
6	g	3	30	10%
7	h	9	30	30%
8	h	19	30	63.3%
9	f	7	30	23.3%
11	f	25	30	83.3%
12	e	5	30	16.7%
13	e	20	30	66.7%
14	f	1	30	3.3%
15	e	1	30	3.3%
16	f	3	30	10%
17	g	0	30	0,0%
18	b	2	30	6.7%
19	h	11	30	36.7%
20	c	8	30	26.7%
21	b	8	30	26.7%
22	e	14	30	46.7%
23	f	0	30	0,0%
25	f	0	30	0,0%
26	d	13	30	43.3%
27	h	15	30	50%
29	e	7	30	23.3%
30	b	16	30	53.3%

As can be seen from Table 3, in the test of the third-grade's test paper, the deviation rate of sentences 1, 2, 3, 17, 23, and 25 is zero, which shows that for these test sentences, none of the students produced errors.

Sentence 1 “这__是我的电脑。”

Sentence 2 “安娜__有汉语词典。”

‘bù’ and ‘mé’ are relatively common negative structures encountered by Cameroonian students when they learn Chinese. Secondary school students often learn to use fixed memory blocks in their studies, and they often combine memory for “bù +be” and “mé +have” in their minds, so there are few errors. The purpose of this test is to test whether Cameroon Yaoundé secondary school students still make “mé +be” and “bù +have” mistakes after learning Chinese for a period of time. The test found that Cameroon- Yaoundé secondary school students studied for four months. After that, they were able to fully grasp this usage without making mistakes.

Sentence 3 “大卫__喜欢踢足球”

Sentence 17 “爸爸告诉他，网上骗人的事情很多，__能太相信。”

Sentence 23 “老师不知道哪个词典好用，哪个词典__好用。”

Sentence 25 “姐姐的嗓子不舒服，所以这次唱歌比赛唱得__太好。”

In these sentences, all participants also answered correctly. Through the analysis of teaching materials and topics, it was found that Cameroon-Yaoundé secondary school students often use familiar words such as “dislike”, “can't”, “not good”. They may not know why, but they just extract familiar phrases from the memory bank and choose from experience. These topics also contain fixed usages from the textbook, so there is no bias.

Sentence 11 had the highest error rate at 83.3%. That is, 25 of the 30 participants chose the wrong negative word to match the sentence with.

Sentence 11 “我的手机__错，你看，那部手机也是六点半。”

For this question, most of the participants chose ‘bù’, and the word “bad” (错) is the word they often come into contact with. When primary learners are exposed to this word, they often use some short phrases for combined memory,

and keep in mind the word "bad". In their minds, when they see the word "bad", they subconsciously choose the negative word 'bù' without considering the context of the sentence. "Look, that phone also has half past eight." The phrase is saying the time on "my phone" is also correct, not that the style or quality of "my phone" is good. Failure to pay attention to context led to subjects making mistakes.

There are also sentences 8, 13, and 24 that have more errors, with an error rate higher than 60%.

Sentence 8 “他决定__去旅游了。”

In this sentence, most participants chose the negative word 'méi'. This is mainly due to the influence of the particle 'le' at the end of the sentence, which is considered a symbol of the past tense. According to the primary textbook and the teacher's explanation, when it comes to the time difference between 'bù' and 'méi', 'méi' is used in the past tense, 'bù' is mainly used in the present tense and the future tense, and cannot be used in the past tense state. Therefore, students chose 'méi' in sentences that they thought were marked with the past tense. In fact, the particle 'le' in these two sentences does not express the past, but a modal word at the end of the sentence. When the elementary level students used these two words, they didn't think about it, and when they saw the particle, they thought it was something that happened in the past, so they chose the wrong negative word. In fact, 'bù' and 'méi' can also express each other's meanings in some cases. 'bù' is used to express the past in sentences expressing rules, habitual actions or states, and 'méi' is also used in subjunctive sentences and to indicate the future. From the error rate of these questions, it can be seen that there was a failure to grasp the teaching content on these rules. In sentence 8, there is a key word "decision" (决定). Since it is a negation of "decision", the negative word 'bù' should be selected instead of 'méi'.

Sentence 13 “我__买鞋子，买了学习汉语的书。”

In this sentence, 66.7% of the respondents chose the negative word 'bù', mainly because they did not understand the context of the sentence well enough. An example sentence means "I use my money to buy books, not shoes". However, 'méi' is used to deny objective facts.

Sentence 26 “这个学校太广了，我转了几分钟就糊涂了，分__清东南西北。”

In this question, 63.3% of the students chose the negative word 'méi', mainly because they thought the particle 'le' in the sentence had a great relationship with the latter part of the sentence. They think that the particle 'le' in the sentence means the past, so they choose 'méi', and they did not have the grammatical knowledge that 'bù' can be used in the middle of the verb-complement structure, which means impossible, as opposed to the possible 'de' (得). They did not understand that 'qing' (清) is a complement, and in this case 'bù' should be used to negate, thus leading to mistakes.

V. DISCUSSIONS

Errors in use by elementary students in Yaoundé secondary schools are caused by an incomplete understanding and mastery of theoretical knowledge about the Chinese language. The same types of errors are also made by intermediate learners due to the lack of a solid foundation from prior learning. The following summarizes various kinds of errors.

A. Grammatical Errors in the Use of 'bù'

(a). 'bù' + Verb

This construction expresses the negation of developments and changes in behaviour. Chinese verbs can be divided into autonomous verbs and non-autonomous verbs. An autonomous verb is also called an action verb, where the subject acts directly and the action is visible. An autonomous verb can be either a discontinuous verb or a continuous verb. Reflexive verbs are also called modal verbs, and they do not refer to actual or invisible actions produced by the subject. Generally, 'bù' can only negate autonomous verbs, not reflexive verbs. In the survey results of this paper, the error rate of intermediate subjects was slightly higher than that of elementary subjects for the negative structures of J 'bù'/'méi' + verb + particle 'le', C 'méi' + verb + result-complement, D verb + 'bù' + structure-complement, and I 'bù'/'méi' + action verb. Students' acquisition of these structures thus does not improve as their proficiency in Chinese increases. Instead, a negative correlation is being shown.

(b). Verb + 'bù' + Result-Complement

The inclusion of 'bù' between a verb and a complement means that the action was taken before the result that should have followed but did not happen. This result may or may not have been expected. In the survey, the error rate of students for this structure was 5.47%.

“这个学校太广了，我转了几分钟就糊涂了，分（ ）清东南西北。”

For this type of construction, most subjects chose the negative word 'méi'. This is mainly due to the influence of the particle 'le' at the end of the sentence, which is viewed as a symbol of the past tense. The main reason for the error in this structure is the lack of teaching material on these rules, which resulted in students failing to learn this important information.

(c). 'bù' + Adjective

The adverb 'bù' only modifies adjectives that describe nature, not adjectives of state. In the above survey, the error rate of students for this structure was 16.22% .

我觉得这个橘子一点儿甜。

The error rate for students is about the same from one student to the other. This is because the Yaoundé secondary-school students were unfamiliar with these grammatical structures. They did not know that 'bu' can also be placed before an adjective to negate it, and teachers did not emphasize this structure when teaching 'bù' and 'méi'. Another reason is that students did not gain a good grasp of the structure of 'bù' and 'méi' in beginner classes, so they made similar errors in intermediate courses.

(d). 'bù' + Verb + 'le'

The particle 'le' in this structure does not represent past behaviour. 'bù' in this case negates a person's will or judgment. In the investigation reported in this paper, the error rate of students for this structure was 8.33% .

“他决定（ ）去旅游了。”

For this structure, most subjects chose the negative word 'méi'. This is mainly due to the influence of the particle 'le' at the end of the sentence, which is considered a symbol of the past tense. When elementary textbooks and teachers discuss the difference between 'bù' and 'méi', it is usually stated that 'méi' is used with the past tense, and 'bù' is mainly used with the present and future tenses, not the past tense. Therefore, the students chose 'méi' in the sentence they thought was marked with the past tense. However, the particle 'le' in these two sentences does not express the past. It is a modal word at the end of the sentence. When using these two words, elementary students do not think about them, they simply assume that they refer to past events, so they choose the wrong negative word. In fact, 'bù' and 'méi' can also be used to express each other's meanings in certain situations. For example, 'bù' can be used to describe the past in sentences expressing rules, habitual actions, or states, and 'méi' can be used to describe the future in fictitious sentences.

B. Grammatical Errors in the Use of 'méi'

(a). 'méi' + Attribute Verb + Result-Complement

In this construction, 'méi' negates the dynamic structure, indicating that the action taken by the subject has taken place, but the action has continued or stopped without achieving the speaker's original goal. In the investigation for this paper, the error rate of students for this structure was 3.50%

昨天的工作我还（ ）做完，因为我太忙了。

In the examination of the above structure, for French speakers, 'méi' + verb + result-complement is easily confused with the form verb + 'bù' + result-complement. Therefore, in the selection process, subjects become confused and do not know how to choose. Through interviews and observations during the test, it has been shown that most elementary-level learners have little understanding of complements. This lack of knowledge affects their choice, resulting in errors.

(b). 'méi' + Adjective

Using 'méi' to negate adjectives is very common to Chinese. Chinese adjectives can be divided into state adjectives and property adjectives. According to previous research results, 'méi' cannot modify state adjectives, but property adjectives can be negated by 'méi'. In the investigation for this paper, the error rate of students for this structure was 16.22%.

今天的讲座讲得_____有趣。

In this examination, students often chose the incorrect answer because the daily use of the collocation 'bù' + adjective is very common. Therefore, the memory of this fixed phrase affected their ability to make the correct choice.

(c). 'méi' + Verb/Adjective + 'guo'

This construction represents the completion of an event, and it has the form of the present perfect. When the words 'méi' and 'bù' are used in a sentence, it means that the action described is complete while the speaker is speaking. When the verb or adjective used as a predicate in a sentence is followed by the temporal auxiliary 'guo', the negative adverb must be 'méi'. The additional auxiliary word 'guo'(过), which relates to time, indicates that the action has taken place. This should be negated with 'méi'. In the investigation for this paper, the error rate of students for this structure was 11.40% .

妈妈以前从来（ ）吃过中国菜，这是第一次。

It can be seen here that the accuracy rate of the students improved as their Chinese proficiency increased. The reason for the deviation is that elementary students did not understand the word 'guo', so they needed to strengthen their grasp of it.

Yaoundé secondary-school students have certain difficulties in understanding these structures. They do not understand the 'bù' and 'méi' structure-type, their meaning in Chinese sentences, or their diverse expressiveness. For native speakers of French, the lack of a change in form of parts of speech hinders students from fully grasping Chinese. Therefore, measures should be taken to improve their education.

C. Causes of Errors

(a). *The Complexity of 'bù' and 'méi'*

The uses of 'bù' and 'méi' are complex and varied. In some situations, they are interchangeable and in others they are not. This results in the confusion in the use of 'bù' and 'méi' by secondary-school students in Yaoundé

The negative adverb 'bù' is used in the present tense and in the future tense, but it is also often used to express an attitude: the speaker's subjective or objective evaluation of the facts of an event. The negative adverb 'méi' refers to the negation of a previous event or a particular sequence of events and, in some cases, to a future event. The rules are complex and challenging for students studying in Yaoundé

For example, consider these two sentences:

(a) 他没写完作业。

(b) 他不写完作业。

When should the phrase '没完成' be used? When should '写不完' be used? '没写完' means 'a result', and '写不完' means 'maybe'. The complex rules of 'bù' and 'méi' can only be taught to Yaoundé students in a simplified way if they are to understand the rules of use.

(b). *Learning Strategies and Learner Factors*

Learning strategies are the plans and measures taken by learners in the process of language learning. Whether the learning strategy is scientific and reasonable may affect the frequency of students' mistakes in learning a second language. The formulation of learning strategies is limited by learners' subjective characteristics, learning attitude, learning experience, and second-language level.

Language-learning is relatively energy consuming, especially learning the many rules of Chinese. If the prominent characteristics are not obvious, sometimes students experience anxiety and negative emotions. However, if students maintain an optimistic attitude towards Chinese learning, they usually do not feel afraid of making mistakes while practicing, and they also accumulate practical experience. This will allow them to be able to constantly improve their Chinese knowledge-framework and their Chinese level.

Changing students' attitudes, mental disposition towards Chinese, psychological structures, absorption levels, and levels of understanding is important to their academic performance. However, some students produced far more errors than others because they did not fully grasp the 'bù' and 'méi' structures in the early stages. Although, at the elementary level, the students were exposed to relatively simple sentences, many of them still did not have a good grasp of the structural uses of 'bù' and 'méi' in the early stages, causing the use of these adverbs in complex sentences to become a challenge for them. In the third year of secondary school, many students do not understand this structure very well. This affects their performance in the fourth grade, where they are faced with even more complicated sentences, resulting in them making many mistakes.

(c). *Learning Environment*

One of the main problems facing the teaching of Chinese in Cameroon's high schools is the lack of classrooms and libraries. Generally, schools need to provide empty classrooms for classes before classes begin, a problem that creates psychological barriers among learners who believe that the government does not value Chinese as a foreign language. Cameroon's school libraries do not have Chinese textbooks, so learners cannot self-learn and must always rely on teachers, classroom lessons, and course manuals. Learners need to be exposed to a corpus that is different from what they learn in class to have better access to Chinese literature.

These issues are problems encountered by learners in the process of Chinese acquisition. Chinese is a new language in Cameroon, unlike German and Spanish, which have been taught for decades in high schools in Cameroon. Therefore, Chinese learners need a suitable environment to promote new language acquisition.

(d). *Classroom Teaching Factors*

A classroom is an essential place for students to learn Chinese, and most of the language-knowledge they gain comes from school. Cognitive psychology reveals that when a person receives new information, it is difficult for the brain to absorb a large amount of data, so the data is reduced to a portion. Therefore, teachers must consider whether the amount of knowledge and information taught is reasonable for teaching in the classroom. Too much information will overload students' memories, resulting in 'generalization'. Generalization occurs when there is confusion between different pieces of knowledge and the student's nervous system stagnates, resulting in students using their knowledge in a disorganized way. Therefore, teachers should not ignore the limitations on the amount of information a student can intake in class. Information should be effectively controlled and disseminated to suit the needs of the students. For example, in teaching 'bù' or 'méi', teaching tasks should be set separately to ensure that the time is sufficient for students to learn the material, and the difficulty level is not too high. In this way, teaching activities will become more efficient.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

By investigating and testing Yaoundé secondary-school students, it has been shown that on a whole, with the improvement of the Chinese level of the students, secondary-school students' 'bù' and 'méi' error rate followed a downward trend. This proves that they follow certain specific rules in using the Chinese adverbs 'bù' and 'méi'. In the initial stages of learning Chinese, learners do not understand the rules of Chinese negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi', which inevitably leads to a high error rate. As students improve their Chinese-language skills, learners become aware of some of their mistakes during the learning process, find the root causes, and correct them. Therefore, when elementary students learn the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi', there is no need to correct some of their mistakes: these will diminish as they improve their Chinese.

A. Pay Attention to the Comparison of Chinese and French Negative Words

Most secondary-school Chinese learners in Yaoundé, Cameroon, are native French speakers. They often translate Chinese sentences into their mother-tongue and then roughly translate these sentences according to the linguistic structure of their mother-tongue and the culture embedded within their mother-tongue. The use of negative structures in Chinese is different from the use of negative forms in the students' French or their mother-tongue. Moreover, there is no detailed introduction of the negative forms of 'bù' and 'méi' in Chinese in the textbooks used in Yaoundé secondary schools, and there is no comparison of the differences in the usage in Chinese and in French. As a result, the concepts and boundaries between the two are not evident in their minds. Therefore, the content of textbooks should be optimized, and teachers should update the class content and lesson plans and adjust the teaching content according to the specific situation of students' learning needs.

B. Emphasize the Limitations of the Different Kinds of Negative Structures

Based on the negative forms excerpted above and an analysis of the use of 'bù' and 'méi' by students at Cameroon Yaoundé secondary schools, the unrestricted use of negative structures is included in the leading textbook, and the restrictions on the use of different types of negative systems are listed one by one. Directly teaching the content to secondary-school students in Yaoundé, Cameroon, will enable them to understand the fixed usage of these negative constructions from the beginning of their Chinese education.

To use a conditional negative structure, the French negative words 'non' and 'ne' can be compared with the negative Chinese components 'bù' and 'méi' and the corresponding applicable conditions can be listed. The learner gains a general understanding of the use of 'bù' and 'méi', depending on practical and functional limitations.

C. Make Rational Use of Phrases in Teaching

The use of negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' in textbooks is mainly in the form of words or phrases that have the grammar portion related to 'bù' and 'méi' highlighted. The teacher explains the grammar points of the book to the learners according to the ideas in the textbook, with then focuses on practice. After the teacher gives their advice and requests for practice, learners form phrases in their memories. Learners tend to remember phrases seen or learned and then apply them to sentences or chapters.

On the one hand, complex phrases affect learners' way of thinking. They tend to form fixed combinations that are difficult to disassemble and lead to rigidity. On the other hand, block storage is an effective strategy for Chinese learners: the whole memory block is helpful to improve learners' awareness of Chinese. In current textbooks, the use of 'bù' and 'méi' should be emphasized and strengthened, with fixed words or sentences as grammatical points, to take full advantage of learners' memory blocks.

However, at the same time, it is necessary to explain the scope of use of these blocks. For example, for the word 'good', most textbooks present the generic form for learners to memorize. But, when learners are faced with the task of negating the adjective 'good' to become 'not good', the learner will use 'bù' to deny it unconditionally and will spend little time thinking about it. However, 'méi' can also be used to negate 'good', as in '我的手机没错'(My phone has no problems). In this case, Yaoundé students' choice of 'bù' is primarily influenced by spelling input rather than by the context of the sentence.

Therefore, although phrases can be used in teaching materials to improve learners' use of fixed collocations and reduce learners' memory load, it is still necessary to look at the conditions under which syntactic blocks are used, and once they are separated, the use of the main word and other words or morphemes must be taught. In this way, Yaoundé students will not subjectively assume that the use of the negative Chinese components 'bù' and 'méi' is limited to the content of the textbooks they are exposed to.

D. Create a Good Learning Environment

To provide a practical Chinese language learning and teaching environment, the Cameroonian government must build classrooms that meet national standards. Every secondary school should have a special Chinese classroom. This would allow the students to realize that the government takes the study of Chinese very seriously, and the students must also take it seriously.

The government should improve and increase Chinese learning resources for schools as much as possible so that students can be in contact with the corpus as much as possible to cultivate their sense of the Chinese language. The

more grammar books, magazines, and Chinese dictionaries learners have access to, the more their understanding of Chinese will become evident.

Yaoundé secondary schools can consider establishing a Chinese exchange meeting to encourage students of all grades to communicate. They can also invite Chinese native speakers to exchange their knowledge and experiences with students on how Chinese people use the negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi'. This would help them to improve their understanding of these negative adverbs.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper analyses the structurally incorrect use of negative adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' in modern Chinese by secondary-school students in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The results show that the secondary-school students in Yaoundé made no errors in the negative structure 'bù' + 'to be' and 'méi' + 'to have' and had a good grasp of the structure. For 'méi' + verb + result-complement, they often confused the use of verb + 'bù' + result-complement. In the structure of 'bù'/'méi' + verb + 'le', most students used 'méi' to negate because they misunderstood the particle 'le', and the error rate did not decrease with the improvement of the Chinese proficiency of learners. These negation structures are difficult for them to master. The error rate of students for the negative structures 'méi' + verb/adjective + 'guo', 'bù' + adjective + 'le', frequent or habitual action, and 'bù'/'méi' + verb showed a significant downward trend with the improvement in students' Chinese proficiency.

REFERENCES

- [1] Arnaud, A. (2007). Les relations spatiales dynamiques en chinois langue étrangère [Dynamic Spatial Relations in Chinese as a Foreign Language]. *Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales* (Vol. 1, pp. 43-45).
- [2] Bai, Q. (2000). 'bù', 'méiyǒu' jiàoxué hé yánjiū shàng de wùqū ['bù' and 'méi' Errors in Teaching and Research], *yǎnyán jiàoxué yǔ yánjiū*, 19(03), 21-25.
- [3] Chun, F. (1980). tán dòngcí qiánmiàn de fǒuding fùcí 'bù' hé 'méiyǒu' [On the negative adverbs "bù" and "méi" in Front of Verbs], *hànyǔ xuéxí*, 44(02)12-14.
- [4] Ding, C. M. (2009). *xiàndài hànyǔ yǔfǎ jiàochéng* [Modern Chinese Grammar Course], Peking University Press (Vol. 1, pp. 70-82).
- [5] Feng, L. P. & Sun H. J. (2010). dì èr yǎnyán xí dé shùnxù yánjiū fāngfǎ shùpíng [A Review of Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition Order]. *Yǎnyán jiàoxué yǔ yánjiū*, 10 (01), 9-16.
- [6] Guo, R. (1997). guòchéng hé fēi guòchéng—hànyǔ wèicí xíng chéngfēn de liǎng zhǒng wài zài shíjiān lèixíng [Process and Non-process: Two Types of External Time of Chinese Predicate Components]. *zhōngguó yǔwén*, 25(03), 162-175.
- [7] Li, X. H. (2004). Apprentissage du chinois par des adultes occidentaux au niveau débutant [Beginner-Level Western Adult Chinese Learning]. *Université Lumi ère Lyon* 2,45(02), 27-29.
- [8] Li, Y. (2004). "bù/méi +V" de xí dé qíngkuàng kǎochá [Investigation on the Acquisition of "bù / méi +V"]. *Hànyǔ xuéxí*, 33(01), 72-78.
- [9] Li, Y. & Xu X. Y. (2009). mǔyǔ wèi yīngyǔ zhě kǒuyǔ zhòng hùnyòng 'bù' hé 'méi' de gè'àn diàochá A Case study on the Mixed Use of 'bù' and 'méi' in the Spoken Language of Native English Speakers]. *Jiān dāxué xū zhào*, 54(02), 20-26.
- [10] Liu, T. G. (2018). cāng dōngcǐ dé shíjiān xìng kàn "bù" hé "méi" de qūbié [The Difference between 'bù' and 'méi' from the Temporality of Verbs]. *Dōngběi shīfàn dàxué* 14(01), 56-89.
- [11] Shen, J. H. (2019). hángguó liúxuéshēng pǐ dīng fùcí 'bù' hé 'méi' de xí dé piān wù yánjiū [A Study on the Acquisition Bias of the Negative Adverbs 'bù' and 'méi' in Korean International Students]. *Hā'ěrbīn shīfàn dàxué*, 26(1), 98-104.
- [12] Shi, Y. Z. (2011). *Kěndìng hé fǒuding de duìchèn yǔ bù duìchèn* [Symmetry and Asymmetry of Affirmation and Negation] (Updated Edition). Beijing Language and Culture University Press (Vol. 3, pp105-118).
- [13] Sun, D. J. (2016). duìwài hànyǔ yǔfǎ jí yǔfǎ jiàoxué yánjiū [Research on grammar and grammar teaching of Chinese as a foreign language]. *Běijīng Shāngwù yīn shūguǎn*, 46(03), 57-60.
- [14] Tong, H. J. (1986). wàiguó rén xué hànyǔ bīngǔ fēnxī [Analysis of Sentences for Foreigners Learning Chinese]. *Běijīng yǎnyán xuéyuàn chūbǎn shè*, 15(03), 76-80.
- [15] Xu, J. Z. (2004). fùcí 'bù' hé 'méi (yǒu)' tóng wèicí zǔhé suǒ shòu de tiáojiàn zhìyuē [Conditional Restrictions on the Combinations of the Same Predicate of Adverbs 'bù' and 'méi (Have)']. *hénán kējì dàxué xuébào* (Social Science Edition), 25(2), 71-75.
- [16] Zhang, W. X. (2018). běijīng yǎnyán dàxué hàn yǎnyán wénzì xué lùn cóng (yǔfǎ juǎn) [Beijing Language and Culture University Chinese Philology (Grammar Volume)]. *Běijīng yǎnyán wénhuà dàxué chūbǎn shè*, 60(4), 36-45.



Kenne Michel Olivier, is a PhD candidate at the Research Institute of Chinese Language, Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing, China. He received his first BA degree in bilingual studies (English and French) from the University of Yaounde I, the second one from the University of Maroua, Cameroon and his MA degree in TCSOL (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of other Languages) from Zhejiang University, China, he is pursuing his PhD in international Chinese education at Beijing Language and Culture University. He had thought Chinese in different secondary schools in Cameroon for several years and has worked as a translator and interpreter in many Chinese companies for a long time. His main areas of research embrace Chinese grammar, Chinese culture, Chinese global dissemination and the state of Chinese educational system in Africa, especially in Cameroon. He has written some articles that are currently in the publication process in scholarly journal such as Beijing Language and Culture University Press, Journal of Creative Education (SCIRP).