

# A STUDY ON THE ERRORS OF NEAR-REFERRING AND FAR-REFERRING DEMONSTRATIVE REFERENCE WORDS MADE BY CHINESE LEARNERS WITH ENGLISH AS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper first analyzes the errors made by Chinese learners with English as their first language (L1) in acquiring Chinese demonstrative reference words (DRW) through examples of errors in their output. Then, it employs a comparative analysis to explore the differences in the near-referring and far-referring functions of four types of DRWs in Chinese and English. Consequently, it concludes that the errors of these learners stem from interference from their L1. The four types of DRWs analyzed are: (1) DRW referring to Person, objects, and events; (2) DRW referring to qualities and states; (3) DRW referring to manners; (4) DRW referring to degrees. Finally, the paper proposes targeted teaching strategies based on the characteristics of each type of error.

**KEYWORDS:** Chinese acquisition; Demonstrative Reference Words; near-referring; far-referring; errors

## 1 Introduction

In the process of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, we have observed that Chinese learners with English as their L1 often make errors in their discourse output similar to the following examples:

(1) \* 有的商人总是要骗外国人，我好几次遭到这些不愉快的情况。

Yǒude shāngrén zǒngshì yào piàn wàiguó rén, wǒ hǎo jǐcì zāodào zhèxiē bú yúkuài de qíngkuàng.

(2) 这些事还需要改善。否则，对中国很多像我那样的外国人会留下不好的印象。(这样)

Zhèxiē shì hái xūyào gǎishàn. Fǒuzé, duì zhōngguó hěnduō xiàng wǒ nà yàng de wàiguó rén huì liúxià bù hǎo de yìnxiàng. (zhè yàng)

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(Some businessmen always try to deceive foreigners. I have encountered such unpleasant situations several times. These matters need improvement. Otherwise, many foreigners like me in China will have a bad impression.)

According to Carl Jameserror theory (James, C. 2001: 274), it is evident that these errors arise from confusion between near-referring and far-referring functions when acquiring DRW. The confusion between near-referring and far-referring DRW is a common error, accounting for a relatively high proportion (about one-third, according to our statistics) of DRW errors made by Chinese learners with English as their L1 (Zhao Chengxin 2009: 213). Why do these learners make such errors? Are these errors related to L1 transfer? Are there effective teaching strategies to prevent or minimize such errors? This paper aims to analyze the differences in near-referring and far-referring functions between Chinese and English DRW, investigate the relationship between these errors and L1 transfer, uncover the causes of the errors, and propose targeted teaching strategies for Chinese DRW.

Reference is a universal feature of human languages, representing a semantic relationship where the interpretation of one component in a discourse or context relies on another component as a reference point. The use of reference simplifies complex discourse and enhances cohesion. Demonstrative reference is a form of reference that indicates persons/objects through discourse by specifying their proximity in time or space. Near-referring words indicate objects close to the speaker in time or space, while far-referring words indicate objects distant from the speaker (Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. 1976: 57).

2. The Chinese Demonstrative Reference Word System

Modern Chinese DRWs can be broadly categorized into eight types based on their referents: DRWs referring to person, objects, events, locations, time, qualities/states, manners, and degrees. Please refer to the table below:

Table 1: The Chinese Demonstrative Reference Word System

| DRWs   | Near-referring DRWs                        | Far-referring DRWs                       |
|--------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| person | 这 zhè (this);<br>这 zhè (this)+Measure Word | 那 nà (that);<br>那 nà (that)+Measure Word |
| object | 这 zhè (this);<br>这 zhè (this)+Measure Word | 那 nà (that);<br>那 nà (that)+Measure Word |
| event  | 这 zhè (this);<br>这 zhè (this)+Measure Word | 那 nà (that);<br>那 nà (that)+Measure Word |

|                |                                                |                                   |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| location       | 这儿 zhèr (here); 这里 zhèlǐ (here)                | 那儿 nàer (there); 那里 nàlǐ (there)  |
| time           | 这会儿 zhèhuìr (right now); 这时 zhèshí (right now) | 那会儿 nàhuìr (then) 那时 nàshí (then) |
| quality, state | 这样 zhèyàng (such); 这么 zhème (such)             | 那样 nàyàng (such); 那么 nàme (such)  |
| method         | 这样 zhèyàng (so); 这么 zhème (so)                 | 那样 nàyàng (so); 那么 nàme (so)      |
| degree         | 这么 zhème (so); 这样 zhèyàng (so)                 | 那么 nàme (so); 那样 nàyàng (so)      |

Due to space limitations, this paper cannot comprehensively explore all errors in the Chinese DRW system. Therefore, we will focus on examining the errors made by L1 English speakers in acquiring the near-referring and far-referring functions of the following four types of DRWs: (1) DRWs referring to person, objects, and events (categorized together due to their nominal features); (2) DRWs referring to qualities and states; (3) DRWs referring to manners; (4) DRWs referring to degrees.

Semantically, when referring to person, objects, and events, Chinese “这 (zhè, this)” and “这些 (zhèxiē, these)” correspond to English “this” and “these,” while “那 (nà, that)” and “那些 (nàxiē, those)” correspond to English “that” and “those.” Regarding DRWs referring to qualities, manners, and degrees in Chinese, such as “这么 (zhème, so/so),” “那么 (nàme, so/such),” “这样 (zhèyàng, so/such),” and “那样 (nàyàng, so/such),” their English counterparts are “such,” “so,” and “as” (referred to as comparative reference words by Halliday and Hasan )(Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. Cohesion in English: 76). For the convenience of comparison with Chinese DRWs, this paper will temporarily refer to them as DRWs.

3 Analysis of Errors in Acquiring Chinese DRWs and Discussion of Causes

3.1 Analysis of Errors and Causes in DRWs Referring to Persons, Objects, and Events

3.1.1 Error Analysis

The following are examples of errors collected from L1 English speakers using DRWs to refer to persons, objects, and events:

(2) \* .....不久以后，我就忘了我寂寞的感觉，跟这个友好的女孩谈了半天。

Bùjiǔ yǐhòu, wǒ jiù wàngle wǒ jìmò de gǎnjué, gēn zhège yǒuhǎo de nǚhái tánle bàntiān.

那天是十一多年以前，不过我和那个女孩现在是很好的朋友。

Nèitiān shì shíyī duō nián yǐqián, búguò wǒ hé nàge nǚhái xiànzài shì hěn hǎo de péngyou.

认识她那么长时间，她已成了我的知己，她很理解我的心情，什么都可以跟她说。（那个）

Rènshi tā nàme cháng shíjiān, tā yǐ chéngle wǒ de zhījǐ, tā hěn lǐjiě wǒ de xīn-qíng, shénme dōu kěyǐ gēn tā shuō. (nàge)

(...Soon after, I forgot my feeling of loneliness and talked with that friendly girl for a long time. That was over eleven years ago, but now the girl and I are good friends. Having known her for so long, she has become my confidante. She understands my feelings, and I can tell her anything. )

(3)\* 管理员说她们没办法给我换锁，要我自己去找这样的公司。

Guǎnlǐyuán shuō tāmen méi bànfǎ gěi wǒ huànsuǒ, yào wǒ zìjǐ qù zhǎo zhèyàng de gōngsī.

我只能去找了一个人回到公寓，保安不光没尽力帮助我解决问题，

Wǒ zhǐnéng qù zhǎole yíge rén huídào gōngyù, bǎoān bù guāng méi jìnli bāngnǚ zhù wǒ jiějué wèn tí,

反而在检查过那个开锁的人的身份证拖了很久才让我们开始换锁。但这个人换不了。（那个）

fǎnr zài jiǎnchá guò nàge kāisuǒ de rén de shēnfènzhèng tuōle hěn jiǔ cái ràng wǒmen kāishǐ huàn suǒ. Dàn zhège rén huàn bù liǎo. (nàge)

(The administrator said they couldn't change the lock for me and told me to find such a company myself. I had to find someone and return to the apartment. The security guard not only didn't help me but also delayed us for a long time after checking the ID of that locksmith. However, that Person couldn't change the lock. )

In example (2), the author recounts a story from “over eleven years ago” and uses “zhège” to refer to the “friendly girl.” However, in the second paragraph, when shifting from the past to the present, the author uses “nàge” again, causing confusion for the reader. Therefore, “zhège” in the first sentence should be changed to “nàge” for a more natural flow. Similarly, in example (3), when referring to the “locksmith,” using “nàge” in the upper sentence and “zhège” in the lower sentence creates ambiguity for the reader. Changing “zhège” to “nàge” would be preferable. These two errors involve referring to “person”.

(4)\* 教学第一天，我很紧张也很兴奋。教课教一半时后，墙上的呼叫器开始叫。

Jiàoxué dìyī tiān, wǒ hěn jǐnzhāng yě hěn xīngfèn. Jiāokè jiào yībàn shí hòu, qiáng shàng de hūjiào qì kāishǐ jiào.

我不知道是什么东西就来看看去。学生们都笑起来我的糊涂像，

Wǒ bù zhīdào shì shénme dōngxi jiù kàn lái kàn qù. Xuésheng men dōu xiào qīlái  
wǒ de hútuxiàng,

他们跟我讲是学校办公室在找我。

tāmen gēn wǒ jiǎng shì xuéxiào bàngōngshì zài zhǎo wǒ.

我就按这个按钮讲回来，“喂？喂？这是叶老师。”（那个）

Wǒ jiù àn zhège ànniǔ jiǎng huí lái, “Wéi? Wéi? Zhè shì Yè lǎoshī.” (nàge)

(On my first day of teaching, I was both nervous and excited. Halfway through the lesson, the call button on the wall started ringing. Not knowing what it was, I looked around. The students laughed at my confusion, and they told me it was the school office calling for me. I pressed that button and said, “Hello? Hello? This is Teacher Ye.”)

(5)\* 六年以前我第一次来中国。当飞机的门一打开，我就感到一种特别香味。

Liù nián yǐqián wǒ dìyī cì lái Zhōngguó. Dāng fēijī de mén yī dǎkāi, wǒ jiù gǎndào  
yīzhǒng tèbié xiāngwèi.

这可能跟菜料有关系。那个时我不知道中国菜的味道，但是那个香味我真的很喜欢。（那）

Zhè kěnéng gēn cài liào yǒu guānxi. Nàge shí wǒ bù zhīdào Zhōngguó cài de  
wèidào, dànshi nàge xiāngwèi wǒ zhēn de hěn xǐhuan. (Nà)

(Six years ago, I came to China for the first time. When the airplane door opened, I sensed a special aroma, possibly related to the ingredients. At that time, I didn't know the taste of Chinese food, but I really liked that aroma.)

In example (4), the author describes an incident that occurred in the classroom during their first teaching experience. Since the event happened in the past and the author is narrating from a distance in both time and space, using the far-referring form “nàge” to refer to the “call button on the wall” would be more natural. In example (5), discussing an experience at a Chinese airport “six years ago,” both temporally and spatially distant from the author's current position, and with the subsequent use of “that,” “这zhè” should be changed to “那nà”. These two errors involve DRWs referring to “object”.

(6)\* 我看，美国政府和人民正在分裂，那跟社会改革有关，也反映在我们的消费观念。（这）

Wǒ kàn, měiguó zhèngfǔ hé rénmin zhèngzài fēnliè, nà gēn shèhuì gǎigé yǒu-  
guān, yě fǎnyìng zài wǒmen de xiāofèi guānniàn. (zhè)

(In my opinion, the U.S. government and people are becoming divided, which is related to social reforms and also reflected in our consumer attitudes.)

In this example, the speaker, an American, discusses a social phenomenon in their own country. From both a temporal and spatial perspective, near-referring should be used. Additionally, the underlined part serves as the topic of the following clause. Therefore, changing “那nà” to “这zhè” aligns better with Chinese language intuition. This is an error involving DRWs referring to an “event”.

How do these errors arise? Are they related to interference from the L1? The following section answers these questions through a comparative analysis of Chinese and English DRWs.

3.1.2 Causes of Errors

A brief study of the Chinese DRW system reveals that Modern Chinese (Mandarin, excluding certain local dialects) has a binary system of DRWs (Lü Shuxiang 1990), meaning each type of DRWs has both near-referring and far-referring forms that are symmetrically distributed. Objectively, when referring to persons, objects, and events, English DRWs, like Chinese, also have near-referring and far-referring forms. Semantically, Chinese “这zhè” and “这些 zhèxiē” correspond to English “this” and “these”, while “那nà” and “那些 nàxiē” correspond to English “that” and “those.” However, differences exist in their referring functions, not in terms of presence or absence but in a skewed relationship, as described by Zhao Yuanren (Zhao Yuanren 1980: 24).

To investigate the English referring patterns corresponding to Chinese “这zhè” and “那nà”, we analyzed the translation pairs in the Chinese short story “Subtracting Ten Years” (by Chen Rong) and its corresponding English translation (by Gladys Yang). To examine the Chinese referring patterns corresponding to English “that” and “this,” we analyzed the translations of “that” and “this” in the first three chapters of the English novel *The Bridges of Madison County* (by Waller, R.J., translated by Mei Jia). The results are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Corresponding translation of this/that and “这zhè”/“那nà”

| Works                        | DRW      | Times of using | Corresponding translation          |
|------------------------------|----------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Subtracting Ten Years</i> | 这<br>zhè | 72             | 14 times of “that”                 |
|                              |          |                | 21 times of “this”                 |
|                              |          |                | 37 times of no or free translation |
|                              | 那<br>nà  | 13             | 0 times of “this”                  |
|                              |          |                | 2 times of “that”                  |
|                              |          |                | 11 times of no or free translation |

|                                                                 |      |    |                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|-----------------------------------------|
| The Bridges of<br>Madison County<br>(The first 3 chap-<br>ters) | this | 35 | 0 times of “那nà”                        |
|                                                                 |      |    | 18 times of “这zhè”                      |
|                                                                 |      |    | 17 times of no or free transla-<br>tion |
|                                                                 | that | 73 | 47 times of “这zhè”                      |
|                                                                 |      |    | 10 times of “那nà”                       |
|                                                                 |      |    | 16 times of no or free transla-<br>tion |

Comparing the translations of the aforementioned two works reveals an interesting phenomenon: regarding the use of near-referring and far-referring DRWs, a skewed relationship exists between Chinese and English. In Chinese, near-referring DRWs of the “这zhè” type are used more frequently than far-referring DRWs of the “那nà” type; in English, far-referring DRWs of the “that” type are used more frequently than near-referring DRWs of the “this” type. In other words, in Chinese, near-referring DRWs of the “这zhè” type dominate and are considered unmarked forms; in English, far-referring DRWs of the “that” type dominate and are considered unmarked forms. Consequently, contexts in English that use far-referring “that” type DRWs may require near-referring “这zhè” type DRWs in corresponding Chinese translation, and vice versa. What causes this phenomenon? Many scholars, such as Xu Yulong (Xu Yulong 1989) and Qian Yuan (Qian Yuan 1983), have addressed and studied this issue. The following is a summary based on previous research:

First, in Chinese, “这zhè” is often used to refer to persons, objects, and events mentioned earlier, while in English, “that” is more commonly used. Consider the following examples of English-Chinese translation:

- (7) “...十年，十年哪，能干多少事情？白白地浪费了，只留下一头白发，一身疾病。这个损失谁来补偿？.....”  
“...shínián, shínián na, nénggàn duōshǎo shìqíng? báibái de làngfèi le, zhǐ liúxià yītóu báifà, yìshēn jíbìng. zhège sǔnshī shuí lái bǔcháng?.....”  
“...Ten years, ten years! Think of all the things I could have done in that time. Ten wasted years, leaving me white-haired and decrepit. Who’s to make good that loss?...”  
(Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

- (8) His long absences—two or three months sometimes—were hard on the marriage. He knew that. (Robert James Waller *The Bridges of Madison County*)  
他长期外出——有时一去两三个月——使婚姻生活很艰难，这点他知道。

Tā chángqī wàichū——yǒushí yī qù liǎngsāngè yuè——shǐ hūnyīn shēnghuó hěn jiānnán, zhè diǎn tā zhīdào.

Second, in Chinese, “这zhè” is generally used to refer to what someone else has just said, while in the same context, English typically uses “that.” For example:

(9) 有人说：“别瞎想了，到了这个年纪，混吧。”有人说：“结了婚，就踏实了。”

Yǒu rén shuō: “bié xiāxiǎng le, dào le zhège niánjì, hùn ba.” Yǒu rén shuō: “jié le hūn, jiù tāshì le.”

而这，都是她最不愿意的……

ér zhè, dōu shì tā zuì bù yuàn yì de……

Someone advised her, “Don’t be senseless. At your age, just muddle along.” Someone else said, “Once you’re married, you’ll feel settled.”

But that was the last thing she wanted... (Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

(10) “正因为你缺乏领导才能，所以才把你选到领导岗位上。”

“Zhèng yīnwèi nǐ quēfá lǐngdǎo cáinéng, suǒyǐ cái bǎ nǐ xuǎndào lǐngdǎo gǎng-wèi shàng.”

张明明始而愕然：这是什么怪话？

zhāng míngmíng shǐ ér èrán: zhè shì shénme guài huà ?

“It’s because you’re not leadership material that you’ve been chosen for a leading post.”

Zhang Mingming was puzzled. What does that mean, he wondered. (Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

(11) “Just vegetables would be fine for me. I don’t eat meat. Haven’t for years. No big deal, I just feel better that way.”

Francesca smiled again. “Around here that point of view would not be popular...” (Robert James Waller *The Bridges of Madison County*)

“素菜就好。我不吃肉，已多年了。不是什么大不了的事，就是觉得那样更舒服。”

“Sùcài jiù hǎo. Wǒ bù chīròu, yǐ duōnián le. Bú shì shénme dàbùliǎo de shì, jiùshì juéde nà yàng gèng shūfu.”

弗郎西丝卡又笑了。“此地这个观点可不受欢迎……”

Fú láng xī sī kǎ yòu xiào le. “Cǐ dì zhège guāndiǎn kě bú shòu huānyíng...”

Third, in Chinese, when the speaker refers to a previous statement, “这zhè” is often used because Chinese is a topic-prominent language and frequently uses “这zhè” to integrate the previous statement as the topic of the following narrations. In the same context, English typically uses “that.” Consider the following examples of English-Chinese translation:

(12) 难道，二十九岁的姑娘中午不去食堂，自己卧两个鸡蛋就是心理变态？

Nán dào, èr shí jiǔ suì de gū niang zhōng wǔ bù qù shí táng, zì jǐ wò liǎng gè jī dàn jiù shì xīn lǐ biàn tài?

这是哪本心理学上的论点？

Zhè shì nǎ běn xīn lǐ xué shàng de lùn diǎn?

If a girl of twenty-nine poached herself two eggs instead of having lunch in the canteen, did that make her neurotic? What theory of psychology was that? (Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

(13) Coming to know Francesca Johnson and Robert Kincaid as I have through my research, I found the boundaries of such relationships can be extended farther than I previously thought. Perhaps you will have the same experience in reading this story.

That will not be easy. (Robert James Waller *The Bridges of Madison County*)

通过我的调查研究结识了弗朗西丝卡、约翰逊和罗伯特·金凯之后，我发现人际关系的界限还可以比我原以为的更加拓展。

Tōngguò wǒ de diàochá yánjiū jiéshí le fúlángxīsikǎ, yuēhànxiùn hé luóbótè jīnkǎi zhīhòu, wǒ fāxiàn rénji guānxì de jièxiàn hái kěyǐ bǐ wǒ yuán yǐwéi de gèngjiā tuòzhǎn。

也许你在读这本书的过程中也会有同样的体验。可这不是一件容易的事。

Yěxǔ nǐ zài dú zhèběn shū de guòchéng zhōng yě huì yǒu tóngyàng de tīyàn. Kě zhè bùshì yǐjiàn róngyì de shì。

Fourth, in Chinese, the choice between “这” and “那nà” when referring to temporal or spatial distance is often influenced by psychological factors, whereas in English, the use of “this” and “that” is less affected by psychological factors and more closely aligned with actual temporal or spatial distance. For example:

(14) 全是这破研究会闹腾的！

Quán shì zhè pò yánjiūhuì nàoteng de!

It was all the fault of those damn researchers. (Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

(15) “可太好了！这个研究会真是知人心啊！……”

“kě tài hǎo le! zhège yánjiū huì zhēnshì zhī rénxīn a! ……”

“That’s fine then! Those researchers are really understanding…” (Chen Rong, *Subtracting Ten Years*)

In the above two examples, the research findings of the research institute evoke mixed feelings in the characters of the story. The characters are highly concerned

with the research institute and psychologically perceive it as close, leading them to consistently use the near-referring form “这zhè” to refer to it. However, the English translation uses the far-referring form “those” (plural form of “that”) because the research institute and its researchers are physically distant from the characters in the story. Consider another example of English-Chinese translation:

(16) “Turn right at the next corner,” she said. That gave her an excuse to glance at the profile of Robert Kincaid. (Robert James Waller *The Bridges of Madison County*)

“下一个街角向右转，”她说。这给她一个借口可以看一眼罗伯特·金凯的侧影。

“Xià yíge jiējǎo xiàng yòu zhuǎn,” tā shuō. Zhè gěi tā yíge jièkǒu kěyǐ kàn yíyǎn Luóbótè· Jīnkǎi de cèyǐng.

The female protagonist, meeting the male protagonist for the first time, wants to learn more about him (including his appearance) but feels shy. Therefore, she seeks an excuse to look at him again. In Chinese, the natural use of the near-referring “这zhè” creates a sense of immersion for the reader, while English uses the unmarked far-referring form “that.”

From the above analysis, it is evident that when referring to persons, objects, and events, a skewed relationship exists between Chinese and English in terms of near-referring and far-referring forms. For L1 English speakers acquiring these functions in Chinese, the difficulty is significant. Taking “that” as an example, the contexts in English that use “that” require Chinese learners to consider two options in Chinese (“这zhè” or “那nà”). According to Clifford Prator’s hierarchy of difficulty, this situation falls under the fourth difficulty level (level four: reinterpretation) (Ellis, R. 1999: 306- 307). Therefore, it can be concluded that the confusion between near-referring and far-referring DRWs when referring to persons, object, and event by L1 English speakers acquiring Chinese is caused by interference from their L1.

### 3.2 Analysis of Errors and Causes in DRWs Referring to Qualities or States

#### 3.2.1 Error Analysis

We have collected some errors made by L1 English speakers when using DRWs to refer to qualities or states. For example:

(17) \*有的商人总是要骗外国人，我好几次遭到这些不愉快的情况。

Yǒude shāngrén zǒngshì yào piàn wàiguórén, wǒ hǎo jǐcì zāodào zhèxiē bú yúkuài de qíngkuàng.

这些事还需要改善。否则，对中国很多像我那样的外国人会留下不好的印象。（这样）

Zhèxiē shì hái xūyào gǎishàn. Fǒuzé, duì zhōngguó hěnduō xiàng wǒ nàyàng de wàiguórén huì liúxià bù hǎo de yìnxìàng. (zhèyàng)

(Some businessmen always try to deceive foreigners. I have encountered such unpleasant situations several times. These matters need improvement. Otherwise, many foreigners like me in China will have a bad impression.)

In this example, the referent of “那样nàyàng” is “foreigners like me...” which is temporally near, making the use of “那样nàyàng” incorrect. It should be changed to “这样zhèyàng”.

(18) \* 我第一次来中国的时候，很多事情让我感到奇怪，其中有那样的情况：

Wǒ dìyī cì lái Zhōngguó de shíhòu, hěnduō shìqíng ràng wǒ gǎndào qíguài, qízhōng yǒu nàyàng de qíngkuàng:

我一起来中国的朋友是中国人，那次回家前一年半没有看见自己的父母。

Wǒ yìqǐ lái Zhōngguó de péngyou shì Zhōngguó rén, nà cì huí jiā qián yì nián bàn méiyǒu kànjiàn zìjǐ de fùmǔ.

当我们到了他的家时，他妈妈在院子里打麻将，她看到了儿子回来了，

Dāng wǒmen dào le tā de jiā shí, tā māma zài yuànzi lǐ dǎ májiàng, tā kàn dào le érzi huí lái le,

(19) 不但没有拥抱他，连没有站起来，只说了，他们换了门锁，给了儿子新的钥匙。(这样)

búdàn méiyǒu yǒngbào tā, lián méiyǒu zhàn qǐ lai, zhǐ shuō le, tāmen huàn le mén suǒ, gěi le érzi xīn de yàoshi. (zhèyàng)

(When I first came to China, many things surprised me, including such a situation: A friend who came with me to China is Chinese and hadn't seen his parents for a year and a half before going home. When we arrived at his home, his mother was playing mahjong in the yard. She saw her son return but not only did she not embrace him, she didn't even stand up. She just said they had changed the lock and gave her son the new key. )

In this example, “那样的情况nàyàngdeqíngkuàng” is cataphoric, indicating the following text will explain it. In Chinese, the near-referring form is typically used in such cases, so “这样zhèyàng” should be used here.

How do these errors arise? Are they related to interference from the learnersL1? The following section answers these questions through a comparative analysis of Chinese and English DRWs.

### 3.2.2 Causes of Error Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese DRW system is binary, meaning each type of DRW has both near-referring and far-referring forms (Lü Shuxiang 1990). In con-

trast, English DRWs can be categorized into two types: some are binary, like those referring to person, object, and event, while others have only one form without near-far distinction, such as those referring to qualities/states, manners, and degrees. Therefore, when referring to qualities, manners, and degrees, significant differences exist between English and Chinese DRWs: Chinese requires the selection of near-referring or far-referring forms based on the actual temporal and spatial distance at the time of speaking, while English has only one form without near-far distinction. This difference is clearly reflected in English-Chinese translation literature. Consider the following examples:

(19) “I do hope it’ll make me grow large again, for really I’m quite tired of being such a tiny little thing.” (Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*)

“我真的希望它能让我再长大，我成了这么个小东西，真的很腻了！”

Wǒ zhēnde xīwàng tā néng ràng wǒ zài zhǎngdà, wǒ chéng le zhème gè xiǎo dōngxi, zhēnde hěn nì le!

(20) I never heard such stories as he tells.

我从没听过他讲的那样的故事。

Wǒ cóng méi tīngguò tā jiǎng de nàyàng de gùshi.

In the above two examples, “such” refers to qualities and has no near-far distinction in English. When translated into Chinese, the appropriate near-referring or far-referring form must be selected based on the context, resulting in translations such as “这么zhème” and “那样nàyàng”.

In summary, English DRWs referring to qualities/states have no near-far distinction, while Chinese DRWs do. “Such” and “so” in English correspond to Chinese words like “这样zhèyàng” “这么zhème”, “那样nàyàng” and “那么nàme”. Based on Prator’s hierarchy of difficulty, we classify the acquisition of Chinese quality/state-referring DRWs by L1 English speakers as difficulty level six (see 3.1.2). Based on this, we can conclude that the errors made by L1 English speakers when acquiring Chinese DRWs referring to qualities and manners are caused by interference from their L1.

### 3.3 Analysis of Errors and Causes in DRWs Referring to Manners

#### 3.3.1 Error Analysis

The following are some examples of errors made by L1 English speakers when using DRWs to refer to manners:

(21) \*关于我以前的男朋友，他可能已经好多了。

“Guānyú wǒ yǐqián de nán péngyou, tā kěnéng yǐjīng hǎo duō le.

我很久没和他联系了，因为怕他还会怀念我。

Wǒ hēnjiǔ méi hé tā liánxì le, yīnwèi pà tā hái huì huáiniàn wǒ.

其实我也不想这么做。可是我自己也无可奈何，真对不起他。（那么）

Qíshí wǒ yě bù xiǎng zhème zuò. Kěshì wǒ zìjǐ yě wú kě nàihé, zhēn duìbuqǐ tā.”

(Regarding my previous boyfriend, he might be doing much better now. I haven't contacted him for a long time because I'm afraid he still misses me. Actually, I would not want to do that. But I'm helpless and truly sorry to him.)

(22)\* 第一天到了宿舍……我一边看一边哭，我还对自己说：“我想回家”……

Dìyī tiān dào le sùshè …… wǒ yībiān kàn yībiān kū, wǒ hái duì zìjǐ shuō: wǒ xiǎng huíjiā” ……

最后我做了一个决定，那就是回家。我打电话告诉我姐姐我要回家了。

Zuìhòu wǒ zuò le yíge juéding, nà jiùshì huíjiā. Wǒ dǎ diànhuà gào sù wǒ jiějie wǒ yào huíjiā le.

姐姐装作很可怜我的样子：“你不是想回家吗？回去吧！反正在这儿你只会哭啊！”

Jiějie zhuāngzuò hěn kělián wǒ de yàngzi: “Nǐ búshì xiǎng huíjiā ma? huíqù ba! Fǎnzhèng zài zhèr nǐ zhǐhuì kū a!”

姐姐的话刺激了我，我决定不回家了。

Jiějie de huà cìjī le wǒ, wǒ juéding bù huíjiā le.

从此虽然我很想家，但我一点也不提出“要回家”这三个字。

Cóngcǐ suīrán wǒ hěn xiǎngjiā, dàn wǒ yīdiǎn yě bù tíchū “yào huí jiā” zhè sāngè zì.

其实这件事对我来说也有他的好处，如果当时我就这样回家了，我会有来到北京学习的机会呢。（那样）

Qíshí zhèjiàn shì duì wǒ lái shuō yě yǒu tāde hǎochu, rúguǒ dāngshí wǒ jiù zhèyàng huíjiā le, wǒ zěnmé huì yǒu láidào běijīng xuéxí de jīhuì ne.

(On the first day in the dormitory... I cried while looking around. I told myself, “I want to go home”... Finally, I made a decision to go home. I called my elder sister and told her I was going home. My sister pretended to feel sorry for me: “Don't you want to go home? Go ahead! You'll only cry here anyway!” Her words stimulated me, and I decided not to go home.

Since then, although I miss home, I never mention the three words “I want to go home.” Actually, this incident has its benefits for me. If I had gone home at that time, how could I have had the opportunity to study in Beijing?)

In the above text, in example (21), “这么做zhème zuò” refers to the event of breaking up with the previous boyfriend, which occurred a long time ago. From the narrative perspective, it is a past event, so using the far-referring form “那么做nàme zuò” would be more appropriate. In example (22), in the clause “如果当时我就这样

回家了” (If I had gone home at that time), the temporal word “当时” (at that time) limits the verb “回家” (go home), indicating that “going home” was a past action. Therefore, when discussing a past event from the present narrative perspective, using the far-referring form “那样nàyàng” instead of “这样zhèyàng” feels more natural. Another related explanation is that “going home” was an event that the speaker wanted to do but did not actually happen. For such envisioned, unrealized, or yet-to-happen events, Chinese often uses the far-referring form.

These are two examples of errors in referring to manners. How do these errors arise? Are they related to the learners L1? The following section answers these questions through a comparative analysis of Chinese and English DRW.

### 3.3.2 Causes of Error Analysis

As mentioned earlier (see section 3.2.2), the Chinese DRW system is binary, with both near-referring and far-referring forms when referring to manners. In contrast, English DRWs have only one form without near-far distinction when referring to manners. Therefore, significant differences exist between English and Chinese DRWs when referring to manners: Chinese requires the selection of near-referring or far-referring forms based on the actual temporal and spatial distance at the time of speaking, while English has only one form without near-far distinction. This difference is clearly reflected in English-Chinese translation literature. Consider the following examples:

(23) “I never was so ordered about before, in all my life, never!” (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

“我一辈子从来没有被人家这样支来使去的，从来没有过。”

Wǒ yī bèizi cónglái méiyǒu bèi rénjiā zhèyàng zhī lái shǐ qù de, cónglái méiyǒu guò.

(24) Martha's got a job, or so she tells me.

玛莎已找到了一份工作，至少她是那样告诉我的。

Mǎ shā yǐ zhǎo dào le yī fèn gōng zuò, zhì shǎo tā shì nàyàng gào sù wǒ de.

(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Commercial Press, 1998: 1451)

In the above two examples, “so” in English refers to manners and has no near-far distinction. When translated into Chinese, the appropriate near-referring or far-referring form must be selected based on the context, resulting in translation “so” as “这样zhèyàng” and “那样nàyàng”.

From the above analysis, it is evident that significant differences exist between Chinese and English DRWs when referring to manners. For L1 English speakers acquiring Chinese DRWs referring to manners, the difficulty is significant because

their L1 has only one form (without near-far distinction), while Chinese requires considering two options—near-referring or far-referring. According to Prator's hierarchy of difficulty (see 3.1.2), this situation falls under difficulty level six (the highest level). Therefore, it can be concluded that the confusion between near-referring and far-referring DRWs when referring to manners by L1 English speakers acquiring Chinese is caused by interference from their L1.

### 3.4 Analysis of Errors and Causes in DRWs Referring to Degrees

#### 3.4.1 Error Analysis

The following are some examples of errors made by Chinese learners with English as their L1 when using demonstrative reference terms to indicate degrees.

(25) \* 人越来越多，科学越来越发展，人靠科学、现代知识，生活不是靠自然，所以人与人之间的关系没有以前的这么亲密。（那么）

Rén yuèlái yuèduō, kēxué yuèlái yuè fāzhǎn, rén kào kēxué, xiàndài zhīshí, shēngshuó bù shì kào zìrán, suǒyǐ rén yǔ rén zhījiān de guānxì méiyǒu yǐqián de zhème qīnmì.

As the population grows and science advances, people rely on science and modern knowledge for living rather than on nature. Therefore, the relationships between people are not as intimate as they used to be.

(26) \* 现在，广州的人口多极了。以前广州没有那么多外国人，可是，现在，每一个地方你会看到很多。（这么）

Xiànzài, Guǎngzhōu de rénǎi duō jíle. Yǐqián Guǎngzhōu méiyǒu nàme duō wàiguó rén, kěshì, xiànzài, měi yīgè dìfāng nǐ huì kàn dào hěnduō. (zhème)

Nowadays, Guangzhou has an extremely large population. In the past, there weren't so many foreigners in Guangzhou, but now, you can see many everywhere.

(27) \* 上个学期为了锻炼身体，我在中大北门学习太极拳。

Shànggè xuéqī wèile duànliàn shēntǐ, wǒ zài zhōngdà běimén xuéxí tàijíquán.

在那里我认识了一个特别可爱又非常聪明的中国女孩.....

Zài nàlǐ wǒ rènshí le yīgè tèbié kěài yòu fēicháng cōngmíng de zhōngguó nǚhái.....

她是初中的语文教师，和我一样的非常喜欢中国文化，而且对它很了解。

Tā shì chūzhōng de yǔwén jiàoshī, hé wǒ yīyàng de fēicháng xǐhuān zhōngguó wénhuà, érqǐ duì tā hěn liǎojiě.

我觉得两个那样喜欢汉学的人能够通过中国功夫认识真是缘分.....（这样）

Wǒ juédé liǎng gè nàyàng xǐhuān hàn xué de rén néng gòu tōngguò zhōngguó gōngfú rènshí zhēn shì yuánfèn..... (zhèyàng)

(Last semester, to exercise, I learned Taijiquan at the North Gate of Zhongshan University. There, I met a particularly lovely and very intelligent Chinese girl... She is a junior high school Chinese teacher who, like me, deeply loves Chinese culture and has a good understanding of it. I think it's truly fateful that two people who love Sinology so much could meet through Chinese martial arts...)

In Example (25), it is stated that “the relationships between persons are not as intimate as they used to be,” where the semantic orientation of “intimate” points to “in the past,” indicating a far-referring reference. Therefore, the far-referring form “那么 nàme” should be used. Conversely, in Example (26), it is said that “now Guangzhou has a large population,” where the semantic orientation of “large” points to “now,” indicating a near-referring reference. Thus, the near-referring form “这么 zhème” should be used. In Example (27), it refers to two persons who love Sinology, with “I” being one of them, indicating a near-referring reference. Therefore, the near-referring form “这样 zhèyàng” should be used.

#### 3.4.2 Analysis of Error Causes

As previously mentioned (see Section 3.2.2), the demonstrative reference system in modern Chinese is binary, with two sets of forms for indicating degrees: near-referring and far-referring. In contrast, English demonstrative reference terms for indicating degrees have only one form, without a distinction between near-referring and far-referring. Therefore, there is a significant difference between English and Chinese demonstrative reference terms when indicating degrees: in Chinese, the choice between near-referring and far-referring forms depends on the actual temporal and spatial distance at the time of speaking, whereas in English, there is only one form without such a distinction. This difference can be clearly reflected in English-to-Chinese translations. Consider the following examples:

(28) Then he began to pity the great fish that he had hooked. He is wonderful and strange and who knows how old he is, he thought. Never had I had such a strong fish nor one who acted so strangely. (Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*)

跟着他怜悯起这条被他钓住的大鱼来了。

Gēnzhe tā liánmǐn qǐ zhètiáo bèi tā diàozhù de dà yú lái le.

它真出色，真奇特，而且有谁知道它年龄多大呢，他想。

Tā zhēn chūsè, zhēn qí tè, érqiě yǒu shéi zhīdào tā niánlíng duō dà ne, tā xiǎng.

我从没钓过这样强大的鱼，也没见过行动这样奇特的鱼

Wǒ cóng méi diàoguò zhèyàng qiángdà de yú, yě méi jiànguò xíngdòng zhèyàng qí tè de yú.

The smell of the casserole that was always so appetizing filled her with a sudden nausea. (Mary Drake, *The Prison*, quoted from *The World of English*, 2004, Issue 5)

平日总是那么令人垂涎的砂锅菜的味道此刻却使她突感一阵恶心。

Píngrì zǒngshì nàme lìngrén chuíxián de shāguōcài de wèidào cǐkè què shǐtā tūgǎn yīzhèn ǎxīn.

In both examples above, “so” indicates degrees and has no distinction between near-referring and far-referring forms in English. When translated into Chinese, the appropriate near-referring or far-referring form must be chosen based on the context, resulting in translations such as “这样zhèyàng” and “那么nàme” respectively.

From the above analysis, it is evident that there is a significant difference between Chinese and English demonstrative reference terms when indicating degrees. Chinese learners with English as their L1 face considerable difficulty in acquiring the function of demonstrative reference terms for indicating degrees because their native language has only one form (without a distinction between near-referring and far-referring), whereas in Chinese, they must consider two options—near-referring or far-referring. According to Prator Clifford’s Difficulty Hierarchy Model (see Section 3.1.2), this situation falls under difficulty level six. Based on this, it can be judged that the errors of mixing near-referring and far-referring forms made by Chinese learners with English as their L1 when using demonstrative reference terms to indicate degrees are caused by interference from their native language.

#### 4. Teaching Strategies and Suggestions

Based on the aforementioned research, we recommend that teachers adopt the following teaching strategies when implementing instruction on Chinese demonstrative reference terms:

When planning the teaching curriculum, teachers should emphasize the distinction between near-referring and far-referring demonstrative reference terms as a key teaching point.

In teaching the use of demonstrative reference terms, teachers should instruct students not only to rely on their linguistic intuition but also to make near-referring and far-referring judgments based on certain rules. These rules can be roughly summarized as follows: (A) Judge the temporal distance from the speaker’s narrative moment based on time words in the context. Use the near-referring form for times close to the speaker and the far-referring form otherwise, as in Examples (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (21), and (22). (B) Judge the spatial distance from the speaker based on spatial words in the context. Use the near-referring form for spaces close to the speaker and the far-referring form otherwise, as in Examples (1), (4), (17), (22), and (27). (C) If the context contains both past and present time words, judge whether to use the near-referring or far-referring form based on semantic orientation, as in Exam-

ples (25) and (26). (D) Make judgments based on syntactic position. In Chinese, the near-referring form is often used when the term is in the topic position of the next clause, as in Examples (6) and (18).

During the instruction on demonstrative reference terms for qualities/states, manners, and degrees, remind students that there is no distinction between near-referring and far-referring forms when indicating these aspects in English, whereas in Chinese, such a distinction exists. Foster students' awareness of near-referring and far-referring forms when using these types of reference terms through comparative explanations and repeated practice. When teaching demonstrative reference terms for persons, objects, and events, use a comparative analysis method to explain the differences between the near-referring and far-referring forms of Chinese and English demonstrative reference terms. Clarify to students that the unmarked form in Chinese differs from that in English and explain when the near-referring form is more commonly used and when the far-referring form is more appropriate in Chinese. Assign a certain amount of practice after class to consolidate students' acquisition in class. During subsequent lessons, whenever encountering such demonstrative reference terms, let students judge whether they are near-referring or far-referring and explain the reasons for such usage to review the learned content. When teaching beginner and intermediate students, guide them to use consistent demonstrative reference terms in their speech or writing. That is, when referring to the same object, the demonstrative reference terms in the context should be consistent. Avoid alternating between near-referring and far-referring demonstrative reference terms to prevent errors. Teaching practice has proven that this is an effective method for beginner and intermediate learners.

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