

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Li-qiong Yang for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology presented on August 7, 1997

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John A. Young

Culture, thought worldview and language have been discussed for a long time in different fields from various perspectives. However, the basis of this study is the view of language as both the product and producer of people just as people are the producer and product of language. Each language requires of those who use it, a particular way of viewing reality. The structure of language containing a particular worldview therefore must influence how people learn and acquire a second language. The purpose of this study is to test this assumption about worldview in adult second language acquisition. The main concern is whether or not the native English speakers' worldview influences their ability to learn Chinese as a second language. The focus of

this investigation is the Aspect marker *-le*, which represents a different way of observing action when compared to Tense used in English.

Chinese is a context sensitive language. The way of perceiving action is in terms of Aspect, which is to observe an action within an event from a specific point of view without considering Speech-time. In contrast, English is less context sensitive, and its way of perceiving action is more precise and time-conscious, in terms of Tense.

The results of the investigation of a group of native-English-speakers learning Chinese as a second language reveals that the worldview they have in observing action is shaped by their native tongue and interferes with their use of the Chinese Aspect marker *-le*.

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THE INFLUENCE OF WORLDVIEW ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:
A STUDY OF NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS ACQUIRING THE CHINESE
ASPECT MARKER *-LE*.

by

Li-qiong Yang

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Li-qiong Yang, Author

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THE INFLUENCE OF WORLDVIEW ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A STUDY OF NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS ACQUIRING THE CHINESE ASPECT MARKER *-le*.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the influence of worldview, the way of people observing actions, on native English speakers' acquisition of the Chinese¹ Aspect marker *-le* in the context of learning Chinese as a second language. The purpose is to further our understanding of the relationship between culture, worldview and language in second language acquisition.

Chapter one will deal with methods. The main concern is to provide detailed information on how this study was designed, its purpose and research procedures. It provides the framework for the relationship between language and culture from viewpoint of second language acquisition. This chapter also provides the basis for evaluation the validity for later findings.

Closely related to this study, the Chinese Aspect marker *-le* and the expression of time in language, in terms of Tense and Aspect, will be explored from a linguistic

1. In this thesis, Chinese refers to Mandarin, the main dialect and official language of China.

perspective in chapter two. Tense is the way people reference Speech-time, the time when the utterance is made to observe actions, while Aspect is the way people observe an action within the event without concerning Speech-time. English is rich in Tense, while Chinese is rich in Aspect without any Tense. *-Le* as an Existence Aspect marker, is totally different from Tense markers. It denotes an action started but not necessarily ended -- an action or characteristic which has become a fact.

In Chapter three, theories about culture, thought, worldview and language will be reviewed. Different views of the relationship between language and thought are centered on whether or not and how language influences people's thoughts and behaviors. Whorfians claim that language does influence people's thinking and shape their ideas. Other scholars and researchers claim that language is only a tool or vehicle of thought and that culture and thought influence language but not vice versa. These theories provide the background for discussing specific differences between English and Chinese linguistically and culturally. From a linguistic point of view, English is a more time conscious language, and Chinese is a more context sensitive language. From a cultural point of view, Westerners are more individual-centered and direct in expression, while

Chinese are more situation-centered, more concerned with when, where, and with whom one is interacting; their expression tends to be indirect.

Chapter four provides the data derived from the exercises given to native English-speaking respondents who are learning Chinese as a second language. These exercises included: translations, questionnaire (natural conversation), and making sentences with *-le*. Four patterns are analyzed. This chapter shows whether or not and how respondents' cultural viewpoint in observing an action influences their learning the usage of *-le*.

Finally, a brief conclusion is presented based on the four patterns found in the data. The conclusion summarizes how native English speakers' view of action in terms of Tense, consistent with Whorf theory, strongly influences their understanding and applying the Chinese Aspect marker *-le* in translation and conversation.

Chapter 1. METHODS

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Objectives

Teaching Mandarin Chinese as a second language to native English speakers has gradually become more popular in the last ten years. Historically Chinese scholars had little connection with linguistic studies in the West (Donovan, 1981). In the late 1970's, a new relationship between the United States and China was established and in the early 1980's, various language exchange programs started to develop (Donovan, 1981). However, the studies on language are still limited in China. Although many studies relating to Chinese have been done, most of them focus on linguistic features only, and much less concern has been shown for teaching Chinese as a second language to native English speakers.

I taught Chinese to non-native speakers for eight years at a university in China and for two years at two universities in the United States. The usual problem is finding suitable text books and good reference books to explain certain grammatical features to my English-speaking students. *-Le* is one of the most difficult aspects for me to teach, because students are confused as to when to use

it in a sentence. For many years, I have tried to find the source of this problem.

The primary objective of this study is to determine why native English-speaking students have difficulty understanding and using the Aspect *-le*. To achieve this goal, the paper is based on a field investigation of a group of native English-speakers studying Chinese as a second language. All had at least one-and-half years of language experience and had learned all basic Chinese grammar. With emphasis on the different worldviews in observing action differently, this thesis focuses on the differences between Tense and Aspect as related to the problem experienced by native English speakers in acquiring the Chinese Aspect marker *-le*.

Secondly, this study is an effort to deepen understanding of culture and language in general, and to aid those involved in researching, teaching and/or learning Chinese language and culture in particular. It attempts to integrate an anthropological perspective with the issues of second language acquisition. To be more precise, this thesis views the relationship between culture, thought, worldview and language through the lens of adult second language acquisition. In this theoretical framework, my special interest is to determine if native English-

speakers' worldview interferes with their ability to learn Chinese.

Finally, my sense of responsibility as a language teacher and a student of applied anthropology has driven me to make an effort to explore and solve some existing problems in bilingual education and multicultural settings in a global context. Dealing with language as a part of culture will provide learners a better perspective to communicate and to understand other people who come from different linguistic communities.

1.2 Research Methods and Data Collection

This section explores procedures and methods in detail. It serves a dual purpose: firstly, it provides a basic framework for those with an interest in researching the Chinese Aspect markers with respect to the relationship between culture and language; secondly, it provides the basis for evaluating the validity of the findings presented in succeeding chapters.

1.2.1 Literature Review

The literature review is divided into three parts: 1) the Chinese Aspect marker *-le* relating to second language

acquisition; 2) Tense and Aspect in linguistics and 3) theories of the relationship between culture, thought, worldview and language.

First, the purpose of the research was to identify the Chinese Aspect marker *-le* in linguistic terms and the relationship between Chinese language and culture in general. The basic sources were Chinese grammar books, journals relating to Chinese language and second language acquisition, and unpublished papers from conferences. Second, I had to understand the concepts of Tense and Aspect linguistically and then apply them to the Chinese Aspect markers. Focusing on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the third part of literature review was to understand the different views on the relationship between culture, thought, worldview and language.

The literature review has demonstrated that the research on the relationship between Chinese language and culture in language education, especially in second language education, has been poorly developed in both Chinese and English. Most Chinese grammar books and papers point out that learning *-le* is one of the most difficult tasks for non-Chinese native speakers, and especially, for native English speakers (Chao, 1968; Chen, 1979; Li and Thompson, 1981; Smith, 1990; Cheung, Liu & Shih, 1994;

among others). However, none of authors mention or discuss any causes of this difficulty. Other research papers focus on -le syntactically but not from the perspective of second language acquisition. One paper mention that the usage of -le overlaps with Tense (zhao & Sheng, 1984). However, this research did not provide any further information.

1.2.2 Preparation for the Investigation

Location of investigation and Respondents: Studying Chinese as a second language is not as popular as studying Spanish, Japanese or other languages in the United states although it is becoming more popular. At Oregon State University, there were no native English speakers in the third-year Chinese class in most terms. At the University of Oregon, the largest Chinese language program in Oregon, there were seven to ten native English speakers in third-year Chinese class in general. There were a few native English speakers learning and speaking Chinese off campus. However, it was difficult to reach them individually. Therefore, most of my respondents, six of the nine, came from the third-year Chinese class at the University of Oregon. The other three were friends' introductions.

There were a total of nine respondents. One was used as a test interview. The other eight respondents included

Table 1

Background of Respondents

Start of study years (sex)	Length of Study years	In China or Taiwan years	Field	Family member Who can speak Chinese
1985 (M)	9	4	Asian Studies	Thai wife who speaks Mandarin
1980 (M)	8	5	Engineering	Chinese wife
1990 (F)	3	1	English	NO
1993 (F)	2	1	History	NO
1994 (F)	2	0	Linguistics	NO
1990 (M)	2	0	History	No
1994 (M)	2	0	no information	NO
1995 (F)	1.7	0.05	no information	NO

Note: There is no correlation between the start of studying and the period of time they had been studying. This is due to respondents having some time off. "No information" means the respondents did not provide any responses.

four males and four females whose ages ranged from 22 to 32. Most of them had visited mainland China and/or Taiwan, and they all had studied Chinese at least one-and-half years at school. However their experiences and backgrounds in learning Chinese were different as Table 1 shows.

Research design: I presented three interview tests: translation, questionnaire (conversation) and making sentences with *-le*, to the respondents.

According to Li and Thompson (1981), there are four ways (F₁ to F₄) to view bounded situations in which *-le* should be used. Thirteen sentences for translation were chosen according to these four. But the actions of these sentences took place differently with respect to Speech-time and Reference-time. In other words, from the viewpoint

of Tense, the sentences varied by including three different Tenses, and one negative sentence. In addition, I provide three different sentences -- 3, 5 and 7 -- in which the usage of *-le* had not been discussed thoroughly by Li and Thompson, but has been explained in detail in sentences C, D, and E of chapter two. Since Chinese is a very context sensitive language, all thirteen sentences were presented as part of a paragraph (see page 74). Before these sentences were presented to the respondents in English, they were reviewed by ten native Chinese speakers who are bilingual in English, and discussed with three native Mandarin language teachers at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University.

The questions shown on page 75, were designed to determine the respondents' background. I also explicitly discussed with them how they understood *-le* in grammatical perspective. While answering the interview questions, the respondents were observed to find out how they applied *-le* in a natural conversation. In the last part of the interview, I required the respondents to make two or three sentences with *-le*. The purpose was to provide them with an opportunity to create sentences using *-le*.

The intent of the initial translation section was to find out how well respondents could apply *-le* without

knowing the purpose of this research. The intent of the second section was to gain an inside look at the respondents' understanding of *-le* and how they applied it in natural conversation. The intent of the last section was to observe how the respondents would use *-le* when they were made aware of the purpose of the research.

1.2.3 Interview Procedure

I conducted nine interviews. One of the nine was my test interview. This test interview helped me to adjust the amount of time I needed to allow for the translation, and, to determine if my questions in Chinese were clear to the respondents. After the test interview, instead of requiring the respondents to answer completely in Chinese, I changed to a more flexible approach: they could use some words or phrases in English to overcome limited vocabulary, but could not use English syntax.

All of the respondents were volunteers, and all the tests were conducted one-on-one without involving writing. The respondents chose the most comfortable place and time for themselves to start our tests. I met most of them in the library after their Chinese class at the University of Oregon. Three of them invited me to their home. All conversations were taped.

The interviews were conducted in a friendly and sometimes enthusiastic atmosphere. Some students also asked many questions about Chinese language not related to the research topic. Some of them mentioned their concerns such as students' poor manners in class and problems in the language education system.

1.3 Limitations of the Research

The literature review was difficult because the research topic focused on the specific Chinese Aspect marker *-le*, while at the same time, it involved four general areas: General Linguistics, Chinese language and culture, Second Language Acquisition and Culture Anthropology. Due to the lack of previous studies of *-le* in second language acquisition, the literature search turned out to be very time-consuming. Related to the above problem, the most difficult stage of this research was to design the test sentences for the translation section. The sentences selected for respondents were revised seven times. Although the thirteen sentences represent selected various uses of *-le* in different situations, further research in this topic should include more sentences, especially sentences using other Aspect markers.

Another limitation of the existing study was the small number of respondents. Due to the small number of learners as well as the limited time, the research sample was small. As I mentioned before, Learning Chinese as a second language is not as popular as learning other languages in the United States, although now there are more native English speakers in the beginning level of Chinese. At Linn-Benton Community College at the time of this study, there were more than ten English speakers learning Chinese. However, since this research required the learners to have learned all basic Chinese grammar and to have the ability to communicate in Chinese, these students were not far enough advanced. Also, because of the lack of time and not being able to travel to distant places, the research was limited to two accessible sites.

Chapter 2 TENSE AND ASPECT

2.1 Basic concepts : Tense and Aspect

Tense and Aspect are the two most important devices for expressing time concepts in the world's languages (Bates, E., Elman, J. & Li, P, 1992). The third device is an inherent temporal feature and less important in this thesis.

Temporality shows up in language in three different ways: first, the time of some event, action, process, etc. may be RELATED to some other time interval (temporal reference, in particular tense); second, the temporal course of an event, action, process, etc.. may be VIEWED or PRESENTED in different ways (aspect); third, expressions, notably verbs, may be classified according to their INHERENT TEMPORAL FEATURES. (Klein, 1994:15)

Distinguishing Tense and Aspect is useful in discussing the differences between Chinese and English. Tense is a systematic grammatical mark of the verb; and it is a typical way of expressing time in language. Klein (1994) points out three time parameter approaches--time of utterance, time of event and point of reference based on Reichenbach's suggestion (1947). "Speech-time refers to the time of utterance. Event-time refers to the very occurrence

of action and Reference-time is always specified, either by an explicit frame adverb such as 'yesterday' or by context" (1992:327). Comrie (1986) proposes a simple and clear analysis in which some forms, such as the Pluperfect Tense², require three time parameters. The simple Past, Present and Future Tense in English -- is, was, will ignore aspectual differences.

is	Event-time simultaneous with Speech-time
was	Event-time before Speech-time
will be	Event-time after Speech-time

Here, Event-time is "the time point or interval which is occupied by the situation to be located in time" (Comrie 1986:122). "Event-time simultaneous with Speech-time" is given when Event-time simply includes Speech-time rather than being fully simultaneous with Speech-time.

Tense is typically used to locate the Event-time with respect to Speech-time. In English, Tense is well known and has been by far the most investigated aspect of language. Aspect is "the different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:3). Aspect is significantly different from Tense, which locates

2. Event-time is before Reference-time and Reference-time is before Speech-time.

the time of a situation in relation to the utterance. Aspect, refers "not to the time relation between a situation and the moment of its being mentioned in speech, but rather, to how the situation itself is being viewed with respect to its own internal makeup" (Li and Thompson, 1987:184). Comrie gave an example in English: "John was reading when I came in." Here, two events are expressed in Past Tense. The first verbal complex, "was reading", however, differs strikingly from the second verbal complex, "came in", in terms of the way the two situations are viewed. The second verbal complex presents the totality of the situation referred to -- the speaker's coming in without reference to its internal temporal constituency. The entire situation is viewed as a single, unanalyzable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one. However, the first verbal complex is viewed as a process. In this sense, Aspect is basically seen in the Perfective and Imperfective oppositions. The Perfective indicates a focus on the whole situation including both endpoints of the situation, whereas the Imperfective indicates a focus on the processing intervals of the situation without explicit reference to its boundaries. Smith examines the Perfective and Imperfective in this graph (1991:95).

Perfective: I F
 //////////
Imperfective: I...////////...F

The slashes I(nitial) point and F(inal) point enclosures indicate the situation that is the focus of the speaker's viewpoint. The situation is seen as "completed" vs. the situation being seen as "not completed" or "ongoing" (Smith, 1991).

Two-component theory (Smith, 1991:93) emphasizes that all sentences have a viewpoint, since situation-type information is not visible without one. This theoretical requirement has the interesting consequence that sentences with no explicit aspectual morpheme must have an aspectual viewpoint. In addition to Perfective viewpoint and Imperfective viewpoint, the neutral viewpoint is proposed. The neutral viewpoint includes the initial point of an action and at least one stage of a situation. In this thesis, traditional theory of Aspect and viewpoint will be discussed with reference to the Chinese Aspect marker *-le*.

In summary, the differences between Aspect and Tense are noted as follows. First, the situation is seen from outside -- Tense vs. the situation which is seen from the inside--Aspect. Tense is observed in terms of time, and action is observed with reference to Speech-time. However, Aspect is not observed in terms of time; nor is action

compared to any other time; action is observed inside an event. Second, Tense is generally categorized as Past Tense, Present Tense and Future Tense ignoring all other possible tense-forms. Aspect is categorized as Perfective, Imperfective and neutral in viewpoint. Klein states:

Aspect concerns the different perspectives which a speaker can take and express with regard to the temporal course of some event, action, process, etc.: the speaker may view it as completed, as on-going, as imminent and possibly in other ways. This "view" is independent of the time which the event, action, process, etc. occupies on the time axis (1994:16).

Both Chinese and English have Aspect. But only English has Tense, and Tense and Aspect in its verb forms are tightly related. Also, as mentioned before, Aspect in English is recognized as two categories: Perfective and Imperfective. In contrast, Chinese does not have Tense in its verb forms. It does, however, indicate Aspect with several markers and has a richer viewpoint component than English. According to Li and Thompson (1981:185), there are four types of verbal Aspects in Chinese: (1) Perfective: -le and other expressions (2) Imperfective (Durative): -zai -zhe (3) Experiential: -guo and (4) Delimitative³ (1981:185). According to Smith (1991), there are two

3. Doing an action "a little bit" or for a short period of time.

Perfectives: *-le* and *-guo*; two Imperfectives: *-zai* and *-zhe*; and a neutral viewpoint, which allows more than one interpretation of a sentence, and the different interpretations are determined by context (1991:343-365). The focus of this thesis is *-le*, and other Aspect markers will be mentioned as needed.

2.2 The Chinese Aspect Marker *-Le*

Chinese linguists generally recognize two functions of the particle *le*: 1) *-Le* (Verb + *le*), suffix *-le* which is traditionally recognized as expressing the "completion" of an action (Chao, 1968; Chen, 1979; Chan, 1980; Gong, 1991; Li and Thompson, 1981 among others) and 2) *Le* (Sentence + *le*), which occurs in the final position of a sentence, indicating the entry of the situation into a new state (Teng, 1975; Chen, 1979; Li and Thompson, 1981 among others). These scholars also generally assert that in some cases, such as those where the verb does not take an object or the object appears preverbally, *-le* may attach to the verb and also be in the sentence final position, so that these two positions syntactically overlap. *Le* in this case would possess both functions mentioned above (Chen, 1979; Li and Thompson, 1981, among others). In this thesis, the

primary focus is on the suffix *-le*.

Most linguists categorize *-le* as a Perfective Aspect marker. As discussed above, the Perfective Aspect is the situation which is seen as "completed". The following example in Mandarin Chinese show evidence that *-le* as a Perfective Aspect marker is different.

⁴A. Ta chang-le yi xiaoshi le.
 3sg sing-EXA one hour ⁵CRS
 S/He sang for an hour.

Both suffix *-le* and sentence final *le* occur. This kind of sentence conveys the message that the event's ending is dependent on the context. An example is shown in two different sentences as follows:

A₁. Ta chang-le yi xiaoshi le, bu chang le.
 3sg sing-EXA one hour CRS not sing CRS
 S/he sang for an hour and stopped singing now.
 S/he sang for an hour and stopped singing.

A₂. Ta chang-le yi xiaoshi le, haizai chang.
 3sg sing-EXA one hour CRS still sing
 S/he has sung for an hour and is still singing.

Chang (sing) occurs before the Speech-time. However the end point of the action is left open. In other words, the

4. Examples indicated by capital letters are sentences used by the writer to explain the text; Examples indicated by lower case letters are sentences respondents made; Examples arranged by numbers are sentences from the data derived from the translation tests given to respondents.

5. Abbreviations show on page 84.

action of singing might have ended before the time of speech(A₁), or it might have ended at the time of speech (A₁), or it might have ended after the time of speech (A₂). Only the total context in which A occurs can determine what is the precise end point of the action in time. It is obvious that here *-le* does not signal completed action since sentences such as A are undetermined with regard to the end point of the action denoted by the verb.

Colarote Smith (1991) points out that "in Chinese Perfective termination and completion are expressed separately for all situation types" (1991:344). Li and Thompson (1981:215) directly point out that *-le* does not mean completion. The end point of an action, or completion is expressed by a set of optional, independent morphemes known as "Resultative Verb Complements". This is illustrated by sentences B below:

B. Wo zuotian xie-le yi-feng xin.
 I yesterday write-EAX one CL letter
 I wrote a letter yesterday.

B1. Wo zuotian xie-le yi-feng xin,
 I yesterday write-EXA one CL letter
 Keshi mei xie-wan.
 but not write-finish
 I wrote a letter yesterday but I didn't finish it.

From sentence B alone, a wrong conclusion may be drawn that *-le* expresses the completion of the action of writing

a letter. However, in sentence B₁, the added conjunction is not contradictory to the original sentence. Thus *-le* does not necessarily indicate completion. Here completion is indicated by another morpheme which is the completive morpheme *-wan*, a Resultative Verb Complement, which may be added to *-le* as in sentence B₂.

B₂. Wo zuotian xie-wan-le yi-feng xin.
 I yesterday write-RVC-PA one CL letter
 I wrote a letter yesterday.

Considering the evidences above, the expression of *-le* in terms of Aspect should be represented as follows:

I F
 /////.....

In many cases, *-le* gives the impression of a completed action. But, as an Aspect marker, it is not always an indication of a completion. In other words, the final point of an action in the sentence is not always encoded by *-le*.

Considering the linguistic evidences of *-le*, Liu (1988) in his paper suggests that "*-le* expresses action or characteristics which have become a fact. Grammatically, the suffix *-le* after a verb, adjective or other words, indicates that the meaning of the word becomes a fact. And *-le* is an Existence Aspect" (1988:326). This explanation easily solves the problem of *-le* in cases where the

explanation of other linguists were lacking. For example:

- C. Qiang-shang gua-le yi-fu hua.
 wall-on hang-EXA one-CL painting
 On the wall hangs a painting.

Wang (1990:180), explained this as a state of being after the completion of the action "gua" (hang). Li and Thompson(1981) leave out such sentences because they consider that the sentence is not an action but a stative sense. However, sentences D and E below are not stative:

- D. Wo haipa-le ni die yi baizi.
 I afraid-EXA you father one generation
 I have been afraid of your father all my life.
- E. Mama tengai-le ta, ke ta bu mingbai.
 Mother cherish-EXA 3sg, but 3sg not understand
 (Her/His)mother cares for her/him, but s/he does
 not know.

Obviously, sentences such as D and E are not stative. They simply refer to a situation as an existing fact.

In summary, the suffix *-le* is an Existence Aspect marker, referring to an action which becomes a fact that is observed within an event. Clearly *-le* does not necessarily indicate the end point of an action.

Since *-le* is not a usual way to observe an action for native English speakers, learning to properly use *-le* is a difficult task. Chinese grammar books attempt to present

rules to show when students should use *-le*. Among Liu & Deng (1981), Cheng et al (1984), Li & Cheng (1988), Cheung, Liu & Shih (1994); Li and Thompson (1981) and Yong (1994), the latter two are best understood.

Li and Thompson propose using *-le* in a bounded event. A situation is viewed as a single whole if it is bounded, which is to say that the temporal, spatial, or conceptual limits are placed on it. (1981:185). There are four ways to examine such limits: 1) the event is quantified (F₁); 2) the event is definite or specific (F₂); 3) the verb is inherently bounded (F₃); or 4) the situation is the first in a sequence of situations (F₄).

F₁. Ta shui-le san-ge zhongtou.
 he sleep-EXA three-CL hours
 He slept for three hours.

F₂. Wo peng-dao-le Lin Hui.
 I bump-into-EXA Lin Hui
 I bumped into Lin Hui.

F₃. Wo wang-le ta-de dizhi.
 I forget-EXA his address
 I forgot his address.

F₄. Wo kan-wan-le bao jiu shuijiao.
 I read-finish-EXA newspaper then sleep
 I will go to sleep after I finish reading the newspaper.

Yong (1994) provides a detailed analysis of *-le*,

focused on three times: Speech-time, Event-time and Reference-time. Yong's research indicates that *-le* has nothing to do with Speech-time. But it does relate to Reference-time. Yong (1994:332) conclude that *-le* occurs either when the Event-time is included in its Reference-time (sentence only has one action) or the Event-time is anterior to the Reference-time which is the Event-time of the second action of a complex predicate or a simple sentence (sentence has two or more actions). As a word, *-le* appears when the Event-time includes in Reference-time (one action, G) or before Reference-time (two or more actions, H).

- G. Wo (yijing) xie-le xin (le).
 I already write-EXA letter CRS
 I (already) wrote/have written (the) letter(s).
- H. Wo xie-le xin jiu qu mai dongxi.
 I write/EXA letter then go buy thing(s)
 I will write (a) letter(s) then will go shopping.
 I will go shopping after I write (a)letter(s).

The critical point is that Reference-time is very flexible and it changes in context. Therefore, to master *-le* the speaker needs to identify the Reference-time, which is very context sensitive.

Summarizing Liu's (1988) and Yong's (1994) analysis, *-le* is an Existence Aspect marker, which relates to

Reference-time closely in context. In considering the needs of non-native Chinese speakers, Li and Thompson present most uses of *-le*. However they do not present the uses in different cases such as in C, D, and E mentioned earlier. In this study, the information I presented to the respondents included C, D and E, as well as the four types F₁-F₄.

Chapter 3. CULTURE, WORLDVIEW AND LANGUAGE

3.1 Overview

In the early part of the twentieth century, Sapir and Whorf carried out studies on language and culture. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis assumes that a close relationship exists between language and culture and that language defines our experiences (Whorf, 1965). In other words, humans have filtering devices that classifies reality, and these filtering devices are languages. According to this view, double principles were set. The principle of linguistic determinism is that the way one thinks is determined by the language one speaks. Another principle, linguistic relativity, is that differences among languages must therefore be reflected in the difference in the worldview of their speakers (Salzmann 1993). This principle is connected to the linguistic and cultural determinism of habitual thought patterns (Gumperz & Levinson 1991). The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis has drawn wide attention from linguistic and anthropological researchers who include both supporters and detractors.

Disagreeing with this hypothesis, Wittgenstein argues that a language consists of nothing more than a complex

array of meaningless verbal tools that are manipulated by language users, like the pieces in a game of chess, to achieve desired effects. Some manipulations are designed to elicit emotional reactions, others to elicit a behavioral response, others to impart information and still others to direct the listener's attention to a particular object or to induce the listener to consider a novel idea. The meaning of an individual word or sentence is determined by its use, and the effect it is designed to achieve (Bloom,1981:8). Wittgenstein explains language functionally but nothing more than that. However, he does concede that language functions differently in different cultures.

Another challenge to the Whorfian Hypothesis comes from the cognitive revolution in psycholinguistics. In their textbook on this subject, Clark and Clark state:

What can one conclude about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? At present very little ... languages can apparently be stretched and adopted to fit the needs of virtually any group of experts... language differences reflect the culture and not the reverse (1977:557).

Represented by Noam Chomsky, another group of Linguists (Pinker 1984; Anderson 1974, 1975, 1976; Wesler and Culicover 1980; among others) conducted research on children's language acquisition and claimed that all

languages are products of the same initial innate grammar - a Universal Grammar. They argue that language does not cause children to change to representational thought, but results from it.

From an anthropological point of view, John Lucy (1992) argues that Whorf's opinions have in fact been systematically misunderstood. Whorf emphasized the "undercurrent" of systematic grammatical distinctions that run across a number of grammatical paradigms and their effects on habitual thinking. John Lucy points out that studies of language and thought should focus on grammatical features, or their a "covert" correlates, whose frequency of application forced habitual distinctions. Such studies should be carried out in a strictly controlled, comparative, experimental way on at least two contrasting languages simultaneously.

Hunt and Agnoli conducted research on language and thought from the different linguistic cognitive levels or aspects -- lexical, syntactic-semantic and representational pragmatic meaning. They concluded that "different languages pose different challenges for cognition and provide differential support to cognition" (1991:387). Their research indicates that thought can be influenced by cultural variations in all the above aspects of language.

From a bilingual point of view, many fluent bilingual people maintain that they do think differently in different languages. Wierzbicka (1985) said that she is a different person in Polish and English. Her remarks make it clear that she believes that her attitudes and interpersonal behavior are affected by the language she is using.

This overview shows that culture, thought, worldview and language are interlocked tightly. Every language is closely bound up with a particular view we hold of the world. While there are many aspects of language that seem to be universal, other aspects vary across cultures and reflect different worldviews, or unique ways of perceiving the world. Worldview varies considerably from one group to another in different linguistic communities. Therefore, "the development of a second language involves not only acquiring a linguistic tool, but also, and more important, developing a new worldview, embedded in the second language's culture" (Fantini, 1992:14).

3.2 Worldview and Language

Historically, although worldview is one of the central subjects of American cultural anthropology, it is seldom discussed in theoretical literature (Kearney 1984).

Anthropological research describes and analyzes worldview as the ways in which different peoples think about themselves, about their environments, space, time and so forth. The investigation of such things is referred to as the study of worldview in a broad context (Kearney 1984). However, in this thesis, worldview is more narrowly defined as how people observe actions in time. Related to the language devices of expression about time, this study assumes that people who come from different linguistic communities hold different worldviews.

Language is an instrument through which we assign conceptual categories to our human experiences. It is clearly not simply a mirror that reflects reality. Rather, its function is to impose structure on our perceptions of the world. It is highly selective and in this sense, too, the process of linguistic encoding involves a significant degree of abstraction away from reality. Slobin (1982) gave an example, a child, who sees her father kick a ball, and says "Daddy kicked the ball." This utterance encodes only a tiny part of the event as perceived by the speaker. It does not encode, for example, any information about how long the action occurred before the time of utterance. Nor does it encode information on the size of the ball. However, in some languages both these items of information are encoded

obligatorily. According to David Lee (1992), some east African languages have two distinct Past Tenses: one for events in the recent past and the other for events in the more distant past. And in the Amerindian language Navaho, there is a system for sub-classifying nouns according to the shape and other attributes of the object which the noun denotes. In Mandarin, the sentence *Baba ti qiu* (Daddy kick ball) does not encode any information mentioned above: when or which ball; it could convey this information only from the context of the sentence.

The English utterance, "Daddy kicked the ball", does not express information such as the Daddy's height, whether he kicks the ball with his left or right foot, the color and size of the ball, or the daddy's experience of kicking a ball, etc. All these features and many more are real properties of the situation; however, the speaker has no interest in selecting them. Furthermore, English is different from Chinese, East African languages and Navaho, lexically and grammatically as it encourages, and in some cases, forces the speaker to select certain features for encoding and pay less attention to other features. For example, the sentence above encodes which ball (the ball) and when (through the Past Tense), but does not encode the size of the ball or the experience of the daddy kicking the

ball. Based on this understanding of language and worldview, Slobin (1989; Slobin & Bocaz, 1988) provide a specific case study on the difference between Spanish and English. They point out that the English-speaking child emphasizes action, for example, saying "The boy climbed a tree." Whereas, the Spanish-speaking child emphasizes the result of the action, "El niño está subido arriba de un árbol," literally, "The child is climbed in the tree", which means the boy is in a state of having climbed the tree.

Obviously, different languages force the speaker to describe events in different ways, in the sense that the focus of attention of different worldviews is on different aspects of the linguistic situation, and these differences in focus affect the speaker.

3.3 The Differences Between Chinese and English

The differences between Chinese and English are structural -- Chinese is more of a context sensitive and indirect language than English, while English is a more time-conscious and direct language than Chinese.

On the lexical level, the meaning of a Chinese character is often less precise than an English word and

more variable. Chinese content words generally have several meanings or homographs that are context dependent, and not completely disambiguated by context (Brandt, 1943). After looking at various empirical research on Chinese and English, Aaronson and Ferres (1991) suggest that Chinese units contain about three to sixteen times as many meanings as English words (depending on how they are defined⁶). Thus the extent to which context determines the exact meaning will be far greater in Chinese than in English.

Context sensitivity shows not only in the meaning of words, but also in the function of words in different aspects of expression: articles, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions (Aaronson and Ferres 1986). For example, Chinese has fewer pronouns than English because separate forms generally do not exist, or are rarely used, to indicate gender and, to some extent case. English he, him, his, she, her, it, its are all translated as ta; I, me, my are all translated as wo (Henne et al., 1977). Conjunctions also appear to play a weaker semantic role in Chinese than in English (Henne et al., 1977). The coordinate conjunctions "and" and "but" in Chinese are often omitted from context. Their functional role might be

6. The number of different depends on whether words are defined by pronunciation or character.

indicated by punctuation, or by pauses in speech. The frequent omission of function words results in sentences whose meaning is as much inferred from nonlinguistic as well as linguistic context. For example:

Ji	bu	chi	le.
chicken	not	eat	EXA/CRS

This sentence could have two different translations: "As for chicken, I am not going to eat any more," or "The chickens are not eating any more." Both translations are perfectly fine depending on the context (Li, 1971).

From the perspective of grammatical categories, although some English words do serve multiple syntactic roles, e.g., to plant; the plant, this phenomena occurs far less frequently than in Chinese. Herdan(1964) discusses a Chinese "mathematical language game" where the same character may be employed to serve in several syntactic roles:

sheng: life (noun); living, growing
(adjective); to live, produce,
grow(verb).
chang: length, seniority (noun); long,
elderly (adjective); prolong,
grow(verb).
xi: happiness (noun); happy(adjective); to
rejoice(verb); happily (adverb).

In English, it is also possible to create syntactically ambiguous constructions based on multiple grammatical

categories for some words, for example, "They are eating apples." Here "eating" could have two functions: one denotes the present progressive verb form and another converts the verb class to adjectival form. In English, however, this ambiguity is the exception rather than the rule. Syntactic ambiguity based on multi-category words in Chinese is certainly more prevalent than in English.

Chinese is context dependent in even more complex ways. For instance, the Perfective Aspect marker *-guo* generally expresses a person's experiences. However, depending on the context, *-guo* also denotes that the speaker has learned or tested a specific thing the listener offers, for example (Smith, 1991:351):

Wo he-guo jiu le.
I drink-EXP alcohol CRS

Indefinite: I have drunk alcohol. (at some time)
Specific: I have drunk (my drink of) alcohol now.

According to the indefinite reading, the sentence means "I have had the experience of drinking an alcoholic beverage;" according to the specific reading the same sentence means "I have had my drink this time." The emphasis here is "I don't want any more, or you can remove the glass."

At the syntactic level, one of the most obvious differences between Chinese and English is Passive Voice

(Liu, 1997). In English, Passive Voice is expressed by "to be + Past Participle (done)." Although there is a Passive preposition *Bei* in Chinese, it is only used for emphasis in a few cases. Chinese Passive Voice, especially in daily conversation, depends on context as shown in following examples:

Denglong gua-qi-lai le.
lantern hang-up-come CRS
Lantern(s) was/were hung up.

Hunli mei zunbei-hao.
wedding not prepare-well
The wedding was not prepared well.

Some grammar books (Liu & Deng 1981; Cheng et al 1984; Li & Cheng 1988; Cheung, Liu & Shih 1994) refer to these sentences as "Notional Passive" sentences.

Above all, Chinese is classified as a "topic prominent" (Li & Thompson, 1981) language where the focus is on what the sentence is about rather than separate words. The topic always comes first in the sentence, and always refers to something about which the speaker assumes the person listening to the utterance has some knowledge, as in the following example:

John wo yijing jian-guo le.
John I already see-EXP CRS

John, I've already seen (him).

Li and Thompson (1981) point out that the topic prominent is:

A significant topological feature in terms of which it can be compared to other languages, such as English. Nearly all English sentence must have a subject, and the subject is easy to identify in an English sentence, since it typically occurs right before the verb and the verb agrees with it in number (1981:16).

This topic prominent feature also effects the word order of Chinese which is different from English. Chinese speakers can put some sentences in either SVO, SOV, or OSV order, depending on which part of sentence the speaker wants to emphasize, and English speakers cannot do this.

Wo mai-le piao. SVO
I buy-EXA ticket(S)
I bought ticket(S).

Wo ba piao mai-le. SOV
I BA ticket(s) buy-EXA

Piao wo mai-le. OSV
Ticket(s) I buy-EXA

In summarizing all characteristics discussion above, Aaronson and Ferres (1986:157) conclude that the evidence suggests that Chinese is more context dependent than English.

In fact, this linguistic evidence reflects the broader cultural differences between Chinese and Americans. Francis

Hsu, a scholar of Sino-American cultural studies, points out that Chinese have a "situation-centered" way of life, while that of the Americans is "individual-centered." Americans emphasize the predilections of the individual, whereas Chinese place importance on an individual's appropriate place and behavior in society. Hsu's explanation of art in the two cultures makes this point clear. "In western art the focus is on man or woman as an individual. In Chinese art what is important is the individual's place in the external scheme of things." And these differences exist, "not only in art and fiction, but also in business, religion, and political and social behavior" (Hsu, 1981:20).

The core value of Chinese culture is *Li* (propriety) (Ju, 1986). *Li* does not recognize a person as an individual or an independent entity. Rather it puts a person in a collective, a group and a community according to the position (Ju, 1986). *Li* views everything from the perspective of human relationships. Human relationships are valued above everything else, above science and technology, above material life, above reason and rationality. Pang Pu, a noted researcher on Chinese culture, points out that Western culture regards the person as an independent entity with reason, emotion, volition, love and equality. The

person is the creation of internal factors within self, and the self is responsible for one's own destiny. Chinese culture looks at this issue the other way around. Human relationships must be maintained at the sacrifice of person's individuality (Pang, 1986). Without the collective, the group, or the community, the person is non-existent. Therefore, among Chinese, communication in what ways, with whom, and through which channel always needs to be considered carefully.

Chinese culture is situation-centered, and its language is context sensitive. During communication, the linguistic context alone often is not sufficient for disambiguation, a context of shared experiences and worldly knowledge is also required (Karlgren, 1926). Thus, the Chinese interpretation of an act of communication may shift depending on context. We cannot find any English sentence that does not show tense in whatever context. In this sense, English is a time language, and the native English speaker's worldview is focused more precisely on perceiving action in time compared to Chinese speakers.

Chapter 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Four patterns were found from the translation required of the respondents. While presenting results of these patterns, the other two sections of the interview tests will be discussed.

4.1 Pattern 1: The Confusion of -Guo and -Le.

In Chinese, *-le* and *-guo* are two different ways to observe an action, although both are Perfective Aspect markers. However, as discussed earlier, *-le* is a typical Existence Aspect marker, which encodes the Initial-time but not always Final-time. In contrast, *-guo* is a typical Perfective Aspect marker, which encodes both Initial-time and Final-time and "must ensure that the final state of the situation no longer obtains" (Smith, 1995:354). This is illustrated in the following sentences:

I: Wo mama qu-guo women xuexiao.
 I mother go-EXP we school

My mother has been to our school.

I₁: Wo mama qu-le women xuexiao.
 I mother go-EXA we school

My mother went to our school.

Sentence I shows that the mother is not at the school now.

Sentence I₁ is not clear on this point, since the mother might be at the school while the speaker is talking. From a semantic point of view, the topic of sentence I is about school, or if the mother knows about the school; whereas, sentence I₁ describes where the mother is or what the mother did.

-Le emphasizes the existence of an action, while *-guo* focuses on the speakers' experience of an action. Let's look at the following two sentences:

J. Wo xie-le hanzi, danshi wo mei zuo
 I write-EXA characters but I not do

fanyi.
 translation

I wrote the Chinese characters but I didn't do the translation.

J₁. Wo xie-guo hanzi, hanzi zhen
 I write-EXP characters characters really

nan xie.
 difficult write

I have had the experience of writing Chinese characters. They are really difficult to write.

Here both *-le* and *-guo* are used in the same sentence *wo xie hanzi* (I write characters). However, because of the different Aspect markers after the verb *xie* (write), the emphasis of the sentence becomes completely different. The Aspect markers influence the meaning of the sentence and

affect the sentences immediately following it. The example J simply tells the listener about something the speaker did or something which already exists, and the following sentence tells what the speaker did not do. Example J₁ tells of the speaker's experience with writing Chinese characters, while the following sentence tells that the speaker feels it is difficult to write Chinese characters. From the translation of the two sentence variations, it is clear that the difference depends on the viewpoint of the speaker. How the speaker observes the action, either in terms of the existence of the action or in terms of the experience of the action, is most important. The point of view that the speaker chooses to use in order to observe an action determines which Aspect marker will be used. The time when an action takes place is not critical.

In daily conversation, this difference is even more obvious. For example: if a person says "*Jintian zaoshang, wo mei kan jian ni. Ni zai nar?*" (I did not see you this morning. Where were you ?) Then you would probably answer:

K. Wo qu-le tushuguan. yizhi zai nar
 I go-EXA library. all the time in there

kan shu.
 read book

I went to the library and stayed there all morning.

If a person says: "Na ge tushuguan zhen bucuo (The library is very good)." a possible response would be:

- L. Wo qu-guo na ge tushuguan.
 I go-EXP the CL library
 I have been to the library.

The difference between K and L is the completely different focus of the speaker. The answer K simply tells the listener what action has been done. However, the answer L not only lets the listener know about the existence of the action, but also lets the listener know that the library is good from the speaker's experience. Further illustrations occur in the translated sentences 1, 2 and 6.

1. wo canguan-le xuduo difang, ye jiao-le
 I visit-EXA many places also make-EXA
 hen duo pengyou.
 very many friends

I visited many places and made a lot of friends there.

2. Zuotian, wo qu canjia-le pengyou de
 yesterday I go join-EXA friend GEN
 shengri wanhui.
 birthday party

Yesterday, I went to my friend's birthday party.

Sentence 1 and 2 express actions. The speakers tell only what they did without going into the details about their experiences. However, if these sentences had used *-guo*,

then they would have had very different meanings emphasizing "that an event has been experienced at least once in the past" (Chuang, Liu & Shih, 1994:276). Therefore, following sentence 1, the speaker would probably talk more about the friends or the places to elaborate on experiences, such as how to make friends in China, how to travel in China, or the speaker's impression of those friends and places. Following the usage of *-guo*, sentence 2, the speaker would probably give more details about the birthday party, such as describing the decorations, the food, and the guests. Sentences 1 and 2 in the paragraph presented to respondents to translate, was not centered on these "friends and places," nor on the "birthday party". These sentences only give general information about the trip of 1990 and what the speaker did at the party (see first two paragraphs in Translation Sentences on page 74). Sentence 6 provides us with a clearer picture.

6. Wo gei John da-le hen duo ci dianhua.
I to John call-EXA very many times phone

I had called for John many times.

What the speaker really wants to let the listener know is that the action happened many times and not that the repeated attempts were frustrating. Again, if this sentence had used *-guo* in place of *-le*, the main idea of the

sentence should have been to complain about the frustration. In general, most sentences containing *-le* can substitute *-guo*; however, the meaning and the emphasis of the sentences would be changed. The speaker's point of view is the key in determining which Aspect marker will be used in the sentence.

Six of eight respondents used *-guo* instead of *-le* in sentences 2 and 6. And some of them, used *-le* in sentence 1 after the first verb "*canguan*" (visit) but did not use *-le* after the second verb "*jiao*" (make). When asked why they had difficulty with *-le*, most mentioned that they did not know when to use *-le* or *-guo*. One of students made it very clear, saying: "It is not easy to learn *-le*. *-Le* and *-guo* are very similar. I am confused about when to use *-le* or *-guo*." When I asked another student to make sentences with *-le*, he thought for a while and said: "I don't know. I think *-le* makes past tense. I think 'I ate.' Consequently I think about *-guo*... hmm...I don't know. I will use *-guo*."

In order to find the basic factors influencing their understanding, I asked respondents when they felt they should use *-le*, and whether or not they felt that this Chinese grammatical feature had a counterpart in English grammar; And how these features were interrelated. Most respondents related *-le* to tense as shown in Table 2:

Table 2

How Respondents Think About -Le

Years of studying	Difficult	not so difficult	Related to tense	not clear
9		X	X	X
8		X	X	X
3		X	X	
2	X		X	
2	X		Yes and no not sure	
2	X		X	X
2	X		X	
1.7	X		X	

Three respondents mentioned that -le is not simply related to past tense. One said: "In fact, it relates to imperfect tense more often." However, when I asked them to make three sentences using -le, they hesitated, "A...hmm.. .what did I do ?..."and then made several sentences represented below:

- a. Zuotian, wo guang jie de shihou,
yesterday I walk street GEN time
- wo kan-jian-le yi ge hen piaoliang
I look-see-EXA one CL very beautiful
- de yifu.
GEN coat

Yesterday, while I was walking on the street, I saw a beautiful coat.

- b. Wo xiao haizi de shihou, wo qu-le
I young child GEN time I go-EXA
- Disine leyuan.
Disney happy place

When I was a kid, I went to Disneyland.

c. Zuotian, wo qu- le pengyou de jia.
 yesterday I go-EXA friend house

Yesterday, I went to my friend's house.

d. Ruguo jintian shi xingqier, zuotian
 if today is Tuesday yesterday

xingqiyi, wo shang-guo-le san ge ke.
 Monday I take-EXP-EXA three CRS
 class

If today were Tuesday, Yesterday were Monday, I had three classes.

With only one exception, twenty-one out of total twenty-two sentences were made in the past tense. These twenty-one sentences all made the time very clear using terms such as "yesterday," "this morning," "when I was kid," etc.. One of the students said: "English uses -ed such as 'walked', -le and -guo are related to the things that happened before."

In fact, -le is not a marker of Past Tense, and neither is -guo. -Guo, as an Experiential Aspect marker, usually follows the actions which have already happened or Event-time is before Speech-time. However, it is not true that all actions which have already happened require -guo, since speakers do not always wish to express those actions as their experiences.

To understand and manage -le is difficult for native English speakers, because -le only shows an action as an existing fact and has nothing to do with experience, which

is marked by *-guo*. Obviously, English Tense does not help native English speakers to differentiate between existence fact and experience as viewpoints internal to an action itself in the event.

In summary, the confusion of native English speakers in using *-le* and *-guo* is due to a different way of observing action. Native English speakers observe an action from the perspective of Tense, by referencing the time of an action with respect to the time of speech, but do not focus on the nature of the action itself within the event.

4.2 Pattern 2: The Confusion of Resultative Verb Complement and Aspect -Le

One of the unique components of Chinese grammar is related to the result of an action, namely, the Resultative Verb Complement. According to Li and Cheng (1988:288) "The complement of result is a complementary element following a verb predicate, indicating the result of an action." Two Resultative Verb Complements: *-wan* and *-zai*, are relevant to understand this pattern. The following sentences serve as examples:

M. Ta ba men la-kai, wo kan-qingchu le.
 he BA door pull-open, I see-clear CRS
 He pulled the door open, (then) I can see clearly.

N. Wo ba xin xie-wan.
 I BA letter write-finish
 I have finished my letter.

In sentence M, *kai* (open) is the result of *la* (pull), *qingchu* (clear) is the result of *kan* (see). The complement of the verb or action shows the result, but not the action itself in the event. Thereby, the result of *la* (pull) could be still closed or unopen, and the result of *kan* (see) could be not clear or unclear. But the actions themselves, *la* and *kan*, are still the same no matter what the results. In sentence N, *xie* (write) is the verb to show action. *-wan* (finish) only shows the result of *xie* (write). Whether or not one needs to use *-le*, depends upon the action verb *xie*, but not an Resultative Verb Complement *-wan*. However, most respondents were confused and overused *-le* in sentences 12 and 13.

12. Zuotian wanshang, wo xie-le yi-feng
 yesterday night I write-EXA one-CL

 xin, dan wo hai mei xie-wan.
 Letter but I still not write-finish

Last night, I wrote a letter, but I have not finished it yet.

The first part of the sentence 12 is obviously past tense. And most respondents used *-le*; however, in the second part of sentence, they also used *-le*. There are two

reasons for their mistakes. One is that *zuotian wanshang* (last night) makes them think about past tense. Another is *-wan* (finish), makes them think of completion, so that they immediately used *-le* to show the action was finished in the past. Most translated sentence 12 in this way:

12a. *Zuotian wanshang, wo xie-le xin,*
 yesterday night I write-EXA letter

dan wo hai mei xie-wan le.*
 but I still not write-finish EA.

12b. *Zuotian wanshang, wo xie * xin,*
 yesterday night I write letter

dan wo hai mei xie-wan le.*
 but I still not write-finish EA.

Sentence 12a overused *-le* in the second part of the sentence, and 12b did the same thing and also missed the *-le* in the first part of sentence.

In the second part of sentence 13, within the event or in respect to Speech-time, *xie* (the action of writing) does not exist in this sentence. But most of the respondents used *-le*.

13. *Mingtian xia-le ke, wo jiu hui jia*
 Tomorrow end-EXA class I then back home

ba xin xie- wan.
 BA letter write-finish

Tomorrow, I will go back home to finish my letter after I finish my class.

Actually, *-le* is an Aspect marker that shows the existence an action but not the completion of an action. If an action does not exist, then there is no need to use *-le* (Liu 1988).

Table 3

Usage *-Le* in Each Sentence (8 respondents)

Sentence #	Correctly used <i>-le</i>	Incorrectly omitted <i>-le</i>	Incorrectly used <i>-le</i>
1	4 (3 partially correct)	4	
2	2	6	
3	0	8	
4	4	4	
5	0	8	
6	2	6	
7	0	8	
8	3	5	
9	1	7	
10	8	0	
11	8	0	
12	2	0	6
13	1	7	4 of 7

Note: Sentence 1 needs two *-le*, but 3 of 4 used only one *-le* correctly.

However, half of the respondents used *-le* in sentence 13 when the action did not exist, as shown in Table 3.

The confusion existing in sentences 12 and 13 is focused on the Chinese distinction between completion and existence from a linguistic view. Completion in Chinese is the result of action, but existence is to show that an action itself began within the event. The Resultative Verb Complement is not the critical feature for the speaker to consider in using Aspect markers.

In Chinese, there are many verbs and adjectives that can be used as the Resultative Verb Complement in sentences. -Zai (at, on, in, upon...) is another common form used as a Resultative Verb Complement. The basic function is to indicate that a person or thing, either subject or the direct object, will reach or remain at a certain place through an action. Li and Thompson (1981) do not give any definition of -zai. They discuss this form in terms of locative and directional phrases⁷.

The importance of the condition specifying that the subject or direct object locally displaced is demonstrated by the fact that verbs whose actions result, not in locally displacing, but in transporting the subject or the direct object to a new location cannot take a locative phrase in postverbal position(Li and Thompson, 1981:400).

The following examples show very clearly this function of -zai as a Resultative Verb Complement.

O. Ta tang-zai caodi shang.
 3sg lie on grass-ground over
 S/He is lying on the grass.

P. Shu fang-zai zhuozi shang.
 Book put on table top
 The book is put on the table.

7. In other words, -zai is used to express the location and the direction of an action.

In these sentences, the speaker is on the grass after the action "tang" (lie), and book is on the table through the action "fan" (put). -Zai indicates the place where the subject, the speaker in sentence O, and the direct object, the book in the sentence P, ended up as a result of the action tang (lie) and fang (put). Sentences 3 and 7 provide further examples:

3. Keting li zuo-le hen duo ren.
 livingroom inside sit-EXA very many people

There were lots of people sitting in the living room.

7. Shitang li zongshi pai- le
 dininghall inside always stand in the line-E
- hen duo xuesheng.
 very many students

There are always a lot of students standing in the line at the dining hall.

In general, Chinese linguists consider these structures as existential sentences. "A sentence at the beginning of which words or phrases denoting place, time are used to indicate the existence, appearance or disappearance of a thing or a person, and which is without subject, is known as an existential sentence" (Li & Chen 1988:534). Obviously, sentences 3 and 7 both indicate existence. Zuo -le (sitting), and pai -le (standing in the line), both are described as existing facts. The speaker

expresses the situation that the people are in, but not the result of the actions of "zuo" and "pai". However, most respondents translated these sentences this way:

- 3a. Zher you hen duo ren zuo-zai* keting.
 there have very many people sit-in livingroom
- 3b. Hen duo penyou zuo-zai* fangjian li.
 very many friends sit in room inside

Here instead of using *-le*, they used *-zai* to indicate the place of the action. However, the place is not the focus, but rather the situation itself. The speaker does not want to indicate where the people are sitting or where the gathering is being held. Suppose we change 3 and 7 to 3' and 7' as follows:

- 3' Hen duo ren zuo-zai keting li.
 Very many people sit-at livingroom inside
 A lot of people sit in the living room.
- 7' Hen duo xueshang pai- zai
 Very many student stand in the line - in
 shitang li.
 dininghall inside
 Lots students stand in the line in the dining
 hall.

The difference between 3,7 and 3',7' is that the first two describe the existing situation "understood in a stative sense" (Li and Thompson 1981:396). But 3' and 7' emphasize the action, such that the whole event is focused on the

action.

In fact, one respondent said, "-le is interesting, but not so difficult. Those complements are more difficult and sometimes are confusing." The confusion here is due to the non-native speakers' lack of understanding about using -le to express an existing fact or situation; they tend to use -le to express action but not a situation.

4.3 Pattern 3: Missing -Le in Sentences With Durative Time Phrases⁸

The most difficult translations were sentences 5 and 9. All of the interviewees took a relatively longer time to work on them, and they changed their translations several times.

5. Wo pa-le wo zhangfu yi beizi.
 I be afraid of-EXA I husband one generation
 I have been afraid of my husband all my life.

9. Lian ta ye xiang-le yihui cai
 even 3ng also think EXA a while just
 zhao-dao daan.
 look-find answer

It even took her a while to find the answer.

When one respondent translated sentence 5, she said "I

8. All Durative time Phrases expressing a period of time are underline.

don't know how to say..." then after a while, she said:
 "Zai shenghuo, wo kongpa wo de airen" (in life, I am scared
 by my husband). And another respondent, after looking at
 the sentence 5, said: "hmm... this is a difficult one."
 After thinking for a while, he said, "I don't know," and
 gave up. When one of the other respondents translated
 sentence 9, at first, he said: "Keshi, ta shengzhi haishi
 yao haohao de xiang le cai huida" (But, even he thought
 carefully before answering). He hesitated and then
 corrected it, "Keshi shengzhi yao xiang yi huir cai hui da"
 (but, even he thinks for a while and then answers it). The
 first time, he used "haohao de xiang-le" and then he
 changed it to "xiang yi huir." In fact, he could have put
 the two parts together and said "haohao de xiang-le yi
huir." Sentences 8 also contained Durative Time Phrase.

8. Ta zai daxue jiao shu jiao-le ershi
 she at university teach book teach-EXA twenty
duo nian.
 many years

She has taught for more than twenty years in a
 university.

When translating sentence 8, one respondent first made a
 sentence with -le without a Durative Time Phrase and then
 changed it to a sentence without -le by adding a Durative
 Time Phrase. She said: "Ta zai daxue jiao le shu " (She

taught in a university). "...hmm.. *Ta zai daxue jiao ershi nian shu*" (She teaches for twenty years at an university).

Obviously, the respondents felt that Durative Time Phrases and *-le* were in conflict, and they tried to avoid using both at the same time. This confusion results from the misunderstanding of *-le* as a completion marker or Past Tense marker.

4.4 Pattern 4: Missing -Le When the Entire Event Is After the Speech Time

The function of *-le* in a sentence in which action takes place after Speech-time is shown in sentence Q.

Q.	Mingnian	qiutian,	women	mai di,	mai-le
	next year	fall	we	sell land,	sell-EXA
	di	jiu	keyi	ban- jin	cheng-qu.
	land	then	may	move-into	city go

Next fall, we will sell the land. After we sell it, we will move into the city.

This sentences expressess that once the *mai di* (selling the land) becomes an existing fact, they will move. Here, the speaker observes the action "sell" inside of the event.

Even though from the point of speech time, this action has not happened yet. In the event, before the Reference-time, which is the Event-time of *banjia* (move house), *mai* (sell) becomes an existence fact. *-Le* can be used to mark the

action even if it has not happened yet with respect to Speech-time. The action happens in the context of the event. As Table 2 shows, seven out of the eight respondents did not use *-le* in sentence 13, when the action happened after the Speech-time.

13. Mingtian xia-le ke, wo jiu hui jia
 Tomorrow end-EA. class I just back home
 ba xin xie-wan.
 BA letter write-finish

Tomorrow, I will go back home to finish my letter after I finish my class.

This sentence uses *-le* to express that *xia* (end) has become an existence situation which takes place before Reference-time -- going home and finishing the letter -- even though the Reference-time will not happen until tomorrow. In English, this expression call for Future Tense. Again, it is obvious that *-le* has nothing to do with Tense. As Gong (1988:326) states: "This Existence Aspect has no relationship to Tense. As a result, verbs which show action or a situation happening in the present, past, or future, can use *-le*." However, because of their way of observing the action, most of the respondents missed *-le* after the verb "*xia*" (end).

This pattern of using *-le* in the future is only shown in one sentence. I included this sentence because it is

particularly interesting. Although *-le* is supposed to be used in the first part of the sentence after the verb "xia" (end), seven out of eight respondents did not use it. *Xie* (write) exists within the event, but because of *mingtian* (tomorrow), most respondents were influenced by Speech-time and did not use *-le*. In the second part of sentence, *-le* is not supposed to be used, but half of the respondents used it. As discussed previously, the respondents related the action *xie* (write) to Speech-time, and did not use *-le* for the action that came after Speech-time. In the second part of sentence, the action *xie* (write) still came after Speech-time, but because Resultative Verb Complement *-wan* "completion", half of respondents used *-le*. On one hand, respondents keep in mind that they need to observe an action within an event without concerning Speech-time. Nonetheless the idea of viewing time within an event is not clear to them. *-Wan* (completion) always seems to signal respondents to put *-le* after *-wan*. From these examples, we can see that the respondents' own worldview in terms of Tense remains and interferes with their ability to comprehend the Chinese view of completion and existence. Further work related to sentences similar in structure to 13 will provide a clearer picture in this pattern.

4.5 Others

What of the sentences which are not mentioned in the discussion of the four patterns? Table 3 shows that all respondents used *-le* correctly in sentences 10 and 11.

10. Mary si-le shi duo nian le.
 Mary die-EXA ten over year CRS
 Mary died more than ten years ago.

11. Wo wang-le xuduo guoqu de shiqing.
 I forget-EXA many past GEN things
 I forgot a lot of things in the past.

These two sentences belong to the third category, where the verb is inherently bounded (F3) (Li and Thompson, 1981:185). Because of the semantics of these verbs "si" (die) and "wang" forget, it is easier for the interviewees to identify and use *-le* as a past action marker. In these sentences, Past Tense and Existence Aspect overlap. In sentence 4, which is not included in any patterns, half of the interviewees used *-le* correctly as shown in Table 3.

4. Wo wen ta fasheng-le shenme shi ?
 I ask 3sg happen-EXA what thing
 I asked him what had happened?

In the beginning, I expected all of the respondents would use *-le* in this sentence. However, there was some confusion because there is another word "zenme"

which can also be used to translate this sentence. "Zenme-le?" is an oral phrase meaning "what happened?" "what's wrong?".

Wo wen ta zenme-le?
I ask 3sg how-EXA

However, Some of the respondents confused *zenme* and *zenmeyang*. Half of them used *zenmeyang* instead of *zenme*. *Zenme* refers to the way of action, followed by a verb(R). *Zenmeyang* refers to situations(S). This shows that vocabulary can influence the learners' application of *-le*.

R. Wo bu zhidao zenme du zhe-ge zi.
I not know how read this-CL character
I don't know how to read this Character.

S. Zhe fangzi zenmeyang
this house how

What is the house like?
How do you think about this house?

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

It is clear that native English speakers are influenced by their worldview in using the Chinese Aspect marker *-le*. Their worldview in observing actions is structured by their native tongue -- English. English, as a time-conscious language, observes actions in terms of Tense and is closely related to Speech-time. Responses of the respondents were grasped into four patterns of confusion.

In the first pattern, the confusion of two Aspect markers, *-le* and *-guo*, is the result of misunderstanding of Aspect and Tense. Most of the interviewees mentioned that *-le* and *-guo* are related to Past Tense, and they did not know when to use it. In English, Aspect has only two basic types: Perfective and Imperfective (Smith, 1991). *-le* and *-guo* both are Perfective, but they represent two different viewpoints -- a situation become a fact and the speakers' experience. Furthermore, some of the respondents categorized *-le* and *-guo* completely in the manner of Tense to characterize in terms of Past, Present and Future Tense.

In pattern two, the misunderstanding of the different viewpoints of completion and existence in Chinese shows

that the respondents did not understand *-le* as an Existence Aspect marker; instead, they tended to categorize both completion of action and existence as the same. In the second part of this pattern, seven out of eight mistakenly used the Resultative Verb Complement *-zai* instead of *-le* to express the situation. This tendency demonstrates that respondents do experience some confusion in understanding the difference between viewing a situation and an action in Mandarin Chinese.

Pattern three is related to pattern two. The interviewees incorrectly perceived a conflict between *-le* and Durative Time Phrases. This misunderstanding results from miscomprehension of *-le* as a completion marker, instead of an existence marker. Pattern 4 is the most interesting one. It most clearly shows the difficulty of learning the proper usage of *-le*. There is a double task: first applying a new way to observe an action without concerning Speech-time, and then distinguishing the difference between completion and existence.

To summarize the four patterns, the fundamental issue is different worldviews in observing action. Two critical influential factors in these patterns are 1) Respondents are sensitive to the Speech-time but not the speaker's standpoint within the event. 2) The differences between

experiences, completion, and existence of action are not clear to them. This confusions results from the different ways of viewing actions: as an insider (Aspect) or an outsider (Tense).

The general tendency is that native English-speakers apply *-le* properly when a sentence is in Past Tense in English; otherwise, their action-oriented worldview interferes with their use of *-le*. Native English speakers' worldview is more time conscious in reference to Speech-time. Even though, English has Aspect, there are only two ways to generalize actions: Perfective or Imperfective. However, Chinese completely ignores Speech-time, and focuses on the speaker's standpoint and Reference-time. Furthermore, Chinese generalizes actions in a completely different way, that is within an event.

From another perspective, this research shows that respondents who have lived in the Chinese language community apply *-le* better than those who have not. As Table 4 shows, the respondents who have been to China are better than those who have not been to China, but the former also have studied Chinese longer. The exception is the respondent who studied Chinese for less than two years but spend several weeks in China used *-le*. This respondent more accurately used *-le* than

Table 4

Number of Respondents Using *-le* Correctly in the Three Tests

Length of respondent study (years)	Respondents in China or Taiwan (years)	Translation (The maxim is 14 <i>-le</i> in this section)	Questionnaire or Conversation	Making sentences with <i>-le</i> (Maxim is 3 sentences)
9	4	7	4	1
8	5	6	3	3
3	1	3	1	2
2	1	4	1	2
2	0	5	0	2
2	0	2	0	0
2	0	5	0	2
1.7	0.05	5	1	2

respondents who had studied Chinese longer but never visited China. This is especially true in conversation. Those who never lived in a native language community hardly use *-le* even though they probably can make sentences with *-le* if they are required to do so. However, because of the limited number of respondents in this study, it is difficult to prove statistically. Comparison of the acquisition of *-le* according to in-country experiences and the length of study is beyond the scope of this research. However, this is a promising area for extended study to further this research.

5.2 Conclusion

The relationship between culture, worldview and language has been studied from various viewpoints, such as

theory of anthropology, linguistics, bilingual education and native language acquisition among children etc. In this thesis, the task was to shed light on this topic through the applied perspective of language pedagogy. The purpose of the research was to understand the relationship between culture, worldview and language from the point of adult second language acquisition.

Several views of language and thought have been discussed. The discussion has been based on the Sapir-Whorf theory that language carves up reality differently and shapes people in different ways of habitual thinking -- their worldview. Differences between Chinese and English have been explained in terms of worldview. Chinese culture is situation-centered and its language is highly context sensitive. The worldview of Chinese in observing action takes an insider's point of view -- Aspect. American culture is individual-centered and English is a more time conscious language; The worldview of Americans observes actions from an outsider's point of view -- Tense.

The crucial difference between Tense and Aspect in linguistics is: Tense considers action in respect to Speech-time, whereas Aspect considers actions within an event without considering Speech-time. The Chinese Aspect marker *-le* is related to Reference-time, which is

determined by context. *-le*, as an Existence Aspect marker, can overlap with Present, Past, Future, Perfect Tense and other Tenses (Zhao, S.K. & Sheng, J.X. 1984). *-le* is one of the most difficult Aspect markers in Chinese for native English speakers to master.

The result of this research on native English speakers learning Chinese shows that confusion in the use of *-le* can be analyzed in terms of four patterns: 1) the difference between the Existence Aspect marker *-le* and Experiential Perfective Aspect marker *-guo*; 2) The differences between Resultative Verb Complement *-wan, -zai* and the Existence Aspect marker *-le*; 3) not using *-le* in a sentence that has a Durative Time Phrase; 4) not using *-le* when the entire event is after the Speech-time. This analysis demonstrates the fundamental issue is native English speakers' worldview, which is structured by their native tongue -- English.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between people's worldview and second language acquisition. More precisely, the native English speakers' worldview emphasizing Tense does interfere with their acquiring the use of the Chinese Aspect marker *-le*. This result directly supports the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, and the view of Lucy, Hunt and Agnoli, which state that a people's native tongue

influences their habitual thought.

In this sense, language is not only a simple tool to achieve desired efforts as claimed by Wittgenstein, rather it is a system which determines the speaker's behavior and habitual thought. People's worldview is shaped by their native tongue and influences their second language learning. This finding does not conflict with Chomsky's view of Universal Grammar. Universal Grammar focuses on an underlying structure of grammatical relations and categories that are essentially invariant across languages and are reflected in some similarities in languages. However, the findings of my study are based on variant features in different languages and how these features influence people's habitual thinking and behavior. From the viewpoint of language acquisition, Universal Grammar in general focuses on why human beings can learn language, and in particular on children learning their mother tongue. In contrast, my study focuses on why there are some features of grammar that are more difficult for adults to learn in their acquisition of a second language. The objective is to try to understand adult second language acquisition in which the learners already have a complete language system established in their minds. As a result, second language learning requires the learning of a new worldview encoded

in the second language.

5.3 Applied Implications.

One contribution of this study is to identify the Aspect marker *-le* as an Existence Aspect marker, which includes the initial point of an action or situation, but not necessarily the final point. This finding provides clear direction for students to use *-le* -- to refer to a situation or characteristics that become a fact in context. Furthermore, this finding provides a simple solution to the difficulty of explaining the usage of *-le* in different cases linguistically. The analysis of *-le* therefore can be useful directly in teaching Chinese as a second language to native English speakers. The same is true for Chinese Aspect markers *-guo*, and Resultative Verb Complements *-wan* and *-zai*.

The results of this study can be used to improve the mutual understanding between Americans and Chinese. It is important to know that the nature of Chinese communication is context dependent and that American communication is more direct. This point is especially important in business and political dialogue. The worldview of Chinese emphasizes actions in context; for example, their attitude toward a

contract involves not only business, but also human relationships. When a Chinese proposes a toast for someone's health at a business banquet, an American businessman might think this act is quite irrelevant. However, when an American directly expresses a desire to get down to the business immediately, a Chinese might regard this request as an unpleasant start. If both sides understand the cultural elements and the worldviews hidden behind their conversation, they will interact more appropriately, smoothly and joyfully.

Finally, and more importantly, the results of this study can be used in adult second language acquisition. Most second language acquisition research derives from cognitive psychology, which focuses on the universal cognitive processes of human beings (O'Malley, J; Chamot, A. & Walker, C. 1987), or sociolinguistics which focuses on social factors such as pidginization, acculturation, individual variation in learning, and classroom vs. "naturalistic" environment in learning language (Mclanghlin, 1980). This study demonstrates that extending the language learners' understanding to comprehension of culture is important. Knowing the cultural context will assist learners in the proper use of -le and other linguistic structures.

The Sapir-Whorf theory on language and thought provides the foundation for the relationship between people's habitual thinking and their native tongue. To apply this understanding to the problem of how people learn a second language will benefit all who wish to learn about and communicate across different language communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: TRANSLATION SENTENCES

In 1990, I went to China; I visited many places and made a lot of friends there (1). This summer, when I finish my business, I will go to visit them.

Yesterday, I went to my friend's birthday party (2). There were lots people sitting in the living room(3). I met many friends whom I have not seen for a long time. It was very nice to talk to them. I had a very good time there.

While I was walking, I saw my friend John who was running towards me. I asked him what had happened(4). He did not answer me and passed by.

Wang Hong's mother says: "For my generation, women's situation is very hard. Life is difficult and male is very domineering. In my family, my husband controls every thing. I have been afraid of my husband all my life(5). But Wang Hong's life is good and she has a helpful husband in and out of home."

I had called for John many times(6). but I had not been able to reach him. Today I have met him twice on my way.

However, I did not have a chance to talk to him. The first time was by the gate of the library. He rode by on his bicycle and did not notice me. The second time is in the dinning hall. There are always a lot of students standing there in the line(7). We only greeted by smiling. Tonight, I am going to call him again.

Dr. Smith is a very experienced teacher. She has taught in a university for over twenty years(8). However, one question was very difficult, it even took her a while to find the answer(9).

Mary died more than ten years ago(10). However, all her friends still miss her a lot since she was such a pleasant woman. I forgot a lot of things in the past(11). But I will never forget her and what she has done for me.

Recently, I have been very busy. Last night, I wrote a letter to my friend, but I have not finished it yet (12). Today, I have to work on my paper. Tomorrow, as soon as I finish my classes, I will go back home to finish it(13).

Appendix B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Ni xue-guo Hanyu ma ?
(Have you learned Mandarin Chinese before ?)
2. Ni shenme shihou kaishi xuexi Hanyu ?
(When did you begin to learn Chinese ?)
3. Ni qu-guo Zhongguo ma ? Qu-le shenme difang ?
Zengmeyang ?
(Have you been China ? Where did you go ? How did you feel about those places ?)
4. Ni xue-guo Hanyu yufa ma ?
(Have you learned Chinese grammar before ?)
5. Hanyu yufa nan-bu-nan ? Weishenme ?
(Is the grammar difficult to you ? Why ?)
6. Hanyu "-le" nan-bu-nan ? Weishenme ?
(Is Chinese -le difficulty to you ? Why ?)
7. Ni juede Hanyu -le yu Yingwen de shenme yufa you guaxi ma ? Ruguo you, qing ni ju xie lizi shuoming.
(Do you think whether or not Chinese -le relates to any English grammar ? If so, could please gave examples to explain it/them.)
8. Could you please make two or three sentences with -le.

Appendix C: ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation

3sg	Third person singular pronoun
BA	Ba: The noun phrase following <i>ba</i> , which is called the <i>ba</i> noun phrase.
CL	Classifier is a word that must occur with a number (e.g., <i>yi</i> 'one', <i>ban</i> 'half', <i>shi</i> 'ten') and/or a demonstrative (i.e., <i>zhei</i> 'this', <i>nei</i> 'that', <i>nei</i> 'which'), or certain quantifiers (such as <i>zheng</i> 'whole', <i>ji</i> 'how many/a few', and <i>mei</i> 'every') before the noun.
CRS	The sentence final particle <i>le</i> , which has a communication function is to signal a "Currently Relevant State" (CRS). What this means is that <i>le</i> claims that a state of affairs has special current relevance with respect to some particular situation.
EXA	Existence Aspect (- <i>le</i>)
EXP	Experiential Perfective Aspect (- <i>guo</i>)
GEN	Associative (- <i>de</i>): Associative phrase denotes a type of modification where two noun phrases (Nps) are linked by the particle <i>-de</i> . The name associative phrase indicates that two noun phrases are "associated" or "connected" in some way. One very important associative meaning is that of possession. Thus, one type of associative phrase is the possessive, or genitive, phrase. The <i>-de</i> of the genitive/possessive phrases is GEN.
RVC	Resultative Verb Complement