

A Study on the Matching Adverbs of Degree Between Developing Chinese—Elementary Comprehensive Course and Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education at the Elementary Level

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How to cite this paper: Ying Gao, Chuan Xu. (2024). A Study on the Matching Adverbs of Degree Between Developing Chinese—Elementary Comprehensive Course and Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education at the Elementary Level. *The Educational Review, USA*, 8(5), 753-757. DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.05.020

Received: April 12, 2024

Accepted: May 9, 2024

Published: June 7, 2024

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Abstract

Based on the Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education, this paper discusses the adverbs of degree that elementary-level Chinese learners need to master. The study compares the adverbs of degree in the comprehensive textbook "Developing Chinese for Elementary Stages" with the Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education. It examines the consistency of the adverbs of degree included in Developing Chinese are consistent with those in the standards, analyzes the reasonableness and effectiveness of the textbook's content, and provides suggestions for learning and teaching. The study provides guidance for Chinese language learners and a reference for Chinese language teachers. It is worth noting that many adverbs of degree have multiple uses, and the ones that appear in the textbook for the first time should be the most basic and easy to understand. The basic usage should be reiterated in the subsequent texts, with other uses presented in a progressive order from simple to complex. In the process of learning adverbs of degree, teachers can summarize and categorize them to help students understand the differences in the levels of degree expressed. This comparison will enhance students' awareness of how these adverbs convey different degrees.

Keywords

Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education, Developing Chinese, Elementary Chinese Learning, Adverbs of Degree

1. Introduction

The Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education (hereinafter referred to as "the Standards") (Education Center for Language Exchange and Cooperation between China and Foreign Countries, 2021) are applicable to the learning, teaching, testing, and assessment of international Chinese language education, and provide normative references for all kinds of schools, organizations, enterprises and institutions carrying out international Chinese language education. The release of the Standards makes the system of language norms and standards more complete and

puts forward new standards and requirements for international Chinese language educators. Developing Chinese is a series of teaching materials for Chinese as a foreign language published by Beijing Language and Culture University Press. In this paper, the two comprehensive textbooks "Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course I) (Rong Jihua, 2011) and Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course II) (Xu Guimei, 2012)" in the elementary level of "Developing Chinese" are selected as the objects of study. Developing Chinese is a widely used textbook in Chinese language teaching, and many universities have chosen this textbook for long-term advanced students and undergraduates.

After the release of the Standards, there have been some articles comparing the Standards with textbooks, such as *A Comparative Study of Developing Chinese (Primary Comprehensive) and the Standards* (Zhang Li, 2022), *The matching degree between the "Boya Chinese" and the "The Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education"* (Zhao Yueyue, 2023), *The vocabulary comparison study between the "Developing Chinese (Comprehensive)" and "The Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education"* (Li Mei, 2023), and *The textbook analysis of the "Boya Chinese" (Elementary) based on the "The Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education"* (Zhong Weiting, 2023) and so on. Combining "the Standards" to arrange teaching content is the direction we need to strive for in the future. Adverbs are a very important part in Chinese language teaching, and they are also the focus of teaching. By comparing textbooks with standards, we can understand the teaching content that needs to be added or reduced in the future, and highlight the focus of teaching. Currently there is still a lack of specialized research on degree adverbs in a certain textbook.

Based on the Standard, this paper compares the degree adverbs included in Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course I and II) with the Standard and analyses the arrangement of degree adverbs in the textbook. Based on the results of the study, we can find out whether the adverbs of degree included in Developing Chinese fully cover the contents required by the Standard, whether they are out of scope or insufficient, and summarize the adverbs of degree that are out of scope and those are not included, so that we can make adjustments and additions to the textbook in the future. In addition, whether the usage of adverbs of degree is comprehensively explained in the text, class activities, and comprehensive exercises, and whether the exercises are reasonably and adequately organized are the main focuses of the discussion in this paper.

2. Statistics and Analysis on the Contents of Elementary Level Adverbs of Degree in Developing Chinese and the Standard

The Standards stipulate the contents of life, learning, teaching, testing, and evaluation for learners of Chinese as a second language. The Chinese language proficiency of learners is categorized into three grades from low to high, i.e. elementary, intermediate, and advanced, and within each grade, there are three levels according to the differences in proficiency, "three grades and nine levels" in total. The total number of syllables, Chinese characters, vocabulary, and grammar to be mastered at the elementary level which includes levels I, II, and III, is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Summary table of quantitative language indicators for Chinese Proficiency Grading Standards for International Chinese Language Education

Grade	Levels	Syllables	Chinese Characters	Vocabulary	Grammar
wo Elementary	I	269	300	500	48
	II	199/468	300/600	772/1272	81/129
	III	140/608	300/900	973/2245	81/210

A total of 19 adverbs of degree are included in the Standard at the elementary grade (level 1-3): 5 adverbs at the level I: feichang (very much), hen (very), tai (too), zhen (really), zui (most); 10 adverbs at the level II: duo (much), duome (how), hao (really), geng (more), shifen (very), tebie (especially), ting (quite), youyidianr (a little), yue (more), chabuduo (almost); 4 adverbs at the level III: bijiao (rather), gengjia (more), hai (also), xiangdang (quite).

Through the above comparison, there are differences between the adverbs of degree included in the Standard and Developing Chinese. There are 12 adverbs of degree included in both the Standard and Developing Chinese: hen, tai, feichang, tebie, zhen, bijiao, zui, geng, youyidianr, chabuduo, shifen, ting. There are 7 adverbs of degree that are included in the Standard but do not appear in Developing Chinese: duo, duome, hao, yue, gengjia, hai, xiangdang. There are 3 adverbs of degree in Developing Chinese that are beyond the scope of the Standard: shaowei, jihu, ji.

Through the comparative analyses in this section, we can see that the 12 adverbs of degree included in both Developing

Chinese and the Standard belong to the scope of elementary learning and investigation. The 7 adverbs that are included in the Standard but do not appear in Developing Chinese should be added to the learning content in future teaching. These 7 adverbs of degree also belong to the scope of elementary learning and investigation stage in the Standard, and their specific levels are as follows: duo (Level II), duome (Level II), hao (Level II), yue (Level II), gengjia (Level III), hai (Level III), xiangdang (Level III). The three adverbs of degree included in Developing Chinese but not appear in the Standard belong to the scope of intermediate learning and investigation stage in the Standard, with the following specific levels: shaowei (Level V), jihu (Level IV), ji (Level IV), and do not belong to the scope of elementary learning and investigation stage.

3. Statistics and Analyses of the Arrangement of Elementary Level Adverbs of Degree in Developing Chinese

Comparing the adverbs of degree included in Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course I and II) with those included in the Standards (i.e., Level I-III), the Level I adverbs of degree included in the Standards are "hen, tai, feichang, zui, zhen", all of them appear earlier in the textbooks of Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course I), which is in line with the requirements of the Standards. There are ten Level II adverbs of degree included in the Standard: duo, duome, hao, geng, shifen, youyidianr, chabuduo, ting, tebie, yue. Among them, "duo, duome, hao, yue" does not appear in Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course), which is also worth noting after the comparison. Although they do not appear in Developing Chinese, these words will be examined as Level II adverbs of degree in the Chinese proficiency test, so they should be added in the teaching of the elementary grade. Among them, "geng, tebie, youyidianr, chabuduo" appears for the first time in the textbook that is basically the same as that required by the Standard. The adverbs of degree "shifen, ting" appear later, after some adverbs of degree at Level III and Level IV. There are four adverbs of degree at the Level III included in the Standard: bijiao, gengjia, hai, xiangdang. Among them, "bijiao" appears earlier than a number of Level II adverbs of degree, and "gengjia, hai, xiangdang" does not appear in the textbook, which are three adverbs of degree that should be added in time for future teaching. In addition, "shaowei, jihu, ji", which appears in Developing Chinese (Elementary Comprehensive Course II), is not included in the elementary level of the Standard, but it belongs to the scope that needs to be mastered in the intermediate grade for adverbs of degree. In practice, teachers can adjust the teaching focus according to the situation and teach them as the focus of learning adverbs of degree at the intermediate level. The example sentences in the textbook are simple and easy to understand, and the text is informative and comprehensive. In general, the usage, example sentences, and topics of adverbs of degree in Developing Chinese are more appropriate. In the following chapters, we will take the 12 adverbs of degree included in both the Standard and Developing Chinese as the objects of study, and conduct statistics and analyses of the usages.

4. Statistics and Analyses on the Usage of Elementary-Level Adverbs of Degree in Developing Chinese

Elementary-level adverbs of degree are arranged in the textbook Developing Chinese, and we mainly analyse the usage of elementary adverbs of degree. In this paper, we compare the usage of adverbs of degree in the textbook with *Modern Chinese eight hundred words* (Lu Shuxiang, 1999), in order to know which usage of these adverbs has been taught and practiced in the textbook at the elementary level, and which usage has not been mentioned, and the usage that has not been mentioned can be appropriately supplemented and strengthened in the teaching and practice. Comparison of the usage of adverbs of degree will reflect the comprehensiveness and rationality of the organization of the textbook. In this chapter, 12 adverbs of degree, which are included in both the Standard and Developing Chinese, will be used for statistics and analysis.

The frequency of "hen" in the textbook is very high, starting from the third lesson of the first book, there are example sentences of the adverb of degree "hen" in every lesson, and the recurrence rate is very high. The example sentences in the textbook are mainly "hen"+ adjective and "hen"+ verb. Although the recurrence rate is high, the arrangement of the usage is not comprehensive, and basically focuses on two or three usages. For the uses that do not appear, teachers can add explanations and examples of other uses to enrich and supplement the multiple uses of "hen".

The frequency of "tai" in the textbook is relatively high. The teaching can be supplemented with explanations and exercises on "tai+ not + adjective/verb" as appropriate.

The frequency of "feichang" in the textbook is relatively high. The example sentences in the textbook mainly focus on "feichang+ adjective/verb". Examples of "feichang" are: very good, very low, very busy, and so on. But "feichang de ganxie", is also a very common usage, which can be supplemented with additional explanations and exercises in teaching. Examples of "feichang+ verb phrase" were also found, such as "very interesting." There are also examples of "feichang+

not + adjective" such as "feichangbuhao".

The frequency of "zui" in the textbook is not high, the occurrence of example sentences focuses on "zui + adjective/verb". Examples of "zui" are: the lowest, the coldest, the most comfortable, the cheapest and so on. Usage of "zui + not + verb" also occurs, such as the "most not accustomed to" and "the most not liked". But there is no example sentence for "zui + words of orientation".

"zhen" does not appear frequently in the textbook, and the examples focus on "zhen + adjective/verb". Examples in which "zhen" appears include: really hungry, really much, really tasty, really wanting, and so on. The use of "zhen + not + adjective" also occurs, e.g., "It's really not cost much, it's really not easy, it's really not easy to buy, it's really not much."

"tebie" appears infrequently in the textbook and the example sentences in which it appears to focus on "tebie + adjective/verb", such as: especially conscientious, especially convenient, especially suitable, and so on.

"bijiao" appears infrequently in the textbook, the example sentence that appears is mainly "bijiao + adjective/verb". For example, "comparatively good, comparatively big and so on." No example sentences appear in "bijiao [+ auxiliary verb] + verb". Teachers can supplement their teaching with it and increase practice in the use of these word collocations.

"geng" does not appear very often in the textbook. The example sentences that appear are mainly "geng+ adjective/verb phrase". For example, "more angry, more expensive, more convenient, and so on." Example sentences do not appear in usage of "geng + not + adjective/verb" and "geng + verb + the Chinese character "de" (not) +...". Teachers can supplement their teaching with explanations of and increase practice in the use of these word collocations.

"youyidianr" does not appear frequently in the textbooks, usages which are mainly "youyidianr + adjective/verb" and "youyidianr + not + adjective/verb" like: a little ugly, a little regretful, a little unsure, a little upset, a little uncomfortable and so on.

"chabuduo" appears very infrequently in textbooks, with examples such as: almost understand, almost forget, almost know, almost 3 o'clock, almost a year.

The word "ting" appears very rarely in textbooks, and the example sentences are mainly "ting + adjective[+de]" such as: quite good, quite thick, and quite serious. There are no example sentences for "ting + verb[+de]" and "ting + adjective/verb [+de]", teachers can introduce the usage "ting + verb[+de]" and "ting + adjective/verb [+de]" appropriately and add more exercises.

The word "shifen" does not appear very often in textbooks. There are only two examples of sentences using the collocations of "very lonely, be very appreciative".

5. Statistics and Analyses on the Usage of Elementary Level Adverbs of Degree in Developing Chinese

According to the results of our comparative analyses, the seven words included in the Standard but not arranged in the textbook of Developing Chinese are duo, duome, hao, yue, gengjia, hai, xiangdang, ; they should be added to the learning content in teaching. These 7 adverbs of degree are included in the scope of primary learning and investigation in the Standard. The intermediate adverbs "ji, shaowei, jihu" which appear in the textbook of Developing Chinese Primary Course are the focus of learning at the intermediate grade. The textbook should avoid including too many words that are beyond the level, so as not to bring more pressure to learners by making them too challenging. Developing Chinese, as a core curriculum of Chinese language teaching, the arrangement of the teaching materials should be consistent with the Standard and must not lack the necessary examination contents at this level. If students have not mastered enough words required at this level at this stage, it may lead to difficulties in Chinese application, expression, and testing, which may cause inconvenience to students' learning.

The adverbs of degree that appear more frequently in the Elementary Level of *Developing Chinese* are: hen, tai, feichang; and the adverbs of degree that appear less frequently are: tebie, zhen, bijiao, zui, geng, youyidianr, chabuduo, shifen, ting. In the two textbooks at the elementary level, "hen" has the highest rate of recurrence, with example sentences of "hen" appearing in every lesson starting from the third lesson of the first book, and the rate of recurrence reaches more than 90%. "tai" and "feichang" also have a high rate of repetition, with these two adverbs of degree appearing in more than half of the lessons, with a repetition rate of more than 50%. Other adverbs of degree did not have a high recurrence rate. The frequency of recurrence has a direct impact on teaching effectiveness. Newly learned words increase the possibility of forgetting if they are not reproduced in the textbook in time to achieve the effect of reviewing and strengthening the memory. In the arrangement of teaching materials, the importance of recurrence should be taken into account, and the timely recurrence of the words that have been learned can improve the teaching efficiency and learning effect. Therefore, this paper suggests that the adverbs of degree, which appear less frequently, should be supplemented with more exercises and readings in learning. The preparation of future teaching materials should also consider the problem of repetition, and

should solve the problems of low repetition rate and frequent repetition distance time.

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