

A Study of the Interference of the
Subjectless Sentences in Chinese

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1. Introduction

In learning a foreign language, one can hardly eliminate his native language from his mind. After all, he has been listening to and learning his own language since he was born. Therefore when it comes to speaking or writing a foreign language, he tends to express himself according to the rules and habits of his own language, sometimes without so much as being conscious that they are making mistakes. The following joke serves a good example.

A Chinese accompanied his American friend to a movie. When they got to the movie house, they found that all the seats were taken and that there was standing room only, so the Chinese told his friend, "You see, stand see; no see, tomorrow see." (Tsao, 1980)

At that time, the Chinese must have thought he was conveying his meaning, without the slightest idea why his friend should have felt confused. This is a joke but this is the case with most senior high school students. When they come to write something in English, they are likely to think in Chinese and mentally translate their thoughts into English. No wonder there appears in their composition and translation items a lot of Chinglish.

Chinglish, as the term suggests, is caused by the interference of the Chinese language. Among the Chinglish made by senior high school students, the interference of Chinese subjectless sentences plays an important part. This can easily be explained by the fact that