

中国英语学习者

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Temporality in Chinese EFL Learners' Written Narrative Discourse:  
A Cross-Sectional Study

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## 序

孙炬是我指导的博士生中年龄最小的一位。她应届考上了硕士,后来又应届考上了博士,可谓是一路顺风。然而事业的顺利是与自己的艰苦努力分不开的。她虽然年轻,却为人处世十分成熟。她本来是作二语习得和外语教学研究的,与我的研究方向不十分一致。她是因山东大学的王守元教授不幸病逝而转给我指导的。开始,我还因为我们的研究方向不十分一致,并且因为她年纪轻而担心,不知我能不能做好导师,顺利让她完成学业。但不到一年的时间这种担心就打消了。孙炬在博士二年级(2006年)就在核心期刊《外语研究》上发表了论文,而且接着又在同一年和2007年分别在CSSCI和核心期刊《外语界》和《山东大学学报》上发表了论文。所以,我发现她是一个自主学习能力很强、刻苦努力而且研究能力也很强的让导师省心和放心的学生。尽管在许多理论细节上不能给予她向其他导师一样的指导,但只要告诉她研究的基本思路和方法,她就能够自己做得很出色。

她博士毕业后当大学老师,继续从事教学研究工作。尽管一开始教学压力很大,备课的任务特别重,不是像其他许多博士毕业的学生那样,已经做过教学工作,有很多教学实践经验,但她还是能够在做好教学工作的同时,抽出时间来做科学研究工作,特别是把自己的博士论文进行修改、完善、优化、提高,使其达到能够出版

的水平。

本研究是一个在语篇层面的一个比较综合的研究,既涉及不同的群体,包括初中生、高中生和大学生,又涉及不同的语言:被试者既要用英语,也要用汉语(当然是在不同的时段,以避免相互影响)进行写作;同时还涉及不同的层次(微观、中间、宏观)、不同的方法(定量和定性)、不同的理论(如叙事学理论、心理认知理论、语篇衔接理论等)。采用这么复杂的研究方式显然是为了对研究对象进行比较全面和深入的研究,而不只是“瞎子摸象”式的研究,但这样显然也增加了难度。作者基本上处理得比较合理:思路清晰,层次分明,循序渐进,结论可靠。

从研究方法上讲,作者把定性和定量两种方法相结合。定性研究主要用于了解中国英语学习者叙述文写作经历的背景信息,以利于更好地解释学习者对与时序内容相关的叙事内容和结构,以及叙事的交际功能的表达。定量分析则用于发现中国学生写作中叙事的基本模式和方式。同时,作者还能够运用现代媒体技术,将较为先进的 Coh-Metrix 软件应用于分析学生的英语语篇,并且发现了意图性、因果性、逻辑性及时序衔接等指标对叙事语篇时序性和叙事性的重要影响。

由于研究的设计和运用的方法比较恰当,研究的成果也比较丰富。除了中国学生由于英语水平比较低,在英语写作中词汇的选择、语法结构等方面出现一些错误之外,作者还发现,就微观层次的命题单位而言,大多数外语学习者能够选择适当的表达过去时间命题的时体形式,大致能够理清主要事件和故事背景,并且偶尔运用时态变化来取得特殊的叙事效果。在修辞单位方面,学习者能够逐步意识到命题之间关系的重要性,通常以序列的方式将其连接起来。但在多数情况下,他们不能有效地表达出事件之间的因果性或同时性,并且往往忽视其间的修辞关系。另外,他们还缺乏对于连接词语篇功能的认识,不能有效地运用表达不同逻辑

关系的连接成分来实现语篇的连贯。他们在汉语语篇中使用因果连词的数量略高于在英语语篇中的使用。

在时间结构的中间层面,英汉语篇呈现出较为一致的情节叙事模式,学生能够运用恰当的表达方式来表示时间的转换、提供背景信息以及增强叙事效果等。同时,他们的语篇中确实存在情节不连贯的现象,并且由于没能遵循叙事时间链的规范而导致叙事时间的阻断。与他们的英语语篇相比,汉语语篇中的时间表达资源及其表达方式的不同配置要丰富得多。就显性标记而言,学生们通常借助于体形式以及时间副词来建立过去时间参照点。从隐性方式来看,学生主要依赖语篇语境并且依靠自然叙述顺序采用零标记形式。尽管汉语语篇显示出时序表达的丰富性和复杂性,但受试学习者将叙事语篇组织成为以目标为导向的、具有层级性的时间结构的能力还有待进一步发展和完善。

本研究一方面对汉英语篇比较研究的发展有一定启示,另一方面也对语篇教学本身有一定启示。正像作者本人所说的那样,本研究可以使老师“通过对时序性表达的功能分析更好地了解中介语叙事语篇的结构特征,特别是学习者如何表达时序概念”,同时还可以把“本文提出的以目标为导向、多层面的时间结构概念应用于教学材料的准备和课堂教学,以便使学习者增加表达时序性的手段,增强时间表达的跨文化意识,并提高叙事文体的整体修辞效果”。

当然,虽然作者已经获得了博士学位,在学术上取得了一定成就,但在学术界还是一个新兵,还需要进一步发展和提高。书中可能还有个别不尽人意的地方,还请读者提出宝贵意见。

张德禄

2008年7月10日

于中国海洋大学浮山园

# 前 言

本书是在作者博士学位论文《中国英语学习者中介语书面叙事语篇时序性的横断研究》的基础上撰写而成的。全书共分六章：第一章为引言，介绍了研究的背景、意义及价值；第二章为文献综述，从英语学习者叙事能力、时序性习得和对比修辞三个方面对相关理论进行了总结和论述；第三章为研究方法，介绍了研究理论的框架及相关数据的搜集和分析方法；第四章通过对中国英语学习者英汉叙事语篇的文本描述和分析，探讨了其时序表达的特点及影响因素；第五章提出了五个方面的教学建议；第六章为结论和启示，总结了研究成果、局限性和未来研究方向。

本书以初中、高中、大学的英语学习者为研究群体，考察他们在英汉书面叙事语篇里时序性的表达运用情况。本研究主要以 Kruistum (2006), Masuda (2002) 和 Meyerson (1997) 的分类及叙事框架为理论依据，将外语学习者叙事文本的时序结构分为微观层次、中间层次和宏观层次，探讨他们分别在英汉文本中时序表达的横向发展特征，并且采用多学科、定性与定量相结合的研究方法，全面考察英语学习者时序性语言表达和外语叙事能力的关系，同时也涉及到母语汉语叙事语篇能力对英语叙事写作的直接和间接影响。根据以往研究存在的问题和文献研究的结果，在理论框架上，本研究力求突破时序性原有较为狭窄的时体特征习得及其定义，综

合叙事学、心理认知和二语写作多领域的新视角来分析时序性,提出一个多层面的书面叙事语篇的时序结构,从而在深层次上解读中国英语学习者写作过程中所体现的文化、语言及语篇行为。

在研究方法上,采用定量研究与定性研究相结合的方法。在文本分析研究中,来自济南三所学校的 90 名学生于 2006 年 9 月参与了为期三周的、在课堂环境中完成以无字图画为诱导材料的英汉写作任务。不同于前人的是,定量分析还开创性地将较为先进的 Coh-Metrix 软件应用分析学生英语文本,并且发现了意图性、因果性、逻辑性及时序衔接等指标对叙事语篇时序性和叙事性的重要影响。而通过问卷调查获得的定性描述旨在获得中国英语学习者叙事文写作经历的背景信息,以期更好地解释学习者对与时序内容相关的叙事功能、内容和结构的表征并且能够进一步支持定量研究中的一系列数据结果,由于篇幅所限,原始数据未全部列出。

研究发现,中国英语学习者在叙事语篇的微观、中间和宏观时间结构方面遇到不同程度的困难。与英语本族语者总体相比,中国英语学习者的英语语言表达储备量小,缺乏变化。就微观层次的命题单位而言,大多数外语学习者能够选择适当的表达过去时间命题的时体形式,大致能够分清主要事件和故事背景,并且偶尔运用时态变化以达到特殊的叙事效果。而初中组学生文本中所出现的大量时体错误正是他们较低的英语水平和不成熟的语言运用的表现,但是这并未影响其叙事内容的丰富性。在修辞单位方面,学习者逐步能够意识到命题之间关系的重要性,通常以序列的方式将其连接起来。但在多数情况下,他们不能有效地表达出事件之间的因果性或同时性,并且往往忽视其间的修辞关系,例如背景关系、详述关系、结果关系等等,尽管这些修辞关系在一定程度上蕴涵了时间关系。另外,三组受试学习者还缺乏对于连接词语篇功能的认识,因为他们大多采用增添式连接词“and”来确保叙事



的顺畅。另外,三组学习者在汉语文本中使用因果连词的数量略高于在英语文本中的使用。

在时间结构的中间层面,英汉文本呈现出较为一致的情节叙事模式,受试学习者一般使用句首时间和地点状语来表示时间转换,而且运用事件句、静态句、评价句和人物引语来分别达到推进故事的时间进程、提供背景信息以及增强叙事效果的目的。同时,通过对外语学习者写作文本的分析说明,他们的语篇中确实存在情节不连贯的现象,并且由于没能遵循叙事时间链的规范而导致叙事时间的阻断。而在宏观叙事连贯层面上,本研究采用 Coh-Metrix 软件,综观受试英语叙事文本的因果、空间关系,意图性及时间连接词的使用情况。就叙事文本的因果结构而言,初中组学生文本含有较少的与叙事顺序相关的因果信息,而他们在 Coh-Metrix 软件中所获得的可读性高分源于其他重要指标,例如句间概念相似性、意图性表达以及连词的使用。与初中组和高中组学生相比,尽管大学英语专业学生的文本较长,但他们并没有提供较多情节间的因果关系,由于认知方面的局限,他们在将各个事件组成一个具有因果关联的网络方面同样面临着困难。结果还表明,初中组学生的叙事文写作的总体表现略强于其他两组,这可归因于初中学生大量接触并练习记叙文。

与学习者的英语文本相比,汉语中的时间表达资源及其表达方式的不同配置有别于英语。就显性标记而言,学生们通常借助于体形式以及时间副词来建立过去时间参照点。若以隐性的方式来表达,学生们主要依赖语篇语境并且依靠自然叙述顺序采用零标记形式。尽管汉语文本显示出时序表达的丰富性和复杂性,但受试学习者将叙事语篇组织成为以目标为导向的、具有层级性的时间结构的能力还有待发展和完善。

本研究结果既具有较强的理论价值,又具有实践价值。从理论上讲,本书建立的有别于其他时体研究且基于对时间表达变量

的融合模式,能够通过按时序性表达的功能分析更好地了解中介语叙事语篇的结构特征,特别是外语学习者如何表达时序概念;较为复杂的时间意义如何在叙事语篇中一步步发展;多种时序语言表达手段如何在外语水平发展的不同阶段协同作用等等。而这种对二语时间语义的习得探究以及它在中介语语篇中的运用有助于了解外语学习者潜在的概念系统,因为学习者表达时间的出发点不仅关乎于时间本身的真值问题,而且涉及对某些时间概念的表征。总的来说,本书所包含的重要理论构念是,叙事语篇时序性的表达依靠自下而上的,由微观层次、中间层次构成的时间语义关联和宏观层面自上而下具有层级性的、因果关联所构成的相对独立而又相互影响的机制的共同作用。从实践意义上讲,外语教师在微观、中间和宏观互动的层次上教授影响时间表达的各种因素,包括内容、表达手段以及语境因素,其视野必将随着对语言形式—意义匹配以及时间语义的关注而得到拓展。

本书成稿前受到我的导师张德禄教授的精心指导和巨大鼓励。在定稿过程中有幸得到了北京大学姜望琪教授、北京对外经济贸易大学王立非教授,以及山东大学博士生导师苗兴伟教授、刘振前教授和王俊菊教授的点拨。他们严谨的治学精神让我在学业上再次经历一次洗礼,使我终身受益。此外,本书得到了山东师范大学外国语学院出版基金立项资助,山东大学出版社为本书的出版给予了极大的支持,在此一并表示诚挚的感谢。

由于本人水平有限,书中难免有不足之处,还望学界同仁及读者朋友批评指正。

作 者

2008年7月于济南

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## **Abstract**

The study examines how Chinese EFL learners at junior middle school, senior middle school, and university levels respectively, express temporality in written narrative discourse. Based on the categories and general narrative structure described by Kruistum (2006), Masuda (2002) and Meyerson (1997), this study breaks down learner narratives into the micro level, the meso level, and the macro level temporal structure, and explores the cross-sectional development of temporal encodings both in English and Chinese narrative versions. The focus of the study is on the integrated and systematic relation between temporal expressions and narrative ability of Chinese EFL learners, which also includes the direct or indirect influences of Chinese narrative discourse ability on learners' interlanguage narrative writing ability, by employing multidisciplinary, qualitative and quantitative research methods. Based on the previous studies and literature research, this dissertation brings together research findings from the disciplines of narratology, psychology and second language writing to form an alternative framework for the analysis of temporality in written narrative discourse and proposes a multi-level

temporal structure which breaks through narrow consideration of tense-aspect in temporality discussion, that, potentially, might yield deeper understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and discursive practices that Chinese EFL learners bring to their foreign language writings.

The study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Ninety learners took part in the study. They were given a questionnaire and a writing task. In textual analysis, the data, consisting of 180 narratives (90 English texts and 90 Chinese texts) collected at three schools in Jinan, during an interval of three-weeks, in September 2006, was a picture-elicited task in classroom environment. A statistical package Coh-Metrix 2.1 was used to estimate the narrativity of learner texts, and those selected measures in Coh-Metrix tool specified that causality, intentionality, logic and temporal cohesion significantly influenced readability of learners' temporally coherent narrative discourse. Qualitative descriptions were conducted to examine background information of Chinese EFL learners' narrative writing experience. Thus, the EFL learners' written discourse could be interpreted in light of not only language in which they directly expressed but also cultural-educational context where their developing system could be observed. For this reason, the quantitative data from questionnaire results were aimed for a discussion of narrative function, content and structure that are relevant to temporal expression both in Chinese and English cultures, in order to illustrate and supplement the findings of the textual analysis of the study.

The findings show that Chinese EFL learners are confronted

with varying difficulties at the micro, meso, and macro levels of narrative. In general comparison with native English writers, Chinese EFL learners' repertoire of temporal encodings was smaller and less varied in English versions. With respect to proposition units at the micro level, it was observed that most learners could choose appropriate tense and aspect to locate events in past time storytelling, to distinguish events and background information, and to employ tense alteration to achieve "narrative effect". The fact that JG learners committed a large number of tense-aspect errors was a sign of their immature and less proficient use of the English language, though this did not exert great influence on their rich and varied narrative content. In terms of rhetorical units, learners became gradually aware of the importance of connectivity between propositions, and could link them sequentially, but in most cases, they failed to connect them causally or simultaneously, to pay attention to the rhetorical relations among these propositions, which, to some extent, specify the temporal relation. They had limited knowledge of discourse functioning role of various types of conjunctions, and as a result, additive conjunctions were maintained across three groups of learners under study. Besides, the number of causal conjunctions in Chinese versions was slightly higher than those in English texts.

At the meso level, Chinese EFL learners displayed a consistent variation among episodes, both in English and Chinese versions. They employed clause-initial adverbials of time and place to signal temporal shift, and organized chronological events into hierarchically-related complete episode. Furthermore, they

employed eventive, stative, evaluative clauses, and reported speech to the extent that stative and evaluative clauses provided background information, eventive clauses moved timeline forward, and reported speech helped to enhance dramatic color. Meanwhile, analyses of writing sample texts or text extracts have shown that episodic disconnectedness indeed existed in learner narrative discourse and their failure to meet the criteria for narrative timeline resulted in temporal break.

At the macro level, narrativity units were investigated by using Coh-Metrix tool, which is a broader approach to encompass casual, spatial, intentional content and temporal connective perspectives. Regarding the causal organization of the narrative, JG (Junior Middle School Group) learners' texts presented less causal information relevant to the story sequence than any of SG (Senior High School Group) and UG (University English Major Group) learners. The highest readability scores obtained from JG might result from other significant measures, such as conceptual similarity across sentences (LSApssa), intentional content and connective use in Coh-Metrix. Compared with learners in JG and SG, learners in UG wrote longer texts but produced similar fewer causal relations between episodes, and they seemed to have difficulty in organizing events in a causal network due to possible cognitive constraints. Generally speaking, JG learners' performance was better than the other groups (learners in JG got the highest mean score 90.182 in Flesch Reading Ease, compared with 84.575 in SG and 86.991 in UG), possibly because their high frequency of input and more practice in narrative compositions. It was also suggested that L1 transfer on macro level



played a positive role in EFL learners' representation of some temporal properties in English.

In comparison with learners' English versions, temporal resources of the Chinese language and relative weights imposed on these devices were different from those in English. When establishing past reference with overt markers, Chinese EFL learners resorted mainly to aspect markers and a number of temporal adverbials. When expressing temporality implicitly, learners relied heavily on discourse context. In addition, a number of zero-marked forms in Chinese narrative production demonstrated the peculiarity of the Chinese language. Though the Chinese versions of narrative showed greater temporal diversity and complexity, they demonstrated rudimentary capability in organizing narrative discourse into goal-directed, hierarchically temporal structure, just as in English versions. It also showed that the effects of cultural context on every foreign language learner's narrative development are undeniable. In other words, how narrative is told and interpreted and the linguistic devices and discourse strategies that convey temporal meanings and attitudes are always culturally embedded. In sum, by virtue of the analysis of 90 English written narratives and 90 Chinese ones, the findings showed that temporality in learner texts varied more than that previously studied. This variation is based on an interaction of several factors, including: (1) narrative structure, i. e., figure-ground distinction, (2) representation of event knowledge or situation model, (3) thematic emphasis, and (4) the focused level (macro, meso, or micro).

The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical