



当代外国语言文学研究文库

Modern Foreign Language and Literature Studies Series

英语母语者与中国英语学习者 体特征理解的比较研究

A Comparative Study of the Understanding of English Aspect
by Native Speakers and Chinese EFL Learners

徐风华 著



上海交通大学出版社
SHANGHAI JIAO TONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

当代外国语言文学研究文库

英语母语者与中国英语学习者 体特征理解的比较研究

A Comparative Study of the Comprehension of English Aspect
by Native Speakers of English and Chinese EFL Learners

徐风华 著

上海交通大学出版社

内 容 提 要

本书是中央高校基本科研业务费项目《英语体特征理解对比研究》(项目号:13D111413)的主要研究内容。该项研究对英语母语者和中国英语学习者对于英语体特征的理解进行了实证研究。具体来讲,研究内容包括:英语母语者和中国英语学习者对于英语状态动词时与体、终结性动词时与体,以及语义特征终结性/非终结性的理解。

本书适合于从事语言学研究的专业人士,包括英语教师、研究生和英语专业的学生。

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语母语者与中国英语学习者体特征理解的比较研究/徐风华著. —上海:上海交通大学出版社,2013

ISBN 978-7-313-10079-5

I. 英... II. 徐... III. 英语—学习方法—对比研究 IV. H319.3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2013)第 163026 号

英语母语者与中国英语学习者 体特征理解的比较研究

徐风华 著

上海交通大学出版社出版发行

(上海市番禺路 951 号 邮政编码 200030)

电话:64071208 出版人:韩建民

常熟市大宏印刷有限公司 印刷 全国新华书店经销

开本:787mm×960mm 1/16 印张:10.75 字数:217 千字

2013 年 8 月第 1 版 2013 年 8 月第 1 次印刷

印数:1-1030

ISBN 978-7-313-10079-5/H 定价:29.00 元

版权所有 侵权必究

告读者:如发现本书有印装质量问题请与印刷厂质量科联系
联系电话:0512-52621873

前 言

时态和体作为表达时间概念的重要语法范畴,在第一和第二语言中都得到了广泛研究。但是,先前有关时态和体的研究,主要关注的是二语学习者语素习得的发展顺序,而有关英语(作为外语的)学习者对于时态和体的语义意义的理解的研究相对较少。本研究采用句子理解测试和句子偏好测试,从实证的角度探讨了中国英语学习者(240名中国大学生)对于英语体特征的理解,即,如何理解语法体所表达的语义意义,如何理解语义特征终结性和非终结性,以及他们对语法体、词汇体和时态之间的原型搭配或非原型搭配有怎样的偏好。另外,将中国英语学习者与英语母语者(40名本族语为英语的美国大学生)对英语体特征的理解进行比较,发现了中国英语学习者和英语母语者在对于英语体特征的理解上存在的异同。

具体地说,本书从以下三个方面展开对英语体特征的理解的研究。

(1) 状态动词时与体的理解研究。根据状态动词和进行体的定义,两者不可以连用。状态动词表达的事件具有稳定性和持续性,而进行体表示暂时性和动态性。然而,一些语言学家指出一些状态动词可以用于进行体,表达事件的暂时性。相关语料库也表明,英语母语者在日常生活中大量使用进行体状态动词。本研究结果发现在默认情况下,一般现在时状态动词表达永久性特征;进行体削弱了状态动词的永久性特征;而蕴含时间变化的语境提高了进行体状态动词的可接受度。在对于一般现在时和现在进行体状态动词的理解上,中国英语学习者和英语母语者存在着差别,但是不论在最小语境还是时间语境下,两者都认为一般现在时状态动词(原型搭配)更加合理。

(2) 终结性动词时与体的理解研究。前人对日本英语学习者对于一般过去时和过去进行体终结性动词(包括完结动词和达成动词)所表达的语义意义的理解进行了研究,发现低水平学习者错误地认为过去进行体终结性动词表达事件的完成。本研究对中国英语学习者进行了同样的考察,发现中国英语学习者区分开了一般过去时和过去进行体所表达的语义意义。虽然中国英语学习者和英语母语者在对于终结性动词的理解上存在着差异,但在绝大多数情况下,两者都认为一般过去时终结性动词表达事件的完成。在对于终结性动词的合理性判断上,对于完结动词而言,只有英语中级水平组和英语高水平组与英语母语者表现一致,他们认为一般过去时完结动词和过去进行体完结动词同样合理。

(3) 语义特征终结性/非终结性的理解研究。本研究对由动词+直接宾语、介词和(无)小品词所表达的语义特征——终结性和非终结性的理解进行了探讨。一

个句子的体特征不只是由动词表达,句子的其他成分同样会影响整个句子的体特征。本研究考察了直接宾语的语义特征、介词以及小品词在决定句子体特征中的作用。并且发现不同语言水平的中国英语学习者在动词短语体特征的理解上与英语母语者存在差异,语言水平越高,其理解水平越接近母语者;反之,则差异显著,中国英语学习者和母语者对三类动词短语所表达的体特征的理解难易度的感知不同。对母语者来说,三类动词短语从易到难依次为:动词+介词,动词+(无)小品词,和动词+直接宾语;而中国英语学习者没有清晰地区分出三类动词的难易度。

本书是在我的博士论文的基础之上编撰而成。我想在这里特别向我的导师山东大学外国语学院刘振前教授表示由衷的谢意。在刘老师的鼓励和支持下,该研究得以顺利完成。2009年,我获得国家留学基金委的资助,前往美国蒙特克莱尔州立大学访学。在一年的访学时间中,我得到了心理学系 David Townsend 教授的悉心指导。Townsend 教授与我就我的研究进行了无数次的讨论,并且在实验材料的编写、数据统计的分析方法上给了我极大的帮助。另外,我非常感谢蒙大语言学系 Mary Call 教授、Steve Seegmiller 教授、Longxing Wei 教授的指点和帮助。还要感谢 Aihua Li 教授、Tony Spanakos 教授、David Townsend 教授的实验助手 George Olekson 和 Samantha Siegel 在受试的招募和测试中对我的帮助。

就读于山东大学期间,我得到了多名教授的教诲。李延福教授、王俊菊教授、王湘云教授、丁原骥教授,他们的学识和教诲拓宽了我的学术视野,点燃了我对英语语言学的热爱,激励我在英语语言的研究中更进一步。清华大学的崔刚教授、对外经济贸易大学的王立非教授、河南大学的张克定教授、北京师范大学的苗兴伟教授、同济大学的张德禄教授对我的研究提出了宝贵的意见。我的同门师弟庄会彬、师妹石磊给了我无数的帮助,对他们的感激难以言表。感谢我的同事东华大学外语学院的吴蕾、蒋敏、任再新、武静老师帮我进行数据收集。专著的出版发行得到了中央高校基本科研业务费专项资金资助,以及东华大学外语学院殷耀教授、赵晓临教授、杨林贵教授和林嵘书记的大力支持。最后,衷心地感谢我的先生宋达,他帮助我进行了数据收集和整理,没有他的支持、理解和奉献,我所取得的成绩都无从谈起。由于笔者学识浅陋,出错难免,尚望读者谅解并指正。

Contents

Chapter One Introduction	(1)
1.0 Introduction	(1)
1.1 Research Orientation	(2)
1.2 Objectives of the Study	(3)
1.3 Organization of the Book	(4)
Chapter Two Theories of Aspect	(6)
2.0 Introduction	(6)
2.1 Smith's Two-Component Theory	(6)
2.2 Verkuyl's Theory of Aspect	(9)
2.3 De Swart's Framework	(11)
2.4 Prototype Theory	(13)
2.5 Summary	(16)
Chapter Three Aspectual Marking in English and Chinese	(17)
3.0 Introduction	(17)
3.1 Tense	(17)
3.2 Aspect	(19)
3.2.1 Definition of Aspect	(19)
3.2.2 Categories of Aspect	(20)
3.2.3 Semantic Meaning Expressed by the Interaction between Tense and Grammatical Aspect	(26)
3.2.4 Syntactic Elements Contributing to the Sentential Aspect	(30)
3.3 Aspect in English	(33)
3.4 Aspect in Chinese	(36)
3.4.1 Grammatical Aspect	(37)
3.4.2 Interaction between Grammatical Aspect and Lexical Aspect	(44)
3.4.3 Special Features of Chinese Aspectual System	(50)
3.5 Differences and Similarities between the Aspectual Marking in English and Chinese	(52)
3.6 Summary	(54)
Chapter Four Previous Studies on the Comprehension of Aspect	(55)
4.0 Introduction	(55)

4.1	Studies on the Comprehension of the Semantic Meaning of Grammatical Aspect	(56)
4.2	Studies on the Comprehension of Lexical Aspect	(61)
4.3	Studies on the Comprehension of Grammatical Aspect and Lexical Aspect	(63)
4.4	Issues Awaiting Further Exploration in the Field of Aspect	(65)
4.5	Summary	(67)
Chapter Five Methodology		(68)
5.0	Introduction	(68)
5.1	Participants	(68)
5.2	Test Instrument	(69)
5.2.1	Rationale for the Design of the Test Instrument	(69)
5.2.2	Sentence Interpretation Test	(70)
5.2.3	Sentence Preference Test	(72)
5.3	Data Collection	(75)
5.4	Summary	(75)
Chapter Six Comprehension of the Tense and Aspect of Stative Verbs		(77)
6.0	Introduction	(77)
6.1	Research Questions and Hypotheses	(77)
6.2	Data Treatment	(78)
6.3	Results	(79)
6.3.1	Sentence Interpretation Test	(79)
6.3.2	Sentence Preference Test	(82)
6.4	Discussion	(94)
6.5	Summary	(99)
Chapter Seven Comprehension of the Tense and Aspect of Telic Verbs ...		(100)
7.0	Introduction	(100)
7.1	Research Questions and Hypotheses	(100)
7.2	Data Treatment	(101)
7.3	Results	(102)
7.3.1	Accomplishments	(102)
7.3.2	Achievements	(108)
7.4	Discussion	(115)
7.5	Summary	(118)
Chapter Eight Comprehension of the Semantic Feature of Telicity/Atelicity		(119)
8.0	Introduction	(119)
8.1	Research Questions and Hypotheses	(119)

8.2	Data Treatment	(120)
8.3	Results	(120)
8.4	Discussion	(126)
8.5	Summary	(130)
Chapter Nine	Conclusion	(131)
9.0	Introduction	(131)
9.1	Major Findings	(131)
9.1.1	Results Concerning Stative Verbs	(132)
9.1.2	Results Concerning Telic Verbs	(132)
9.1.3	Results Concerning Verb+direct object/preposition/ (no) particle	(133)
9.2	Implications of the Study	(133)
9.2.1	Theoretical Implications	(134)
9.2.2	Methodological Implications	(135)
9.2.3	Pedagogical Implications	(136)
9.3	Limitations of the Present Study	(137)
9.4	Suggestions for Further Research	(138)
References	(140)
Appendix A	Sentence Interpretation Test	(149)
Appendix B	Sentence Preference Test	(153)

Chapter One Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The expression of time is one of the central conceptual domains of language. We speak of situations as being in the past, present, or future; and we talk about events as ongoing or completed. Two of the most important grammatical systems for expressing temporal concepts in the world's languages are tense and aspect. While tense and aspect both provide temporal information, they are two different concepts. On the one hand, tense is deictic in that it indicates the temporal location of a situation, that is to say, the occurrence of a situation is in relation to a specific reference time. On the other hand, aspect is non-deictic in that it is related to the temporal shape of a situation, independent of its temporal location. To put it another way, aspect is related to the internal temporal structure of a situation and ways of presenting the situation.

Tense and aspect have been widely investigated in both first language (L1) and second language (L2). However, the previous studies on tense and aspect mainly focused on the developmental sequence of morphology in the L2 acquisition. How the learners of English as a foreign language (EFL learners) comprehended the semantic meaning encoded in tense and aspect is under-explored. This book is designed to investigate the comprehension of English aspect by Chinese EFL learners through the exploration of the comprehension of tense and aspect of stative verbs, the comprehension of tense and aspect of telic verbs, and the comprehension of the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity. The performance of the Chinese EFL learners is then compared with that of the native speakers of English, so as to find out the shared features and differences in their comprehension of English aspect.

In the first chapter, the research orientation, objectives of the study and the organization of this book will be introduced.

1.1 Research Orientation

With tense and aspect being approached from a number of research perspectives, the largest body of work has followed the form-oriented approach to aspect, that is to say, many studies were carried out to test what is known as Aspect Hypothesis and Discourse Hypothesis. Researchers (Andersen, 1986a, 1986b, 1991; Ayoun & Salaberry, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig, 1994b, 1995a, 1998, 2000; Bronckart & Sinclair, 1973; Housen, 1994, 2002; Munoz & Gilabert, 2011; Véronique, 1987; etc.) following the form-oriented approach to aspect argue that lexical aspectual classes guide early language learners in their production of inflectional morphology. For example, it has been observed that learners first use perfective or past morphology with telic verbs. The production data used in these studies show that learners use aspectual morphology from very early stages of acquisition. However, a morpheme and its meaning are not “indissolubly wedded” (Dittmar, 1981, p. 146). To put it another way, learners use aspectual morphology at early stages, but it does not necessarily follow that they have mastered the semantics associated with the forms (cf. Slabakova, 2002). Thus, in addition to the investigation of the acquisition of tense and aspect morphology, it is necessary to tap learners’ comprehension of the semantic meaning of tense and aspect as well.

In the study of the learners’ comprehension of the semantic meaning of tense and aspect, it is worthwhile to investigate how aspectual interpretations are formed. Questions like in what order and how comprehenders combine different types of aspectual information to form aspectual interpretation need to be explored. It is generally believed that aspect is composite in nature, to put it another way, though the verb decides the possible situation type a sentence refers to, other syntactic elements, such as subject, object, complement, preposition, particle and temporal adverbial also contribute to the aspectual meaning of a sentence. With multiple factors co-determining an aspectual interpretation, how these factors combine with each other to form the final aspectual meaning of a sentence becomes an interesting topic for researchers. Take the sentence *He was baking a cake* as an example, the verb predicate *bake a cake* refers to a telic event, the adding of the progressive aspect *-ing* changes it into an atelic event, and the simple past *was* locates the event on a time axis which means that the event took place in the past. Thus, the aspectual meaning of this sentence is that it refers to an atelic event which happened in the past.

The preference for prototypical and nonprototypical combinations of lexical aspect, grammatical aspect and tense needs to be further explored, so as to find out how L2/EFL learners understand nonprototypical combinations, and what kinds of information make certain nonprototypical combinations possible. For example, by definition, stative verbs cannot be used in the progressive form. But the use of progressive stative is supported not only by some linguists but also by everyday use of the native speakers of English. However, no researcher has ever empirically investigated how L2/EFL learners comprehend progressive statives, and what kinds of information make them become acceptable.

The role played by different features of the direct objects, prepositions and particles in determining the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity needs to be further investigated as well. It's well-acknowledged that other syntactic elements also influence the aspectual meaning of a sentence. The effect of direct objects was most widely investigated, and the role played by prepositions was relatively less examined. What is more, the level of difficulty in the comprehension of the aspectual meaning expressed by the interaction between verbs and direct objects, prepositions, with or without particles awaits further exploration.

This study is designed to address the above-mentioned issues by investigating the comprehension of the tense and aspect of stative verbs, the comprehension of the tense and aspect of telic verbs, and the comprehension of the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

There are a number of purposes to undertake an empirical study to investigate the comprehension of English aspect. The first objective is to provide empirical evidence to some theoretical issues. In English, generally speaking, statives are not used with the progressive aspect (Carlson, 1977; Vendler, 1957), but some linguists (Bach, 1981; Binnick, 1991; Comrie, 1976; Dowty, 1979; Filip, 1999; Li & Shirai, 2000; Marchand, 1955; Smith, 1983, 1997; etc.) claim that some progressive statives are acceptable. Some linguists explain progressive stative as emphasizing the temporary nature of a quality. Others regard progressive stative as more descriptive and more vivid. What is more, Smith (1983) explains progressive stative as a marked choice made by speakers. Except for the above-mentioned theoretical explanations of progressive stative, until now, no empirical research has investigated the acceptability and

interpretation of progressive statives by either the native speakers of English or L2/EFL learners. Another theoretical issue that needs to be empirically investigated is how the native speakers of English or L2/EFL learners understand aspectual meaning expressed by verb + direct object/preposition/(no) particle, and their corresponding levels of difficulty. It is well-observed that aspect does not reside in verb itself, instead, it is compositionally assigned to verbs, predicates, sentences or discourse level (Call, Townsend, Seegmiller, Manicin, & Ilia, 2008). The semantic feature of direct object, preposition and particle, etc. all influence the aspectual meaning of a sentence (Smith, 1997; Van Hout, 1998; Verkuyl, 1972, 1993). However, so far, no comprehensive research has been done to investigate the role played by direct object, preposition and particle in determining the aspectual interpretation of a sentence. In addition, the level of difficulty in the comprehension of verb + direct object/prepositional phrase/(no) particle has not been rated. An empirical study conducted in this book explores how the native speakers of English accept and comprehend progressive statives, and how they understand the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity expressed by verb + direct object/preposition/(no) particle, the findings of which will surely enrich the aspectual theory.

The second objective of this study is to improve the efficiency of teaching aspect to English learners. In the grammar class, the students were taught that in English, tenses include simple present tense, simple past tense, simple future tense, progressive present tense, progressive past tense, present perfect tense, past perfect tense, present perfect progressive tense and past perfect progressive tense. That is to say, the teaching of aspect (if the word is ever used) is often mixed with that of tense, to put it another way, aspect has never been explicitly explained. Furthermore, the inherent semantic feature of a verb—the lexical aspect, has never been mentioned in the teaching of aspect, let alone the composite nature of aspect. Therefore, students often fail to have a proper understanding of the notion of aspect, and they have difficulty in comprehending and expressing the aspectual information. By exploring the nature of aspectual interpretation by the native speakers of English, the research findings will be very instructive for the teaching of aspect to English learners.

The third objective is to find out the characteristics exhibited by the Chinese EFL learners in the comprehension of English aspect. In this study, the shared features carried by the Chinese EFL learners and the native speakers of English, differences among the Chinese EFL learners across different proficiency levels, and between the Chinese EFL learners and the native speakers of English in the

comprehension of English aspect are discussed. With regard to the comprehension of the semantic meaning of grammatical aspect, according to the literature review, the semantic contrast being frequently investigated is between perfective and imperfective, for example, the *Preterit* and *Imperfect* markings in Spanish, the *Imparfait* and *Passé Composé* in French. However, the semantic contrast between simple present and progressive present on stative verbs has not been explored. What is more, though the semantic contrast between simple past and progressive past was widely investigated, EFL learners at different proficiency levels with Chinese as native language were not used as participants in great numbers. When it comes to the comprehension of lexical aspect, the semantic feature of telicity is a popular topic, but atelicity is rarely explored. This study focuses just on the comprehension of the tense and aspect of stative verbs, the comprehension of the tense and aspect of telic verbs, and the comprehension of the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity expressed by verb+direct object/preposition/(no) particle by the Chinese EFL learners. Thus, the findings of this study will definitely enrich the literature of the comprehension of English aspect by EFL learners.

1.3 Organization of the Book

This book falls into nine parts. It begins with an introduction to the study, including its research orientation, objectives and organization of the book. Chapter Two introduces the relevant theories of aspect. The aspectual marking in English and Chinese is introduced in Chapter Three. Chapter Four reviews the previous studies on the comprehension of English aspect. The methodology of the present study is illustrated in Chapter Five. Chapters Six to Eight present the comprehension of tense and aspect of stative verbs, telic verbs and the semantic feature of telicity/atelicity respectively. The final chapter, Chapter Nine, summarizes the major findings, as well as discusses the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications of the study, and the limitations inherent in the study. The recommendations for further research are also made in the last chapter.

Chapter Two Theories of Aspect

2.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the relevant theories of aspect which made claims about the aspectual interpretation of a sentence, including Smith's (1997) two-component theory, Verkuyl's (1972, 1993) theory of aspect, De Swart's (1998) framework and Prototype Theory. Smith proposes a two-component theory which claims that the sentential aspect is composed of viewpoint aspect and situation type. Verkuyl holds the idea that aspect is compositional. De Swart develops a framework illustrating how the aspectual interpretation of a sentence is formed. Prototype Theory provides explanation for why certain morphology goes naturally with certain situation type (e. g. , perfective goes with achievements and accomplishments first). In the remaining of this chapter, these theories will be introduced respectively.

2.1 Smith's Two-Component Theory

Traditionally, aspect refers to only grammaticized viewpoints such as the perfective and imperfective. As people have come to realize the relation between viewpoint and situation structure, the range of the term "aspect" has broadened. The term now includes temporal properties of situations, or situation types. Viewpoints and situation types convey different information about the temporal aspects of situations, such as whether the situation is ongoing or completed, whether the situation refers to a state or an event. Smith (1997) proposes a two-component theory which identifies viewpoint aspect and situation aspect as the basic components of aspectual system. They are independent but interacting components of aspect. According to Smith (1997), the aspectual meaning of a sentence is "a composite of the information from the components of viewpoint and situation type" (p. 1). The composite nature of aspectual meaning is an essential part of the two-component theory which provides a principled approach to the relation between the situation type (event or state) and viewpoint (perfective or imperfective) of a sentence. One of the basic ideas is that the situation type of a

predicate remains constant, regardless of the viewpoint with which it is presented.

Smith (1997) compares viewpoint aspect to a camera lens. The function of viewpoint aspect is similar to that of the lens which enables the speakers to present a situation from a particular temporal perspective. It gives a full or partial view of the situation talked about. It is generally indicated morphologically, with affixes or other designated morphemes. Situation aspect is concerned with the aspectual classification of verbs and situations according to their temporal features. The temporal features such as “dynamicity”, “durativity” and “telicity” interact to determine the aspectual class of a verb or the type of a situation. Situation aspect presents a situation as belonging to an event or a state. For example,

- (1) a. Mary walked to school.
- b. Mary was walking to school.

The situation aspect in the above sentences is the same, *walk to school* is an event. While the viewpoint gives a full view in example (1a), a partial view in (1b).

In order to further illustrate the two-component theory, Smith offered a schematic representation of the aspectual information conveyed by sentence (1b) above. Sentence (1b) presents a situation of the accomplishment type with the imperfective viewpoint. (2a) gives the temporal schema for an accomplishment; *I* and *F* represent initial and final endpoints respectively. The dots represent the internal stages of the event. (2b) gives a temporal schema for the imperfective viewpoint; the dots represent an interval consisting of internal stages of a situation. (2c) is a composite of the two schemata; the slashes indicate the interval of the situation presented in the sentence. The linguistic forms that realize the temporal schema are given on the right side of each line (tense is not represented).

- (2) Temporal schema for *Mary was walking to school* (Smith, 1997, p. 3).
 - a. I...F (accomplishment) Mary walk to school
 - b.... (imperfective) be+ing
 - c. I...///...F (composite) Mary walking to school

The slashed period represents an interval of Mary’s walking to school, an interval that includes neither the initial nor the final endpoint. No information as to whether the event is completed; that is, whether Mary actually got to school, is revealed in the sentence. However, the type of event represented by the constellation *Mary walk to school* is known: it is telic, involving a process

associated with an outcome, even though the endpoint may never occur when the situation is presented with the progressive. Thus, viewpoint does not obscure event type. To put it another way, no matter what viewpoint a situation takes, the situation type is always transparent.

It is clear that the two components of aspect operate at two different levels but interact with each other to determine the aspectual meaning of an utterance. Situation aspect operates at the semantic level while viewpoint aspect operates at the grammatical level. This difference determines that situation aspect is language independent whereas viewpoint aspect is language specific. Situation types are based on human cognitive abilities. People distinguish the basic situation types on the basis of their perceptual and cognitive faculties. Human beings make aspectual distinctions quite automatically, without conscious thought. Situation type is conveyed more abstractly, by the verb and its arguments, or verb constellation. However, the viewpoint aspect varies significantly between languages, because it is primarily a grammatical concept, and grammars vary across languages.

The reason that this book adopts two-component theory is that one-component approach has deficiencies in accounting for different levels of aspect. Xiao and McEnery (2004) critically commented on the one-component approach used by Moens (1987) and Zhang (1995), pointing out that one-component approach to aspect is inefficient in explaining certain category or the incompatible interaction between certain situation type and certain aspectual marker. What is more, languages differ in the linguistic realizations of aspect, the interaction between aspectual viewpoints and situation types, and the meaning expressed by the interaction. Thus, in order to thoroughly and accurately account for the aspectual system of a language, two-component theory needs to be adopted. For example, the English perfective takes the non-progressive form, whereas in Chinese, perfective aspect markers include the actual aspect *-le* and experiential aspect *-guo*. In English, Chinese and Russian, there are restrictions concerning the interaction between aspectual viewpoints and situation types, whereas in French, viewpoints apply to all situation types.

In addition to the fact that the aspectual meaning of a sentence is the composite result of viewpoint aspect and situation aspect, other syntactic elements of a sentence, e. g. subject, object, preposition, particle, and temporal phrase also exert influence on the sentential aspect, though the verb plays the most important role (Call et al., 2008; Dai, 1997; Verkuyl, 1972, 1993; Xiao & McEnery, 2004). Verkuyl (1972, 1993) is credited with the notion that

aspectual interpretation is compositional and should be evaluated at the level of the verb phrase or sentence. In the next section, Verkuyl's theory of aspect will be introduced.

2.2 Verkuyl's Theory of Aspect

Verkuyl (1972, 1993) states that aspect is a structural phenomenon, which means that it is not systematically expressed by morphemes but in the form of information scattered over certain constituents of the sentence, in particular the verb and its arguments. By using the following sentences (Verkuyl, 1972, cited in Verkuyl, 1993, p. 15), Verkuyl made a distinction between durative and terminative sentences:

- (3) a. Judith ate sandwiches.
- b. Judith ate three sandwiches.
- c. Judith ate a sandwich.
- d. Judith wanted a sandwich.
- e. They drank from the whisky.
- f. They drank a draught from the whisky.
- g. He walked to the station.

This set of data leads to the statement that aspectuality of the terminative sentences is compositionally formed. The reason is that *eat* being constant in (3a)-(3c), the aspectual difference between these sentences must be attributed to a difference between the noun phrases (NPs) *sandwiches*, *three sandwiches* and *a sandwich*. This difference is explained in terms of quantification and the delimitation of mass: *sandwiches* in (3a) pertain to an Unspecified Quantity of sandwiches, *three sandwiches* in (3b) and *a sandwich* in (3c) to a Specified Quantity of sandwiches. Prepositional phrase (PP) like *from the whisky* in (3e) is accounted for by assuming an empty head NP. In this way, a complex NP like *a draught from the whisky* in (3f) could be taken as its specified counterpart. The head NP is now being lexically filled and expressing a Specified Quantity of Whisky. As to the PP *to the station* in (3g), one option is to treat *to* as an element incorporated into the verb *walk*, so that *the station* in (3g) would end up as the complement of *walk to*.

The compositional nature of aspectuality can also be explained from the perspective of category ambivalence. The entailment test (which will be discussed in section 3.2) would demonstrate that (3a) is classified as an activity and (3b) as an accomplishment (terms in Vendler's four-way verb classification,