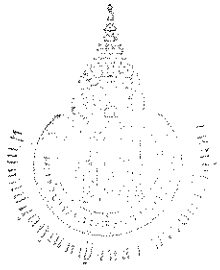
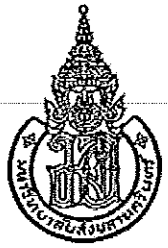




Past and Present Tense and Temporal Interpretation in English Narrative Texts by Third Year Law Students of Southwest University of Political Science and Law at Chongqing City Province, China

Changqing Chen

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

Prince of Songkla University

2007

Thesis Title	Past and Present Tense and Temporal Interpretation in English Narrative Texts by Third Year Law Students of Southwest University of Political Science and Law at Chongqing City Province, China
Author	Mrs. Changqing Chen
Major Program	Applied Linguistics

Major Advisor

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Premin Karavi)

Co-advisor

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Patama Aksornjarung)

Examining Committee:

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Waraporn Sripetpun) Chairperson

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Premin Karavi) Committee

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Patama Aksornjarung) Committee

(Dr. Pittayatorn Kaewkong) Committee

The Graduate School, Prince of Songkla University, has approved this thesis as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Applied Linguistics

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krerkchai Thongnoo)
Dean of Graduate School

Thesis Title	Past and Present Tense and Temporal Interpretation in English Narrative Texts by Third Year Law Students of Southwest University of Political Science and Law at Chongqing City Province, China
Author	Mrs. Changqing Chen
Major Program	Applied Linguistics
Academic Year	2007

ABSTRACT

This study investigated tense and temporal interpretation in English narrative texts of students from Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL) in China. It aimed at four purposes to know: (1) what verb forms were given in English narrative texts by Chinese university students, (2) what factors contributed to their past and present temporal interpretation in English narrative texts, (3) if there were any differences in their receptive performance and productive performance of temporal interpretations in English narrative texts, and (4) if there were any differences in the temporal interpretation performance between the high and the low English proficiency groups.

The subjects in this study were 170 third-year law students randomly picked up from the SWUPL 1,500 population, who had finished Foundation English IV in the academic year 2006. The 170 subjects were divided into two groups: the high proficiency group and the low proficiency group with 85 subjects in each of them.

Four instruments were used to collect data: a cloze test, a recall questionnaire concerning the cloze test, a writing test and a recall questionnaire concerning the writing test.

The data analysis consisted of (1) qualitative analysis of verb forms, targeted at the ungrammatical forms given by the subjects in the cloze test and the writing test;

(2) qualitative analysis of the factors involved in temporal interpretation; (3) *t*-tests to compare the scores of the cloze test and the writing test and the correlation of the cloze test scores and the writing test scores within each group; and (4) *t*-tests to compare the scores between the high and the low proficiency groups.

The findings of the study are as follows:

1. Nine types of ungrammatical verb forms were found involving the tense formation. They were the misuse or misforms of the *modals and past verbs*, the *passive voice structures*, the *progressive tense structures*, the *perfect tense structures* and the *pure present participle structures*. Errors in *past irregular verbs*, in *subject-verb agreement*, *word classes* and *spelling were also observed*. Among them, the incorrect uses of past irregular verbs and of passive voice were conspicuous.

2. Eight factors contributing to temporal interpretation were identified and categorized respectively at syntactic, textual and conceptual levels. They were: *adverbial phrases*, *conjunctions*, *noun phrases*, *verb phrases*, *grammar* (sentence patterns and grammatical meanings of tense), *context*, *text* (discourse structure) and *conceptions*. Among these factors, adverbial phrases, noun phrases, context and verb phrases most facilitated the subjects' temporal interpretation in reading. The decisive factors influencing the students' temporal interpretation in writing were their knowledge of the text structure and general understanding of the event(s). Context and action verbs also played their roles in the subjects' temporal interpretation.

3. Significant differences were found in the subjects' temporal interpretation performance in narrative reading and writing. More correct tenses and temporal interpretations were given by the subjects in the writings than in the readings.

4. The high subject group's temporal interpretation performance in the narrative reading and writing texts was significantly different from that of the low subject group. The subjects' temporal interpretation ability was associated with their language proficiency levels. The high proficiency group outperformed the low proficiency group both in correct verb forms and in temporal interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the time of completion of this thesis and of studying for my MA in applied linguistics in Thailand, I would like to express my thanks to the people and institutions that have helped me in the past two years.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Premin Karavi, for his supervision and guidance. Without his help, I could never have been able to complete this work. His inspiring ideas, insightful suggestions, and valuable comments have given me a lot of help in the research and writing this thesis. During the research, many academic ideas came only after discussions with him. He helped me greatly. I thank him very much.

Secondly, I would like to thank my co-advisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Patama, Aksornjarung for her kindness and comments.

Thirdly, I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Waraporn Sripetpun and Dr. Pittayatorn Kaewkong, my examining committee, for their valuable time and the comments they gave on this thesis.

I would like to thank my proposal reader, Asst. Prof. Dr. Chonlada Laohawiriyanon for her kindness in reading my thesis proposal and offering valuable comments and suggestions.

I would like to thank Mr. Danial Ringold for his kindness in proofreading my testing materials.

I would like to thank Mr. Mick Currie, for his sincere help in proofreading of my thesis. He helped me with the writing data evaluation. He is very kind.

I would like to thank Mr. A-pichai Sangkapan for his help with the statistical work for this research. He is very kind.

I would like to thank Prof. Shi Wuxiang for his kindness in helping me with the statistics of the testing instruments in this study.

I would thank Miss Paratta Promme for her kindness in spending time with me to check the statistics in this study.

I would like to thank my dear husband, Prof. Dr. Zhaojun Dong. He helped me collect the data and taught me how to use the SPSS program. He financed my data collection.

I would like to thank all the course teachers for knowledge they gave to me.

I would like to thank the former and the current chairpersons of the MA program, Asst. Prof. Dr. Monta Chatupote and Asst. Prof. Dr. Waraporn Sripetpun for their kindness and for all their help. I thank them very much.

I would like to thank the former and the current heads of the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Asst. Prof. Umpairat Sudhinont and Asst. Prof. Chitraporn Sherdshupongse for their kindness and help. My thanks also go to Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Faculty International Office.

I am most grateful to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Prasert Chitapong, former President, and Dr. Boonsom Siribumrungsukha, current president of Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus, for granting me presidential scholarship which enabled me to study for a master's degree here and accomplish my thesis. Their generosity has made my dream of extending my English learning possible. Also, my sincere thanks are extended to Asst. President, Dr. Wichien Chatupote, to Mr. Kosin Boon Yawattanopas, to Mrs. Saratwadee Chaiwiwatpong, and the other staff in the PSU International Office for their kindness and help. I would like to thank them for all their help.

I would like to thank my home university, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, former director of the International Office Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zheng Daxuan, and School of Foreign Languages of SWUPL for the chance given to me to study abroad. I appreciate my faculty's understanding, support and help. Both the former and the current administrations of the Foreign Languages School gave me their kindness and allowed me to study without any disturbance in the past two years.

Special thanks go to Prof. Song Lei, former dean of the School of Foreign

Languages of SWUPL. He gave me the chance to start this journey of learning English which had been latent within me for many years. I appreciate his kindness very much. I also wish to thank Assoc. Prof. He Chongrun and Assoc. Prof. Wei Mingfang for their constant kindness to me during the past twenty years. I wish to thank Prof. Zhao Liang, the current dean of the faculty for his kindness and help.

I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Yang Bingjun for his kindness and help. He guided me towards the present research topic and gave me many helpful suggestions.

I would like to thank the students of the 2004 academic year from the three law faculties of SWUPL who participated in my research as the subjects. Their cooperation was indispensable.

I would like to thank Mr. Wangjian and other colleagues at my home faculty for their support and understanding.

I would like to extend my thanks to other kind people at PSU. They are the staff members working in the faculty technical section, in the university registration department, in the PSU computer centre and Mr. Teerapong Chuenjit from the computer centre for his kindness and help.

I would like to thank the security guards at the Faculty of Liberal Arts. They were kind and gave me a lot of help.

I would like to thank my friend Ms. Chusri Wong Sanuwat her kindness, help and concern given to me. It has been nice to know her and make a friend with her.

Lastly, I would like to thank my dear families, my father and my mother, my husband and my son, my sisters and my brother for their love and patience. They have been with me all the time, always standing by me and helping me through difficult times.

Once again, thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Prasert Chitapong and the Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus. It is a very beautiful place. Two years of living and studying in this beautiful place will be a memory for ever.

Thank you all.

Changqing Chen

CONTENTS

CONTENTS (Continued)

CONTENTS (Continued)

CONTENTS (Continued)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES (Continued)

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Languages have different ways to encode time concepts. In English, and also in some other languages, each complete utterance contains explicit time reference markers, especially on the verb units. This time reference marker brings the utterance into relation to the time of speaking. Therefore, the marking of time is a basic feature of utterances in these languages.

English uses tense/aspect and temporal adverbials to construct time concept, as shown in the sentences *John did some shopping yesterday* and *John is working at his office now*. Compared with English, Chinese does not have inflectional verbs for the reference of time. To express a specific situation of an event, Chinese speakers and writers mostly locate time in an utterance and writing by temporal adverbials and sometimes in aspects. That is, concept of time in Chinese is realized generally at the level of lexis (Fang, 1992). This difference between Chinese and English in temporal expressions may pose problems to Chinese EFL learners and is likely to give them difficulties in acquiring English tenses.

Take Chinese students' writing for example. Once I read an adult student's composition. He wrote, *I had a hard time in the past days. My baby has been ill. My wife has lost her job. And I had a quarrel with my boss last week.* In the discourse context set by the writer, he misused *was ill* and *lost her job*. Very often, we encounter sentences from our students like this. Can you stop wondering at our instructive effectiveness when you read *I have never expected that it is the last time I saw her.* Tense has been tackled in the classroom for our students at the very beginning stage of

their English learning. Yet it has been generally acknowledged by us language teachers as one major problem to obstruct Chinese students' successful English expression. This is true even for those learners who have learnt English for years. They do not know whether they should use the past tense or the present tense in a specific context.

The present research is to investigate the Chinese university law students' tense use problems by focusing on their English past and present temporal interpretation in narrative texts. Narrative is the most common text type found in Foundation English textbooks for tertiary students in China, for whom it is compulsory to complete Foundation English 1--4. A narrative passage sets up a context that affects temporality in that environment. And the narrative claims its prominent temporal features. Reference of the situation time in narrative texts can be linguistically and textually constrained and conceptual. They can add difficulties in temporal interpretation of the discourse. These facts lead to the present research in which narrative texts are chosen to test Chinese students' temporality in their EFL learning.

The data will display problems of English tense with Chinese students and the outcome of the data analysis will inform language teachers of the EFL students' temporal interpretation in narrative texts and help them to be aware of delicate parts of tense use in the narrative context. For example, it is hypothesized that the learner's individual approach to time inference in L2 sentences is associated with his English proficiency level and insufficient discourse knowledge about narrative texts is a factor to influence Chinese students' temporal interpretation. If the hypotheses are proved, teachers would be offered a short cut to lead students to appropriate time inference in English narrative readings, and later this would facilitate them to achieve more tense coherence in their narrative writings.

Another benefit is expected to be achieved from the comparison of verb forms in the cloze test and the writing test that can reveal the Chinese students' tense

and temporal interpretation in narrative reading and writing.

It is hoped that this study can add to our knowledge of learning English as a second language (SLA) in aspect of tense and tense acquisition.

1.2 Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate past and present tense and temporal interpretation of the Chinese university students by studying their performances and recalls of verb forms in the context of narrative reading and writing. The study aims to identify:

1. Kinds of verb forms used by the Chinese university students in English narrative texts.
2. Factors that contribute to the Chinese university students' temporal interpretation in English narrative texts.
3. Differences in temporal interpretation performance by the Chinese university students in English narrative texts
4. Differences in temporal interpretation performance by the Chinese university students between the high and the low English proficiency levels.

1.3 Research Questions

Four research questions are designed to accomplish the purposes addressed above. They are:

1. What verb forms are given in English narrative reading and writing texts by the 3rd year Chinese law students from SWUPL university at Chongqing, China?
2. What factors contribute to their past and present temporal interpretation in

English narrative reading and writing texts?

3. Are there any differences in their receptive performance and productive performance of temporal interpretation in English narrative reading and writing texts?
4. Are there any differences in temporal interpretation performance between the high and the low English language proficiency groups?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to help Chinese university students with their difficulties in English tense learning.

The problems identified in the study will inform teachers of the potential misleading temporal interpretation by the learners in English narrative texts and help them to be better prepared for their classroom instruction. Major ungrammatical verb forms in tense formation will be predicted and help enhance effectiveness in teaching.

Knowledge of the factors found to be influencing temporal interpretation of the students will benefit EFL teachers, and data in the study will reveal to a degree how L2 learners interpret time in an English narrative context and how their interpretation might be different from that of native speakers.

Discussion of the tense problems of the Chinese students in this study will shed light on the tense problems with other EFL learners whose first languages bear similarities in temporality with Chinese and therefore, help them with their English learning.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study investigated tense and temporal interpretation of the third year Chinese university law students. It consisted of two parts: a survey of verb forms produced by the subjects in narrative texts and an analysis of factors that influence

their temporal interpretation in this context. The survey of the verb forms centred on ungrammatical verb forms in tense formation. The analysis of factors was based on the subjects' reasons and explanations that they believed to justify their temporal interpretations. A cloze and cloze-test questionnaire and a writing and writing-test questionnaire were chosen to fulfill the task.

Moreover, a comparison of the temporal interpretation performance in controlled and less controlled narrative texts, and the temporal interpretation performance in the high and the low English proficiency groups was undertaken to see how the learners behaved with regard to their receptive ability and productive ability in narrative reading and writing texts and how each group would perform in temporal interpretation.

The study treated tense/aspect as one concept and referred to tense for the convenience of discussion. It was an investigation of the Chinese university students' temporal interpretation and tense performance.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Twenty-one terms in this research are defined as follows.

1. **Tense** is defined as a grammatical expression of time by using verb forms to establish the location of an event in a time continuum. English has two tense inflections: present [-s], marked when the subject is a third-person singular noun, and past [-ed] with its allomorphemes. The present study studies the basic two English tenses: past and present. Future tense is classified as future in the past and present future and included in the corresponding tense range.

2. **Aspect** is defined as a grammatical category accompanying tense. It is essentially a way of viewing processes rather than locating them in time like tense. While tense signifies the time when something happened, aspect of the verb elaborates the meaning of tense by specifying whether an action is a single occurrence or a

repeated occurrence (habitual), whether it is an action that goes on for some time (progressive), or whether that action has been completed (perfect). In English, it is rather difficult to separate aspect from tense. Tense and aspect are treated as tense/aspect following the convention and discussed under the topic of tense in this study.

3. **Temporal Interpretation** is defined as an indication of time of a state or an action by giving verb forms. *Tense employment*, *tense selection*, *tense use*, *choice of tense*, *temporal inference* and *inference of time* are synonyms of the term in this study. To be accurate, tense refers to the form of the verb and temporal interpretation is the concept of time or the perception of the time in an event expressed by tense. Temporal interpretation in this study is performed by the subjects.

4. **Speech Time** (ST) is defined as the time of speaking, the moment at which the speech act takes place. It is understood as "now". When tense situates a linguistic event at a point along the linear flow of time, its temporal interpretation is in reference to this 'now'. So *past* talks about events that are completed prior to ST and *present* is about events whose span includes ST.

5. **Event Time** (ET)[1] is defined as the time of the event described and narrated, a particular point at the time continuum on which that event sits. Reichenbach (1947) gave the name "event time" but some other researchers have called it "situation time". *Events* in this study is used as a broad technical term covering actions, events, processes, relations, states of things or whatever a sentence expresses.

6. **Conceptual Time** (CT)[1] is defined as the time expressed in the verb form in a sentence from the speaker or the writer's perspective of the event time. English prescribes speech time as an orientation for any temporal interpretation. Its

---

[1] Researchers have given several different names for the three time concepts, in which *real time, actual time, objective time* and *situation time* stand for *event time*, and *psychological time* and *subjective time* for *conceptual time*.

present-time establishment sets narratives in the past time frame. With event time being the time at which an event takes place, conceptual time is the speaker or the writer's understanding of that time at which the event situates. It reflects the speaker or the writer's perception of time of a particular situation.

7. **Reference Time** (RT) is defined as the time in every tensed sentence that presents a situation from a temporal perspective. It is the time realized in the verb form of a sentence. It is the speaker or writer's perception of the time of the event and this perception is expressed in tense. Discourse context, grammars and the speaker or writer' conceptual time are considerations in reference time.

8. **Temporality** is defined as the manner of temporal marking of events, actions and states (in brief, events). A general term for temporality is time reference.

9. **Discourse** as a linguistic term is defined as a continuous stretch of language, either spoken or written. *Text* is another term used for *discourse* as written works. In this study coherent succession in a narrative discourse reads from two perspectives: foreground developing in sequence of events and background adding information to the text. The subjects' temporal interpretation is examined at the narrative discourse level.

10. **Narrative Text** is defined as texts that carry general features of a narrative which has an orientation to the story, the happening events, the evaluations and the close of the story, describing and narrating real people and the real lives of these people. Narrative texts of this kind are widely found in Foundation English coursebooks for L2 learners.

11. **Lexical Aspect** is defined as marking the time of an action or a state with the inherent temporal meaning of the verb. This suggests that the semantics of verbs plays a role in time marking. Aspect of verbs is considered in two ways: stative and dynamic which categorize verbs into two types: *states* and *actions*.

12. **State Verb (stative verb)** is defined as a type of verb that describes states and conditions. It includes (a) verbs of inert perception and cognition such as

believe, care, dislike, doubt, feel, forgive, guess, hate, hear, imagine, impress, intend, know, like, love, mean, mind, prefer, realize, remember, see, think, understand, want, etc.; and (b) relational verbs such as *be, have, involve, need, remain, resemble, seem,* etc. Verbs of this class normally do not occur in the progressives. The same verbs with other uses belong to other classes of verbs, for example, *I am thinking of her all the time* (activity verb). Verbs of states contrast verbs of actions.

13. **Action Verb (dynamic verb)** is defined as a type of verb that describes events and actions. In verb aspect analysis, terminology "telic" or "atelic" is used to describe an event with(out) a clear terminal point such as *die* and *rain*; "punctual" or "durative" is used to describe an action with(out) temporal duration such as *start* and *sleep*.

Verbs of actions in this study include verbs of events and verbs of actions. This study will use Vendler's (1967) divisions of verbs which divided action verbs into three subtypes: (a) activities, (b) accomplishments and (c) achievements. Activity verbs are durative verbs without an endpoint such as *play, run, talk,* and *walk.* Accomplishment verbs are durative verbs with an endpoint such as *build* [*a house*], *find* [*the place*], *read* [a book]. Achievement verbs are punctual verbs with a clear terminal point such as *arrive, die, recognize, reach* [*the summit*].

14. **Inflectional Verb** is defined as a verb form changed by adding a suffixed morpheme that signals a grammatical function, such as plural, third person singular and past tense (e.g., *go, goes, walked*).

15. **Verb Phrase** (VP) is defined as a verb or any group of words that is used to refer to an action or a state, and functions in the verb slot in a sentence (e.g., *Bees sting*; *Our neighbor's pet is outdoors constantly*).

16. **Adverbial Phrase** (AP) is defined as an adverb or any group of words that modifies the verb in answering questions concerning the time of an action or a state in the sentence (e.g., *yesterday, this week, when he decided to attack Russia*).

17. **Intralingual Interference** is defined as a factor that may influence and

characterize a second language learner system. It suggests that the items produced by an EFL learner do not reflect a structure of the mother tongue, but are generalizations of incomplete comprehension of the target language. Intralingual errors involve analogy (overgeneralization), ignorance or incomplete use of L2 rules or under-acquisition of the target language (e.g., *He taked it to the kitchen*; *It will closed*; *I didn't thinking much about it*).

18. **L1 transfer** is defined as a factor that may influence and characterize a second language learner system. The erroneous items or the deviant sentence produced by an EFL learner can be traced back to a structure of the mother tongue. The deviant exhibits interference from L1 (e.g., *I have seen the movie yesterday*; *The money is belonged to me*; *I was hesitated*).

19. **Receptive Performance** is defined as the verb forms given or performed by the subjects under the test frame of the close test (see Appendix A).

20. **Productive Performance** is defined as the verb forms given or performed by the subjects under the test frame of the writing test (see Appendix C).

21. **Test Unit** or **Verb Unit** is defined as items or units of verbs to be used to test the subjects' verb forms. It is expressed in the form ( ). There are 39 test units altogether in the cloze test of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 consists of four sections. The first three sections review and discuss the three major concepts of tense, temporal interpretation and the narrative text involved in the present study on past and present tense an temporal interpretation by the Chinese students in English narrative texts. Definitions are provided to elaborate the three concepts. Usages and uses of tense are classified and identified. Factors that influence the learners' tense and temporal interpretation are discussed afterwards. A brief review of related studies is introduced at the end of the chapter..

2.1 Tense

In applied linguistics and also in grammar textbooks, tense has been the subject of much discussion. And it has been admitted that relations between tense and time are not plainly to be classified as one or two or three. Many factors, whether they are linguistic, pragmatic or cognitive, are involved in this event. Literature review and discussion on tense and tense usage in this section is mainly projected onto two aspects: the linguistic area in which usages of tense are classified as a guideline to initiate interpretation of time in English and the narrative texts in which uses of tense are identified in specific contexts to practice temporal interpretation.

2.1.1 Definition of tense

Crystal (1985) defined tense as a category to describe verbs along with aspect and mood. It is a way grammar marks the time at which an action or a state denoted

by the verb takes place or exists. According to Crystal, if tense is defined as forms of verbs, it is debatable to claim that English has a future tense. He suggested the expression *I will/shall go* is best analyzed as a "modal auxiliary verb" (p. 306). Following Crystal, this study bases its justification of tense on defining tense as inflectional verb forms denoting time and focuses it studies on the two tense forms: past and present, and their references of time in the narrative context .

Crystal further noted that tensed verb forms can also signify meanings other than the time. For example, when the speaker says *I knew* in the sentence *I wish I knew*, the verb form *knew* may express a tentative meaning instead of past time. What Crystal emphasized here is that there is not a simple one-to-one relationship between a tense form and time. Other researchers have also noticed this friction between tense forms and time (Riddle, 1986). English tense illustrates problems of this type during the process of analysis of its uses.

2.1.2 Classification of the past tense and the present tense[2]

As two basic temporal frames in English, past tense and present tense have their domains in temporality. However, with the general principle that the past tense describes events and situations in the past and the present tense in the present, deviances are found now and then. And this deviation from the common usages of tense complicates the problems with L2 learners in tense acquisition. In this section, reviewing the general classification of past tense and present tense usages initiates a further exploration of the relationship between tense and time expressed in past and present tenses.

[2] Classification of the past and the present tenses and exemplifications are mainly based on *The Use of Tenses in English* (Ward, 1966), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (2nd ed., Crystal, 2003), and textbooks of *Multiple Reading Skills* (Boning, 1990), *Language in Use--self-study workbook: Intermediate* (Doff & Jones, 1994), *Think Ahead to First Certificate* (Naunton, 1995) and *Landmark* (Haines & Stewart, 2000).

2.1.2.1 Usage of the past tense

Five major usages of the past tense are classified as follows.

1. Completed actions or events that happens at a particular time in the past when the exact time or place is mentioned (e.g., *My last birthday was about two weeks ago and I celebrated it in France*).

2. An action that happens at a given time before the moment of speaking (e.g., *He had breakfast rather late today*).

3. A condition or an action that persists over a period of time (e.g., *He wanted to be a lawyer*; e.g., *Every summer we went to the seaside*).

4. An indirect speech clause embedded in a past tense main verb of the main clause (e.g., *He told me that was a beautiful beach city*).

5. A state or an action that was in a past time context (e.g., [Leaving a movie theater] *That was a great movie*).

2.1.2.2 Usage of the present tense

Four major usages of the present tense are classified as follows.

1. Facts that are always true; statement of a fact (e.g., *Oil floats on water*).

2. Permanent situations; a geographical fact (e.g., *My home is 30 miles away from Kathmandu*).

3. Facts that are true at the moment of speaking (e.g., *He behaves rather stupidly, but he will grow out of it one day*; e.g., *He is still in critical condition* [news report]).

4. Habitual actions and regular activities; habits and customs (e.g., *Men precede women when going downstairs*; e.g., *The local people are friendly to tourists*).

2.1.3 Application of the past tense and the present tense

In the previous section, the main principles in the use of past and present

tenses were outlined, which will serve all the times as a guideline for the use of tense as a temporal indicator in communication. Levison (1983, p. 77) gave a name for this theoretical category of tense: *metalinguistic tense (M-tense)*, in which we may easily distinguish *past* (events completed) from *present* (events that are still going on), as is done with the past tense and the present tense outlined in all grammar books. But in practice, things become difficult and confusions occur at times in our application of these principles. Because underlying those principles exist relationships between deictic time and conceptual time, between tense and text, and between tense and context. Another potential relationship might also be found existing between the lexical semantics of certain verbs and a tense preference by these verbs. A few studies have been conducted to exemplify these relationships in tense application. The following subsections will provide some examples to help explain these relationships and extend this view of the past tense and the present tense and potential areas of their uses in practice.

2.1.3.1 Use of the past tense

With the common sense and also the baseline that the past tense describes actions and events in the past, this section will examine the circumstances in which the past tense is used. Assertions and examples are drawn from the researchers and given here showing applications of the past tense in certain situations and events. Four subtopics are included.

2.1.3.1.1 "New wine in old bottles"—non-completeness sense in the past tense

Riddle (1986) analyzed the meaning and discourse function of the past tense and suggested that the most commonly recognized meanings of the past tense are the complete and the non-complete senses.

Riddle gave the following two sentences as the prototypical use of the past tense.

(a). That *was* my pudding she *ate.* (p. 268)

(b). That *was* a great movie [Leaving a movie theater]. (p. 268)

In sentence (a), the eating was finished, and the pudding was gone. This sentence presents typical use of the past tense in its complete sense.

However, in sentence (b), the act of watching the movie was finished, and the movie remains great but the movie is described in the past tense. Riddle proposed the argument that the past tense can have a meaning of incompleteness in certain contexts to describe a situation which still exists in the present.

Huddleston (1984) presented similar argument in his sentence *Kim was able to speak French, so we got around quite easily* (p. 144), noting that the past tense form *was* does not suggest that Kim is not now able to speak French. Once again the past tense describes a situation that is still true at present.

2.1.3.1.2 "We are here!"—non-completeness of the past tense in narrative texts

From Riddle's view, in a past discourse context, a situation can be still interpreted as a past situation even if the situational time extends to the present. Riddle (1986) justified his assertion by focusing on discourse functioning. Thus when non-completeness is expressed by the past tense, this is due to the past discourse functioning. In Riddle's assertion, background information in a narrative text should be interpreted as past if that information is connected with the past. Riddles' claim could be clarified as this: a narrative text sets up a past time frame which determines the time of the events and the time of the background information in terms of the past discourse context.

With this proposition it is possible to see the relationship between temporal interpretation and the narrative context. In a narrative text, time in the foreground, the

main line of the story which describes the event, the happening or the personal experience is the past time and time in the background is either past or present, judging from its dependence or independence of that discourse context.

2.1.3.1.3 "Copying rule"—coherence of verb tense in an indirect speech clause

Following his assertion of the completeness and non-completeness of the past tense, Riddle (1986, p. 269) proposed the "copying rule" in which the past tense in a subordinate indirect speech clause is copied from the past tense of the main verb. The sentence *Jane said she was tired* illustrates this use of the past tense. This notion is supported by Downing & Locke (2002), who glossed it as verbal harmony in the clauses of indirect reported speech.

However, Riddle also pointed out that factors that condition the choice of tense in indirect speech clauses involve many aspects such as the speaker or writer's point of view and the communicative purposes. When Riddle (1986) limited this kind of copying activity with the indirect speech clause, Huddleston (1984) broadened this use of the past tense copied from the main clause to verb forms in all kinds of subordinate clauses and defined it as *backshifting*. Actually, this backshifting of the tense in the subordinate clause is regularly practiced by most Chinese EFL learners as in the sentence *The match started the next day so he would have* to hurry (Huddleston, p. 151), whether the clauses are indirect or non-indirect reported speeches.

2.1.3.1.4 "Dancing with the word!"--lexical aspect of some verbs and their preference of the past tense

Some researchers (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995; Collins, 2002; Robison, 1995) studied temporal properties embedded by the lexical meaning of some verbs and claimed that lexical aspect of verbs is connected with employment of tense and

aspect. Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds studied this phenomenon for years and concluded that lexical aspect of verbs influences the shaping of tense and aspect in a sentence. Robison's and Collins' studies confirmed the claim. Robison (1995) found that the past tense *-ed* mostly marked punctual events whereas the present tense *-s* mostly marked states. Collins (2002) stated similar findings by specifying the link of achievement verbs with appropriate use of the simple past tense. An example given by Brazil (1995, p. 80) helps to explain the lexical aspect of a verb. Brazil noted that the act *finding an axe* in the sentence *we found an axe on the back seat* is an outcome which can be assigned to a particular moment in time. That is, *found* is a "once-for-all" accomplishment action that took place at a particular point of time. The lexical meaning of the verb noted in a past time context tends to be associated with the simple past tense.

Another example comes from Smith (2005), who pointed out that the verb *builds* in the sentence *John builds a house* is strange to interpret. The event *builds a house* has completeness and a boundary sense that constrains the present tense in this sentence. This is another example in which the function of the semantics of individual words in tense selection can be noted.

2.1.3.2 Use of the present tense

Similar to the previous part, this section extends the review and discussion of the use of the present tense. Attention is given to those uses of the present tense in narrative texts including those uses which might be neglected in other times. The historic present tense will not be included in the discussion. Classified usages of the present tense in Section 2.1.2.2 will serve as a baseline and a few cases of their applications in narrative context are interpreted. Space is also devoted to a brief review of the uses of the present perfect tense as it is a problem for learners in narrative texts.

2.1.3.2.1 "Jump into the queue!"—a theoretical approach for the present tense in narrative texts

Different cultures seem to have different time conceptions. In English, time is perceived as a flow of the event(s) in one direction with the event located at a point or over a span of this time continuum. Description of narrative time is concurrent with this. One fact about this time line is its being able to be sliced into *segments or intervals* (Klein 1986, p. 125). This segmentation of the discourse, or of events, or of an event, signals a new temporal relationship starting between two events, or between an event in a narrative text. It brings about tense shifting, a shift from the past to the present when the event discontinues with a cut-in evaluation or additional information, or just stays for a moment to be given more background information in its past time frame, or from the present to the past when the sequence of the event(s) picks up its members and starts off flowing again. The present tense is seen now and then in narrative texts, where the past tense is believed to dominate the temporal kingdom of the narrative texts (Bestgen & Vonk, 2000; Klein, 1986; Sakita, 2002).

2.1.3.2.2 "Meet you at the entrance!"—the present tense in scene setting

As is well accepted, narratives are typically associated with the past tense, especially the story line, the sequential development of the event(s). However, there are occasions that the present tense presents itself at the event. Use of the simple present tense in scene setting of a narrative is a case in point. When a place is mentioned as a scene to open the story and that place still exists at the moment of speaking or writing, the simple present tense can be used. The sentence *Yixing is a small town in Jiangnan to the south of the Yangzi River* in a story illustrates this usage (Lock, 1996, p. 156). This practice of using present tense form at the beginning of a story is found more regularly now than occasionally in narrative texts with native speakers. Here is another example. It is taken from the opening episode of a story:

Most doctors and scientists refuse to believe in ghosts and psychic happenings. Yet in the 1950's in Yorkshire, in the north of England, two doctors almost changed their minds. A house which they used as their surgery started to make strange noises (Naunton, 1995, p. 130).

2.1.3.2.3 "You know the place!"—the present tense in geographical descriptions

Another place inviting the present tense to narrative texts is found in geographical fact descriptions. This overlaps the generalization of one of the present tense usages which was made in subsection 2.1.2.2. A present tense form describes something that is universally true, something that is a fact. In the story *Robinson Crusoe*, the simple present tense can be found describing a place, thus: *A man named Alexander Selkirk once spent five lonely years on an island. It is 360 miles off the coast of South America. ...* (Boning, 1990, p. 101). The sentence *Yixing is a small town in Jiangnan to the south of the Yangzi River* (Lock, 1996, p. 156) illustrating the present tense being used in scene setting in the previous part displays this use of the present tense in narrative texts from another perspective. Both of these cases support the claim that the present tense is closely linked with truth descriptions. This rule extends to generic descriptions in narrative texts as in .... *The best known of New Zealand's birds is the kiwi. ...Kiwi have no wings* ... (Lock, 1996, p. 157).

However, the function of discourse context, which plays a major role in temporal interpretation in narrative texts cannot be ignored. In comparing two narrations in sentences from *Robinson Crusoe* and *Riding the Iron Rooster*: (a) *A man named Alexander Selkirk once spent five lonely years on an island. It is 360 miles off the coast of South America. ...* (Boning, 1990, p. 101); (b) .... *This did not last long. We came to a pass that linked the Tanggula Shan with the Kunlun mountains* (Heaton & Dunmore, p. 108), it is noteworthy that two different tenses are applied to the category of geographical fact descriptions. In sentence (a), the present tense is used in

an independent clause and in sentence (b), the geographical fact is located as a dependent clause attached to the main clause. So application of the present tense when used for a geographical fact description in narrative texts is likely to occur in a hierarchy of the baseline of the tense, discourse context, and syntactical structures.

2.1.3.2.4 "Specified or unspecified?"— some means to code the present perfect tense use in narrative texts

As in other types of text, the present perfect tense and the simple past tense appear to be the two most confusing tenses for learners in narrative texts. Their selection between the two tenses depends mostly on one judgment: whether the action is finished or unfinished. Lock (1996) proposed looking at the present perfect tense from the perspective of action processes which takes an event as something that took place at an unspecified time before the present but its results are relevant to the present situation, as in the sentence *Now it has been discovered by the world* (p. 157), which is not stating the definite time when the event took place, but referring to a present situation in which *now the world knows about it* (ibid.). Lock further proposed that the present perfect tense can be used to date-back, that is, to extend a present situation back in time as in the sentence *There has been a place of worship on this spot for at least a thousand years*, implying *and there still is* (p. 158).

2.2 Temporal Interpretation

When we use tense as a grammatical form to express time, we are actually talking about our sense of time in a discourse context. This sense of time is achieved at the level of how we interpret the time in that situation. This section will discuss that interpretation. It includes three parts: (a) definition of temporal interpretation; (b) applying temporal interpretation; and (c) factors that influence temporal interpretation.

2.2.1 Definition of temporal interpretation

Smith (2005) described tense as a morpheme that appears in the main verb phrase of clauses and sentences and reports the time of those clauses and sentences. According to Smith, that inflectional verb of tense is obligatory in a sentence. It is a "deictic term" of time on a sentence level (Klein, 1986). Temporal interpretation, prior to tense, is formed at the cognitive level of time. It involves comprehension of the time of a situation and the interpreter's point of view of the time in that situation.

As suggested, temporal interpretation is our understanding and interpretation of the time of the situation in a discourse and tense is the verb form to signify that interpretation. In this study, tense and temporal interpretation are two interchangeable terms grouped in the temporal category of language and treated as one concept. A small difference that lies in tense and temporal interpretation is the different focus on verb forms and on cognition of time in application.

2.2.2 Application of temporal interpretation

Tense as a time marker plays an important role in narrative texts. It strings sequences of an event chronologically and establishes time reference in the discourse. Of the three elements that are involved in signifying the meaning of a verb in a sentence, *lexical item, context, tense and aspect* (Widdowson, 1990), tense and aspect describes a verb and the situation that verb is in (Finch, 2000). All this reflects the interpreter's understanding and interpretation of that situation.

2.2.2.1 Interpretation of *event time* and *speech time*

Reichenbach (1947, cited in Riddle, 1986), who was a pioneer in the modern research of English tense, proposed the idea of *event time* (situation time [SiT] in Smith, 2005) in narratives. This *event time* is the time in which the event occurs and

notified by the past tense in the narrative discourse. The notion of event time later became the time that dominated in Labov (1972) and Bardovi-Harlig (1995)'s main story line and foreground. The point of interpreting time in a narrative text is the moment of speaking, *speech time*, which underlies the reference of the *event time*. The sentence *We want to search your car* indicates that the act of wanting and the act of making the assertion coincide, while the sentence *we found an axe on the back seat* suggests that the act of finding precedes the time of speaking (Brazil, 1995, p. 80). This explains why verbs in the main line of a story take the past tense and verbs to express the evaluation at background can take the present tense in narrative texts.

2.2.2.2 Interpretation of *event time* and *conceptual time*

Event time is the actual time when the event occurs. Some researchers have given different names to it like "objective time", "real time" or "situation time" (DeCarrico, 1986; Hinkel, 1997; Lewis, 1986; Smith, 2005). The *event time* is deducible to *conceptual time* that is entailed in reference time. When the speaker or writer makes reference to the event time, the process embodies a chance of correct or incorrect interpretation of the time of the situation "at the moment of speaking". For example, the past tense morpheme *-ed* in the sentence *Bill visited London in 1920* illustrates successful temporal interpretation of the event time. The *conceptual time* correctly conceptualizes the *event time* (DeCarrico 1986, p. 668). Otherwise the case would be that the *conceptual time* failed to coincide with the *event time*.

This example shows that, despite the objective temporal relationship between the time of a situation and the time of speech, "the speaker's point of view and purpose in communicating play a crucial role in the choice between the past and present tenses." (Riddle, 1986, p. 269). Riddle noted the functioning of concept on the reference time.

Thus, we are brought into a dilemma: on the one hand, our attempt to be interactive in communication allows for a freedom of tense choice in temporal

interpretation of the situation purely from the personal point of view; on the other hand, this arbitrary conceptualization of time causes problems for most L2 learners, who with insufficient second language knowledge might interpret time in a different way from how L1 speakers would.

The present study focuses on the problems arising in L2 learners' interpretation that lacks basic concepts of temporality in the target language of English. That temporality consists of conventions built on the established grammar of the second language.

2.2.2.3 Dichotomy between *reference time* and *event time* and *conceptual time*

When performing temporal interpretations, learners often find themselves encounter a conflict between *event time* and *conceptual time* and *reference time.* In his study of the temporality in the interlanguage, Hinkel (1997) found that there is a dichotomy between "real time" (*event time*) and "psychological time" (*conceptual time*) for L2 learners when they locate events in the time continuum. The sentences *Last year Mary met John. John works at the university* illustrate this dichotomy (p. 291). According to Hinkel, the first sentence is true in both real and psychological time, but the present tense in the second sentence may not be appropriate in past discourse established by the temporal marker *last year.* However, a change into the past tense to be consistent in the discourse produces the implication that John is not working at the university now, or that we do not know if he works at the university now. "Thus, the use of the past tense with verbs that denote actions known (or assumed) to be true in the present may create a dichotomy between the real and the psychological time" (Hinkel, 1997, p. 291). In another word, this is a dichotomy between the tense-realized time and the actual or real time. It is a dichotomy between reference time and event time. Problems in temporal interpretation with L2 learners have been found in this area.

2.2.3 Three factors affecting temporal interpretation

Three major factors are involved in tense and temporal interpretation of a sentence. They are: (a) linguistic elements such as adverbials of time and different types of verbs; (b) discourse context; and (c) cultural differences.

2.2.3.1 Linguistic elements

As English sentences are structurally composed and generally well formed, temporality in a sentence can be both initiated and consistent with certain linguistic components in the sentence. Adverbials of time and lexical aspect of verbs are two prominent linguistic elements that always exert their influence on the temporality of a sentence.

2.2.3.1.1 Adverbials of time

Researchers have long been reporting that time adverbials are significant temporal indicators for sentences in English and many other languages. Chafe (1972) studied English adverbials of time that initiated a passage and noted that adverbials of time pose a temporal constraint on the verb tense and the ongoing tense will not be interrupted until a new time signal appears. The proposition is illustrated in the sentences *Yesterday I went to the store. I bought ten different kinds of apples. Next week I will go to the store again and buy more fruit.* (Godfrey, 1980, p. 94).

This relationship between adverbials of time and temporal interpretation in English sentences has been accepted as a common fact by researchers.

2.2.3.1.2 Verb types

Another potential linguistic element that might influence L2 learners' temporal interpretation is verbs. In 1992, Bardovi-Harlig conducted an experiment

concerning lexical aspect of verbs and reported that punctual verbs were marked by a higher use in the past simple than durative verbs. In 1995, Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995) continued the experiment and concluded that types of verbs play an active role in L2 learners' temporal interpretation. They tested the learners' use of the simple past tense by purposely supplying activity verbs and state verbs in verb-filling cloze passages. The results showed that the progressive is the major tense used for activity verbs, while the simple present tense is more often used for state verbs. The two researchers believed that learners of English interpret tense by lexical aspect of verbs sometimes. To those learners, the progressive tense--"action in progress" is coherent with the inherent meaning of activity verbs while the simple present--"continued existence" is consistent with the "enduring quality" of state verbs (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995, p. 148).

2.2.3.2 Discourse context

Even if a system is established for temporal interpretation by default of the speech time and perception of the event time, sentences to be tensed are still problematic because temporal inferences can be very flexible at the cognitive level. Discourse context, therefore, becomes an important element to constrain the temporal interpretation (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Levinson, 1983; McCarthy, 1991). The relationship between temporal interpretation and the discourse will be reviewed at three points in the following sections.

2.2.3.2.1 As a guide to NS temporal cognition

Hinkel (1997) and Riddle (1986) studied the use of the present and the past tenses in English passages, and stated that the past and the present tenses are not particularly intended for the objective time of the events. It was the temporality of the

discourse context that determined the choice of tense in sentences throughout the discourse, as is often practiced by native speakers. Hinkel (1997) illustrated this in the sentence *Last year Mary met John. John works at the university.* According to Hinkel, while the speaker or writer meant the event time of the second sentence related to the present in the way that *work* in the sentence expressed, a native speaker or writer would use *worked* instead, justified by the discourse context established by the time marker in the previous sentence *last year*. Klein (1986) claimed that context provides the speaker and listener, the writer and reader with information about the situation, and even of the world. If a non-native speaker correctly interpreted the contextual information in the sentence *According to Copernicus, the earth revolved around the sun* as a belief of a dead person, he would interpret time in the verb as past in the way a native speaker would do (Riddle, 1986, p. 271).

2.2.3.2.2 As an anaphora of temporal indicator

Another report showing how discourse context created temporality in sentences came from Partee (1973). Partee, who in his article "Some Structural Analogies between Tenses and Pronouns in English", analogized the use of tense to the use of pronouns. He claimed that the past tense in the sentence *I didn't turn off the stove* refers to a particular time and the listener's perception of that time comes from the extralinguistic context. Partee claimed this identity of a particular time, *a definite interval*, is "just as the identity of the *he* in the sentence *He shouldn't be in here*", [which] is clear from the context" (p. 603). By demonstrating an anaphoric nature of discourse context for tense, Partee establishes a relationship between tense and the context.

Some other researchers have also emphasized the role that context plays in tense employment. Hinkel (1997) attributed the tense errors of non-native speakers to their inability to distinguish contexts within which certain tenses are required.

2.2.3.2.3 Three narrative modes

With the role which context plays in tense use noted by Partee (1973), Hinkel (1997), and Smith (2005) further proposed that the discourse mode in which a text is formed affects the tenses used in the passage. According to Smith, of the five discourse modes, --narrative, descriptive, reportive, expositive and argumentative, the first three are temporal discourse modes, which possess corresponding patterns of temporal reference. In narrative, the tense reference pattern is "continuity", meaning that relations between events are chronologically maintained by tense. In the descriptive mode, tense is "anaphoric", suggesting that events in the discourse or text are related to a previously established time. In the reporting mode, tense is "deictic", with events and situations in the discourse or text being related with speech time. White (1977) and McCarthy (1991) categorized narration, description and reporting into the narrative text type.

This study adopted the three narrative modes in designing the testing material to test the learners' temporal interpretation in L2 reading.

2.2.3.3 Cultural differences in time inference

In section 2.2.2.3, potential problems of temporal interpretation for L2 learners raised by the dichotomy between event time and conceptual time, or reference time and subjective time, were discussed. This problem of temporal interpretation may arise from two aspects: the speaker or writer's attempt to be interactive or his understanding of the time in the situation. However, the source of this cognitive temporality on the part of the speaker or writer may be traced back to his L1 temporal culture. Li & Thompson (1981) reported this difference observed in a Chinese student's writing. In the sentence *My uncle told me his opinion that before students graduate from college, they need to learn kinds of jobs.* Li and Thompson found that

the reason for the student not appending *-ed* to the verbs *graduate* and *need* is that the Chinese learner interpreted the two words with current relevance because, for him, the two words express meanings that are not finished and generally true. The learner thus failed to choose the correct verb forms "graduated" and "needed".

Another example that reflects a non-native speakers' temporal interpretation in past discourse is from Hinkel (1997) in the sentence *School requirements there are much higher than in my old school and my grades became very low*. Hinkel explained that the present "are" implies that the nonnative writer related the school requirements to the present time, i.e., his temporal interpretation depended on his understanding of the "objective time" (*event time*). He perceived it as a present truth. But a native speaker would think "current requirements in the new school [is] irrelevant ... because the requirements at the specific time in the past when the student changed school are sufficient to explain the lower grades" (p. 300). These examples indicate that L2 learners are likely to apply tenses based on their own perceptions of temporality arising from a different cultural background.

2.3 Narrative Texts

Narrative texts are set as the context in this study to test Chinese learners' temporal interpretation. The review of literature in this section focuses on the keynotes of narrative texts and is prefaced by a brief perspective of terminology *text* and *discourse*.

2.3.1 Text and Discourse

The terms *text* and *discourse* do not have a definite boundary within their meaning. Widdowson (1979) referred to text as sentences in a structural frame and to discourse as the use of sentences. This view was shared by Schiffrin (1994) and some other researchers. According to Schiffrin, *text* is structurally bounded while *discourse*,

'language above the sentence or above the clause' (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1), is more functionally related and comprehended with the context. "Discourse [is] language use." (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 31). This notion departs from a division of *text* into written works as distinct from *discourse* (Brown & Yule, 1983), which embraces utterances at other times. Some other researchers have not made a distinction between the two, regarding both authentic and non-authentic data and both spoken and written language as text (Levinson, 1984; Lock, 1996).

The present study roughly treats the two notions as one, choosing the term *text* on the basis that all the testing materials were in a written form and that analysis of the subjects' temporal interpretation began with analysis of the sentence components in passages of reading and writing.

2.3.2 Definition of Narrative Texts

The definition of narrative texts will be given at two levels: broad and narrow. The broad definition of narratives is rooted in general and common acknowledgement of a narrative as a recount with the narrow definition specific and technique orientated. The present study defines its testing and tested materials of narrative texts based on the broad definition of narratives and incorporates some useful elements from the narrow definition of narratives into analysis of the data.

2.3.2.1 Broad definition

There are simple and elaborated definitions of narratives. The most general description of a narrative is that narrative is an account of what has happened, a piece of writing "simply to recount events" (Kirszner & Mandell, 1980, p. 29). Anecdotes, incidents, news report, accounts of historical events, biography, autobiography and fictions are narratives (Herman, 1977; Kirszner & Mandell, 1980; McCarthy, 1991), underlying which is either a sophisticated or an unsophisticated structure to the story.

An unsophisticated narrative is found in a pattern of "introduction", "event in sequence" and "conclusion" (Kirszner & Mandell, 1980, p. 32). Narratives can be divided into two classes: narrative of facts and narrative of fictions. Narratives of facts are telling stories about real people and real events. They also make news reports.

The present research is focused on narratives of facts and relies on the definition referring to narrative as an account of what has happened as the basis for the testing and tested materials as data for the research.

2.3.2.2 Narrow definition

A more elaborated definition of narratives comes with descriptions typical of Labov and Schiffrin. Labov (1972) studied an oral narrative and proposed that the elements that commonly occur in a narrative are *abstract*, *orientation*, *complicating events*, *resolution*, *evaluation* and *coda*.

In the Labov model, the *abstract* is a sentence to start the story. This short statement is optional. The *orientation* establishes the time, place and characters. *Complicating events* tell what is happening and the *resolution* wraps up the story. The *evaluation* gives comments or personal opinions on the events while the *coda*, which is optional like the *abstract*, connects the story and the moment of telling the story as in for instance, "and ever since, I've never been able to look at mango without feeling sick." (McCarthy, 1991, p. 138).

Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop's (2000) description of a narrative text as one that carries the characteristic elements of *orientation*, *complication*, *resolution* and *coda* bears a close similarity to that of Labov's. Whereas Schiffrin (1994) suggested that the elaborated definition of narratives proposed by Labov, especially the "'embedded evaluation" element, separates itself from the simple description of narratives. This concept, though appearing somewhat difficult for L2 learners of writing, is more complete and reflective of the narrative features.

2.3.3 Characteristics of narrative texts

A narrative text has its own characteristics. It carries features such as its discourse style, cultural reference and indicative temporality. These characteristics of narrative texts rely on their structures and have given rise to the field of narrative analysis research. This section presents the principles proposed by two researchers of narrative analysis, Labov, a narrative discourse research representative in 1970's, and Bardovi-Harlig, who was active in studying tense and aspect usage in narratives in the 1990's.

2.3.3.1 Labov's proposition

According to Labov (1972; see also Schiffrin, 1994; Tannen, 1982), narratives in conversation carry two main tasks. One is that the speaker makes the point of the story clear to the audience by answering the question of 'what'. Another is to communicate the point of the story by proposing the speaker's attitude toward what is being said. This proposed attitude reflects the speaker's evaluation of the point of the story he is narrating. Labov established a model in which the narration of a story develops with evaluation as an element moving in and out of the story. Labov further elaborated this evaluation element as either external or internal. External evaluation is the most common form observed in narratives, where the story-teller stands aside from the story line and says something like "Hey, this is what I want to say", "That was a most unforgettable summer I had ever had". Internal evaluation comes from direct quotations, where opinions, judgments and desires are out of the story-teller's mouth to tell what has happened from inside the story. However, this study will not include consideration of internal evaluation.

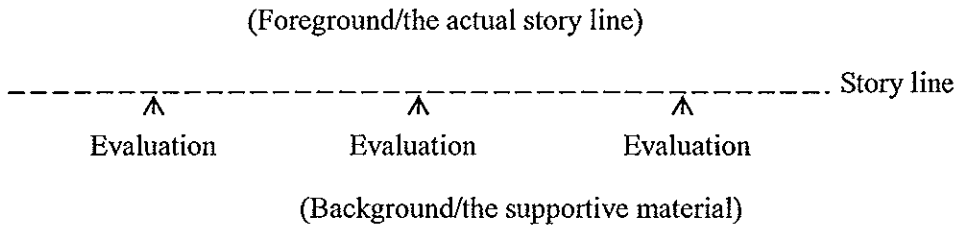
2.3.3.2 Bardovi-Harlig's proposition

Like Labov, Bardovi-Harlig (1995) in her *A narrative perspective on the*

development of the tense/aspect system in second language acquisition analyzed L2 learners' tense and aspect use in narratives from the perspective of grounding--foreground (the actual story line) and background (the supportive material of the narrative). She believed that "narrative discourse is comprised of two parts: the foreground and the background" with selective tenses (p. 265).

Bardovi-Harlig (ibid.) believed that a narrative is a text in which the speaker and writer relates a series of events in an order in which the events take place. It tells a story, an experience, and what the story and experience tells us. In a narrative discourse, the story line makes the foreground where the past tense dominates and the background where evaluations, judgments, and additional information employ both the present tense and the past tense as the case dictates. This pattern of tense in a discourse framework allows us to approach the temporal interpretation the subjects made when reading or writing a narrative text.

Apparently Labov's and Bardovi-Harlig's interpretation of the narrative structures bear a similar pattern, i.e., the main story line, the foreground, and the aside evaluation, the background, forming the skeleton of a narrative. Their propositions could be illustrated in the diagram below:



Examinations and analysis of tense and temporal interpretation by the subjects in this study will rely on this integrated model. *Evaluation* is used here as a general technical term covering evaluations, judgments, personal opinions, geographical facts, universal truth, background information, etc. According to Tirkkonen-Condit (1985, as cited in Teo, 1995), an evaluation "expresses the writer's

view of the desirability, relevance, interest, importance, truth, etc." (p. 27).

2.4 Related Studies

In recent years, studies related to L2 tense and temporal interpretation have been undertaken along two main channels. Researchers in the first channel have wanted to find out if there exists a universal pattern in L2 learners' tense and aspect acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995; Robison, 1990, 1995; Shirai & Kurono, 1998); Those in the second channel believe that tense and aspect acquisition is culturally different. That is, learners' acquisition of tense and aspect was an individual enterprise depending on their different language community background, and that their tense acquisition would reflect the influence of their first languages (Fan & Lin, 2002; Hinkel, 1992, 1997; White, 2002, 2003). This section reports some findings from the above studies.

2.4.1 Channel 1: lexical aspect to English tense acquisition

In a study designed as one of a series of tests to investigate problems in L2 learners' tense acquisition in the hope to find out if there is a universal model existing with English tense acquisition for L2 learners, Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds (1995) tested 182 ESL adult learners who were then at six different levels of proficiency from beginning to advanced, to examine the role of lexical aspect in determining the pattern of acquisition of the simple past tense. The subjects were tested on a total of 84 verb items coming from categories of four lexical aspects: achievements, accomplishments, activities and states, with 62 verbs as targets. The results showed that the acquisition of the simple past tense is not uniform in L2 learners, but that they develop their tense sense in stages linked to the meanings of verbs, i.e., the lexical aspect of verbs suggesting a relationship between the action expressed by the verb and the time of the action implied. The same sequence of tense development was found in classroom

language learners, in adult learners with instruction and in children without instruction. On the basis of their findings, Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1995) proposed that there was a universal model existing among L2 learners in tense and aspect acquisition.

2.4.2 Channel 2: L1 grammars to L2 tense acquisition

In contrast to the tense/aspect acquisition hypothesis, other researchers have focused their attention on the way L2 learners from different cultural backgrounds acquire tense and aspect. Hinkel (1992) studied 130 speakers of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic by designing a test in which the learners were asked to describe the temporal meanings and aspectual implications of the tense forms in 32 sentences. Hinkel wanted to prove Coppieters' claim (1987) that even if non-native speakers had acquired tense forms of English, their perceptions of tense meanings, i.e., the temporal reference by these tense forms to non-native speakers, was still different from those of native speakers. The results of the experiment proved that Coppieters' claim was justified. Hinkel proposed that concepts of time from a different language community could produce difficulties in tense acquisition for L2 learners. Hinkel even claimed that grammar taught from the perspective of the time concepts of English-speaking communities could not be of much help in explaining usages and meanings of tense for non-native speakers.

Another two parallel investigations were conducted on a Chinese English learner and a Turkish English learner to test the effects of L1 grammars on the learners' L2 grammar acquisition (Lardiere, 1998a; White, 2002, 2003). The experiments were designed under the premise that the subjects lacked certain constituents in their L1 grammars and that the absence would influence their acquisition of the corresponding items in the L2 grammars. One experiment was a longitudinal study conducted at two intervals on a Chinese who had been living in America for nineteen years. Another experiment was conducted with a Turkish L1 speaker whose mother tongue is a language with rich tenses and agreement

morphemes but lacking the articles that are found in English. For the Chinese subject, his mother tongue has neither tense inflections nor a third person agreement morpheme. The results showed that the Turkish learner had greater inconsistency in English article use than in tense and agreement morphemes while the Chinese had a relatively low use of tense and agreement morphemes. The conclusions from these two case studies was that L1 grammars interfere with the acquisition of L2 grammars and that features in L1 grammars affect the realization of the corresponding parts of L2 grammars.

Further support came from a study by two Chinese researchers (Fan & Lin, 2002) who investigated tense acquisition among a group of Chinese students at different proficiency levels in EFL and ESL contexts. The subjects' uses of the present perfect tense, the simple present tense and the simple past tense were examined and it was found that the subjects showed tendencies to use the present perfect tense incorrectly in the past frame of time and place and to use punctual verbs with adverbials presenting a time span. The researchers claimed that these two major errors in tense by the Chinese L2 learners of English could be traced back to corresponding time concepts in the Chinese language. In Chinese, the "experiential aspect" (ibid., p. 67) is set in a past time frame and expressed in the manner of *I have finished the wine ten minutes ago* (p. 77). Another major error in the use of punctual verbs such as that in *His dog has died four days. It was run over by a car* (p. 78) also displayed a corresponding Chinese temporal pattern. Fan & Lin claimed that tense acquisition is greatly influenced by the learners' L1 time concepts and expressions and that tense acquisition cannot be achieved in a universal pattern for L2 learners.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates Chinese university students' use of tense and temporal interpretation in English narrative texts. The study aims to establish how the students interpret time in a narrative context and what kind of errors in verb forms they make during the interpretation. It aims to see if the learners' temporal interpretation abilities vary in different narrative texts and if their temporal interpretation abilities are related to their proficiency levels. This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. It contains *subjects*, *research instruments*, *data collection* and *data analysis*.

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of this study were the 170 third year law students of the academic year 2006 from Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL) situated in Chongqing, a provincial city in Southwest China. At the time of the research, they were third-year students. The total population of law students in SWUPL was about 1,500, out of which 316 students were selected according to the formula (N = 1500; n = 316 at e = ± 5%) suggested by Yamane (1967) through random sampling procedures. Using the proficiency test scores of the China National College English Test, Band 4/6 (CET 4/6),[3] the top 27% and the bottom 27% were established from the sample size of 316 and designated as the high English proficiency group and the low

[3] A national norm-reference test sponsored by China National Educational Committee and held twice a year. It aims to test Chinese university students and other Chinese EFL learners' English proficiency. It is the Chinese TOEFL with a total score of 710.

English proficiency group. This 27% technique (Hughes, 1989) produced the final 170 subjects for the study.

The subjects' English proficiency was at intermediate and intermediate-high English language levels, according to the course descriptions from the Curriculum of English as a Foreign Language for All-China Non-English Major University Students and individual language development. They had completed studying the two-year (272 hours)[4] foundation English course (FE 4) and were at the beginning of their third academic year when the experiment was conducted. The information about the subjects is summarized as follows.

Table 3.1

Information about the Subjects

Subject group	Number	Course	CET 4 Score ($\bar{x}$) (Total score = 710)	Gender	
				Male	Female
High group	85	FE 4	561	32	53
Low group	85	FE 4	402	48	37

3.2 Research Instruments

The instruments employed in this study were aimed at creating both obligatory and naturalistic environments to elicit past and present tense data needed for the present research. There were four research instruments in this study: a cloze test, a questionnaire concerning the cloze test, a topic-guided writing test, and a questionnaire concerning the topic-guided writing test. They were summarized in Table 3.2.

[4] Social science and science university students in China study Foundation English as a subject in the first two academic years with an average of 68 course hours in one semester. The total English instruction hours for the two-year Foundation English course were 272 hours. The subjects in the research acquired this scheduled time of English learning.

Table 3.2

Types of Instruments

Types of instruments	Test Units	Testing time (mins.)
Cloze test	39	40
Cloze-test Questionnaire	39	50
Writing test	*"My Unforgettable Experience"*	35
Writing-test Questionnaire	Number of verbs in individual's writing	50

3.2.1 Cloze Test

The verb filling cloze test (see Appendix A) was used to elicit the past and the present tense data needed for this study. Passages of intermediate levels constituted of common vocabulary with fewer embedded clauses than normal were used to ensure that the reading materials were comprehensible to the subjects so that all the responses from the subjects were conscious and conceptual production from the reading.

Three passages with a total number of about 480 words were chosen for the cloze test. The materials for the cloze test were selected from international English textbooks[5] edited by native speakers and published in the 1990's. The passages were narrative texts elaborated in the discourse mode with the text features, --narrative, narrative with descriptive, and news reporting. Justification of the testing texts as narratives came from two angles. First, it accorded with the definition of narratives adopted for the study, i.e. a narrative is a recount telling what happened to people or to their life. Second, the three chosen passages were marked as narratives under the subtitles *Language Study or Grammar* within the unit. Sequences of events (foreground) and evaluations and added information (background) made up the skeleton of the stories, with the alternative present and past forms of verbs being designed as components of the texts. A native speaking English teacher proofread the

[5] Chinese university students use their own English textbooks edited by Chinese professors of English.

texts. Information regarding the cloze test passages is summarized in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Information of Cloze Testing Materials

Texts	Length (words)	Number of test units	Test Units	Sources
Napoleon	143	12	(1) – (12)	*Intermediate listening comprehension* (Dunkel & Lim, 1993)
News Reporting	179	13	(13) – (25)	*Landmark* (Haines & Stewart, 2000)
Nepal	159	14	(26) – (39)	*Lifelines* (Hutchinson, 1997)

3.2.2 Cloze-test Questionnaire

A cloze affiliated questionnaire (see Appendix B) as a parallel data source to the cloze test immediately followed the cloze test in the testing process and attempted to retrieve the subjects' perceptions of the time entailed in the verb forms with which they had responded to the cloze test.

The questionnaire was constructed of three multiple choice items and one open-ended item for each of the 39 verb forms with which the subjects had responded to the cloze test, asking for their reasons and explanations for time references in those verbs forms. The 3-choices were from the original texts without any adaptation but separated into single words, phrases or clauses. They were intended to elicit the subjects' knowledge of time when reading through an L2 narrative text. That is, the selection of each choice indicated their reasoning in interpreting the temporal frame in the sentence. There were 14 adverbial phrases (AP), 7 conjunctions (CONJ), 18 noun phrases (NP), 15 verb phrases ($V_{to\ do}$), 15 verb phrases ($V_{to\ be}$), 10 verb phrases (V NP/AP), 5 sentence patterns, 15 contexts and 10 events and 8 evaluations. The total choices were 117 in the cloze-test questionnaire. Access to the subjects' time conceptions was gained either from their direct reasoning or explanations written down in the open-ended question or from their choice of one of the linguistic units in

these three options. Explicit time indicators of adverbs and adverbials, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, verbs of actions and of states, which might carry some implicit temporal references in the texts, were tested in this part. The subjects' interpretation of speech time and event time, the subjects' understanding of sequence boundaries of the events, and the subjects' knowledge of the discourse context were examined simultaneously. Information of the questionnaire affiliated to the cloze test is summarized as follows.

Table 3.4

Information of Cloze-test Questionnaire

Options	Components	Form
117	Adverbial phrase, conjunction, noun phrase, verb phrase and clause from the original texts	3 multiple choices accompanied with one open-ended question

3.2.3 Writing Test

After the subjects had finished the cloze test and the cloze-test questionnaires, a topic-guided narrative writing test (see Appendix C) started the second section of the test. The writing test was aimed to generate data from the subjects in a comparatively naturalistic context and the topic *My Unforgettable Experience* was chosen because it established a context for potential narratives. The subjects were asked to write a 120-150-word passage about someone or something that most impressed them in their past experience, an experience that was important to his/her development as an adult. This was intended to guide them to narrate what happened in the past (ideal for examining the tentative past tense) and what impact the outcome of the events narrated might have had on them (ideal for examining tenses used in the background). Both past and present verb forms were likely to appear in the subjects' writings when they gave accounts of their personal experience and evaluations of that experience that still influenced their present work and life. Information about the topic-guided writing

test is summarized as follows.

Table 3.5

Information of Writing Test

Topic	Text type	Length needed (words)	Time (mins.)
My Unforgettable Experience	Narrative	120-150	35

3.2.4 Writing-test Questionnaire

Like the cloze-test questionnaire, the writing affiliated questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed as a parallel data source, and was conducted immediately after the subjects finished their compositions, in an attempt to retrieve data about the subjects' perceptions of the time entailed in the verb forms they used in their narrative writings and reasons for their selection.

The questionnaire was made up of an open-ended question for each of the verb forms or test unit in the writing. The subject were asked to give reasons and explanations for the time reference entailed in those verb forms. This served two functions: one was as a parallel data source with the writing test to reflect the subjects' temporal conceptions in that context; the other was as a parallel data source with the cloze questionnaire eliciting information about the subjects' time conceptions and reasons in a different narrative context.

Information relating to the questionnaire affiliated to the writing test is summarized as follows.

Table 3.6

Information of Writing-test Questionnaire

Verb units	Performance	Form
Dependent	Reasons for verb tenses in the writing	Open-ended questions

3.2.5 Piloting the instruments

Before the main study, a pilot test was conducted to test the reliability of the research instruments. The package of tests was implemented with 10 law students who accorded with the description of the subjects in the main research, following exactly the testing procedure designed for the main study. These 10 law students were outside the subject group in the main study.

Information about the pilot study is summarized as follows.

Table 3.7

Information of Pilot Test Participants in Comparison with Subjects in the Main Study

	Number	Faculty / Academic year	CET4 Score ($\bar{x}$) (Total score =710)	Course	Gender (%)	
					Male	Female
Pilot study participants	10	Law / 2006	487	FE 4	40	60
Main study participants	170	Law / 2006	482	FE 4	47	53

From the table, it can be seen that the participants in the pilot test had similar qualities to those of the subjects in the main study. Therefore, the results from the pilot test were indicative for the main study. One thing which was noticed was that the allotted 3-hour testing time seemed to be excessive, since most of the participants finished the whole test in 2 to 2.5 hours. But considering the multiple testing procedures (actually four subtests) involved, the originally designed time allotment was maintained and marked on the individual test papers. Another thing to note was that the procedures which had been implemented in the cloze test and the follow up questionnaire were incapable of being fully followed in the writing test and the writing test questionnaire. In the cloze test, the answer sheets were collected before the close-questionnaires were distributed to the subjects. The testees had only the reading materials of the cloze test with them to complete the questionnaire when they started recalling and explaining the reasons for the tense choices they made in the

cloze test. But in the writing test, the testees had their finished writing papers at hand when they were writing down the reasons for their time references in the questionnaires. The researcher (a proctor then) caught one pilot test subject, changing some verb forms in his composition while completing the writing-questionnaire. The resolution to the problem was first, warn the subjects off this practice and second, any erased traces of inflectional verbs or any purposely changed forms of verb tenses would be regarded as invalid or blanked out of the database. This rule was applied in the main study. Fortunately, the few offenders were not wise enough or they did not have enough time to get rid of the marks of their fraud.

After the pilot test, Kuder-Richardson formula (K-R 20) was used to measure internal-consistency of the cloze test. A post-test interview was also conducted to obtain first-hand feedback from the pilot test participants. The K-R 20, reliability coefficient of the cloze test items was $r = .71$ (see Table 3.8), which suggested that a strong correlation was found between the cloze test items. The correlation was statistically significant and the testing texts could be retained. A post-test interview revealed that the reading passages appeared to the candidates to be quite easy and comprehensible during the whole test process. The researcher believed this unsophistication of the testing materials would ensure the readability of the passages and avoid the possibility of verb misforms arising from the difficulties the subjects had with EFL reading. Final scores from the pilot cloze reading test, where the poorest performer scored 56% correct and the best performer whose CET4[6] score had been quite high (629 out of the total score 710) got 80% correct in the pilot cloze test, proved this assumption.

To sum up, the pilot test established six points: (a) the cloze testing materials were reliable for testing verb items with a K-R20 coefficient of .71 (Henning, 1987); (b) the testing time is long enough for the testees; (c) the reading materials seemed to be quite easy to the testees at first sight but this did not guarantee that the testees' were

[6] National English proficiency test. See p. 35.

able to satisfactorily implement correct verb forms; (d) special attention should be given to the verb forms changed in the testees' writings; (e) few testees could produce very complex or sophisticated narratives but their writings were narratives telling what happened and what they thought about the events; and (f) of 40 verb units in the cloze test, one item (Unit [30]) induced two possible temporal interpretations: past and present, and this reminded the researcher not to include the item in target marking. Some changes and revisions were made to the instruments as a result of the piloting test analysis and reflections, and a refined and specific Chinese instruction for writing a narrative and giving predicates in verb units of the cloze test (both orally and literally) was designed.

Table 3.8

Reliability Coefficient of Cloze Test Items (N = 10)

Statistics resorted	Verb units	Scores	$\bar{x}$	s^2	r
K-R20	39	249	24.9	20.13	.71*

* $r(8) = .71, p < .05$.

3.3 Data Collection

On Sept. 29, 2006 from 2:30 P.M. to 5:30 P.M., the main study test was conducted among the 175 subjects from Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL) in China, following the experiment specifications and data collection procedures described in Sections 3.1 & 3.2. Five performed test papers were randomly picked out and removed from the database to make the number of subjects 170 as designed. The collected data is described as follows.

Table 3.9

Data Collected

Data	Number	
	High group (n=85)	Low group (n=85)
1. Tokens of the subjects' verb forms in the cloze test	3315	3315
2. Tokens of the subjects' retrospective explanations in the cloze-test questionnaires	3213	3158
3. Copies of the subjects' writing in the writing test	85	84*
4. Tokens of the subjects' retrospective explanations in the writing-test questionnaires	1700	1535

* One subject did not submit her composition.

The collected data was coded and specified for validity before statistical procedures and text analysis commenced. The information in Table 3.9 can thus be reduced to the data valid for analysis and split into Tables 3.10 and 3.11.

Regarding the cloze test, all intended data was successfully obtained (see Table 3.9). All the subjects completed the 40-unit verb-filling task with 39 verbs being targeted. As a result, 3,315 tokens from the high subject group and 3,315 from the low subject group were available for analysis, of which 1955[7] tokens respectively belonged to the event time frame respectively for each subject group and 1360[8] tokens to the speech time frame respectively for each subject group.

Of the cloze-test questionnaires, 102 choices from the high group and 157 form the low group were left blank. These items were neither chosen nor explained. After deducting the 102 and 157 missing choices respectively from the two groups, the final tokens were 3213 from the high group and 3158 from the low group available for analysis (see Table 3.10).

[7] In the cloze test passages, there were 23 verbs in the event time frame, taking the past tense.

[8] In the cloze test passages, there were 16 verbs in the speech time frame, taking the present tense.

Table 3.10

Numbers of Tokens in Cloze Test and Cloze-test Questionnaire for Statistical Analysis

Token	Number	
	High group (n=85)	Low group (n=85)
1. Tokens of the subjects' verb forms in the cloze test	3315	3315
2. Tokens of the subjects' retrospective explanations in the cloze-questionnaires	3213	3158

Of the writing test, all of the finite verbs given in the writing were considered to be test units in the writing test. 85 and 84 compositions came from the high and the low subject groups respectively (see Table 3.9). The 169 compositions underwent narrative writing criteria analysis before their verb forms were recorded. With Butt et al.'s (2000) descriptions of a narrative text as one that carries characteristics of *orientation, complication, resolution* and *coda* being a reference, a broader definition in which narrative is taken as an account to tell what has happened, a piece of writing "to recount events" (Kirszner & Mandell, 1980, p. 29), was adopted to evaluate the actual writing data from the participants. As a result, 156 narrative writings were accepted as valid data for analysis, with the high group contributing 77 and the low group contributing 79 which represented 1,885 and 1,676 tokens of the target verbs available for statistical analysis.

From the writing-test questionnaires, 1,493 explanations and statements from the high group and 1,378 from the low groups were collected relating to the 156 valid narrative writing texts. The subjects did not give the same number of explanations as they gave verb forms in their writing. For the high group, 392 tokens and for the low group 298 were missing. The data valid for statistical analysis is shown in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11

Number of Tokens in Writing Test and Writing-test Questionnaire for Statistical Analysis

Token	Number	
	High group (n=77)	Low group (n=79)
3. Tokens of the subjects' writing in the writing test	1885	1676
4. Tokens of the subjects' retrospective explanations in the writing-questionnaire	1493	1378

3.4 Data Analysis

The database in this study contained two sets of data: verb forms and retrospective explanations of the time reference in the verb forms. The 170 subjects were divided into the high and the low proficiency groups and the data analysed accordingly. Two types of data analysis were conducted: 1) qualitative analysis of ungrammatical verb forms and temporal interpretation factors; and 2) quantitative analysis of the receptive performance and productive performance of temporal interpretation in reading and writing contexts, and quantitative analysis of temporal interpretation performance by the two language proficiency groups. The data analysis procedures were described as follows.

3.4.1 Analysis of verb forms in cloze test and writing test

Analysis of the verb forms in the cloze test and the writing test was directed at subjects' ungrammatical verb forms to address problems in tense forms. The ungrammatical verb forms appearing in the cloze test and the writing test were identified and recorded respectively and categorized into groups. The percentage of the incorrect forms in each group was calculated following the formula:

$$\text{Each type of ungrammatical verb forms (\%)} = \frac{\text{Total number of each type of ill-formed verbs}}{\text{Total number of ill-formed verbs in the test}}$$

3.4.2 Analysis of factors reported in close-test and writing-test questionnaires

Following the construct that, in narrative texts, time references were framed in sequences of the events (to be further discussed in Section 3.4.5), subjects' optional choices of syntactic units, discourse units and their statements of reasons for tense uses in the cloze test and in the writing test were recorded and categorized from the cloze-questionnaires and the writing-questionnaires accordingly and respectively (see Appendixes B and D).

After the frequency of categorized factors was tallied, the percentage of categorized factors of each group was calculated following the formulae:

$$\text{Frequency of factors (\%) (In the cloze-test questionnaire)} = \frac{\text{Total number of chosen items and reasoning statements of the same factor}}{\text{Total number of chosen items and reasoning statements of all factors}}$$

$$\text{Frequency of factors (\%) (In the writing-test questionnaire)} = \frac{\text{Total number of reasoning statements of the same factor}}{\text{Total number of reasoning statements of all factors}}$$

The frequencies of the factors for each group in the cloze-test questionnaires were checked by Pearson's Chi-square test to establish if the frequencies were influenced by chance choices.

3.4.3 Analysis of receptive performance and productive performance of temporal interpretation

The verb forms in the cloze test and the writing test were grouped into two basic tense frames: the present and the past tenses. The correct scores of these verbs' tense forms in the narrative reading texts and narrative writing texts were calculated respectively. Comparisons of the two subject groups' receptive ability and productive ability in temporal interpretation were achieved by a Paired Samples *t*-test using SPSS Version 11.0.

3.4.3.1 Consistency of rating scores of verb tenses in writing test

Before the subjects' temporal interpretation performances in reading and writing were compared, the reliability of the tense scores in the total 156 compositions was checked. To achieve reliable marking of the verb tenses used by the subjects in their compositions, two ratings were conducted. The first rating was done by the researcher herself based on the classifications of tense usages and uses described in the literature review and the rater's common knowledge of English tense. A native speaker of English teacher performed the second rating. Person's r was calculated to observe the consistency of the two ratings. The result was $r = .947$, which suggested that the two ratings were statistically consistent and therefore reliable.

3.4.4 Analysis of temporal interpretation performances by high and low proficiency groups

Verb forms in the cloze test and the writing test were grouped into two basic tense frames: the present tense and the past tense. The correct scores of these verb tenses by the two subject groups were calculated. Independent-Samples t-test in SPSS Version 11.0 treated the scores. Comparisons of the temporal interpretation performances between the high proficiency group and the low proficiency group in the cloze test and in the writing test were achieved accordingly.

3.4.5 General framework of temporal interpretation analysis in this study

Underlying all the analyses employed in this study was a code of temporal interpretation in narrative texts, incorporating the concepts of event time and speech time in narrative texts. They are the kernels of the narrative text time into which sequences of the events are recognized as foreground and background. To understand this relationship between the narrative discourse structure and the narrative discourse

time frames, an overview of the characteristics of narrative texts is given before the analysis of the temporal interpretation in the narrative texts starts.

3.4.5.1 An overview of narrative texts

Bardovi-Harlig (1995) and Labov (1972) have proposed individual narrative discourse models. Their main elements are the foreground and the background in which the story develops its sequences of the event(s) with attendant evaluation. Based on Bardovi-Harlig and Labov's models, the characteristics of narrative texts are summed up and some components are elaborated as follows.

1. **Foreground and background** Narrative texts are characterised by the foreground and background with the selective tenses (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995). A narrative is an account of what has happened in the past. It tells a story, an experience, and what this story and experience tells us. In a narrative discourse, the story line makes the foreground where the past tense dominates and the evaluations (Labov, 1972), judgments, and additional information make the background which appeals to the present tense and also to the past tense in some cases. This pattern of tenses in a discourse framework makes up the event time and speech time of the discourse and allows us to approach the temporal interpretation the subjects have made when reading or writing a narrative text. The foreground and the background make up the skeleton of a narrative text.

2. **Story sequence** Narrative texts are characterised by sequences in which an event moves. Sequences of the event(s) keep the verb tense consistent and at the same time, allow for tense shifting between the segments. These sequenced segments facilitate the tracing of the shifting of tenses and allow the reasons behind the temporal shifts when the subjects give their temporal interpretations to be approached. As for the texts given as instruments in this study, story sequence plays its role. For example, in Text 1, the beginning paragraph *Napoleon led a very exciting and dangerous life, but he died in his own bed* (narration, sequence 1). *However, the cause*

of Napoleon's death is the subject of controversy from that time to the present is sequenced into two segments: the story process and the evaluation (comments on the event, sequence 2).

3. **Discourse time** Narrative texts are characterised by discourse time attributes in which sequences of the event(s) progress in the past time frame while background information sets aside, or in some cases inside the story, in either the present time frame or the past time frame. Time in the sequences of the event constitutes the event time frame, while time in evaluations makes up the speech time frame. Speech time creates a clear starting point at which reference time sets forth. The reference time of the event is past deictic. The reference time of evaluation is both present and past deictic. Narratives are typically associated with the past tense because of the nature of the discourse. The paragraph quoted above exemplifies the idea of event time and speech time within.

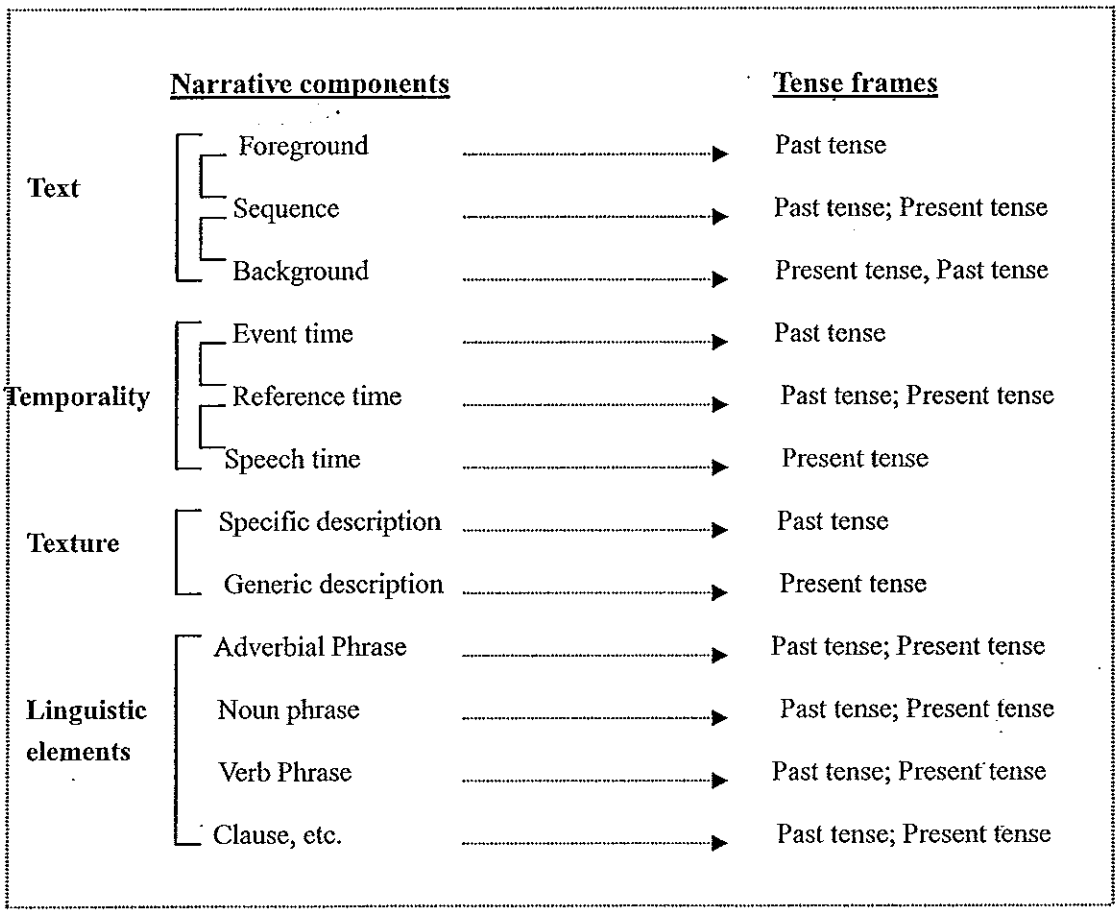
4. **Generic and specific descriptions** Narrative texts are characterised by a way of story telling which incorporates descriptions into the narration. Descriptions can be generic or specific. A generic description describes kinds of people, a geographical location, world knowledge, universal truth, etc., using the simple present tense (usually). In specific descriptions, i.e., descriptions of a specific act at a particular situation, of a specific individual at a particular point of time, or of a specific place where the event took place, the simple past tense is mostly involved. In this study, generic descriptions are treated as evaluations in the speech time frame and specific descriptions are treated as the event in the event time frame.

5. **Verb types** Narrative texts are characterised by verb types. Verbs in the story line (foreground) are usually action verbs that describe sequences of the events and actions while verbs giving evaluations or additional information (background) or expressing relations are statively inclined. In Text 1, the verbs *lead* and *die* signified actions and events; the verb to *be* describes states or evaluations (see the above quoted paragraph).

6. **Temporal adverbials** Narrative texts are characterised by temporal adverbials such as *one morning*, *when I was 11 years old*, *in my middle school days*, *this year* and *yesterday*. These adverbials, together with the verb tense, mark the sequences of the event(s) into temporal phases. In other words, temporal adverbials illuminate the time channel of the verbal clauses in narrative texts. Besides verbs and adverbials, there are other linguistic elements such as noun phrases, clauses and conjunctions which impact on the temporal interpretation of L2 learners.

The characteristics of narrative texts discussed above from the perspective of the discourse structure constitute the basis for the analysis in this study from which a possible relationship could be seen existing between the components of the narrative discourse and their temporal interpretations. We illustrate this relationship as follows.

Figure 3.1. Relationship between narrative components and temporal interpretation.

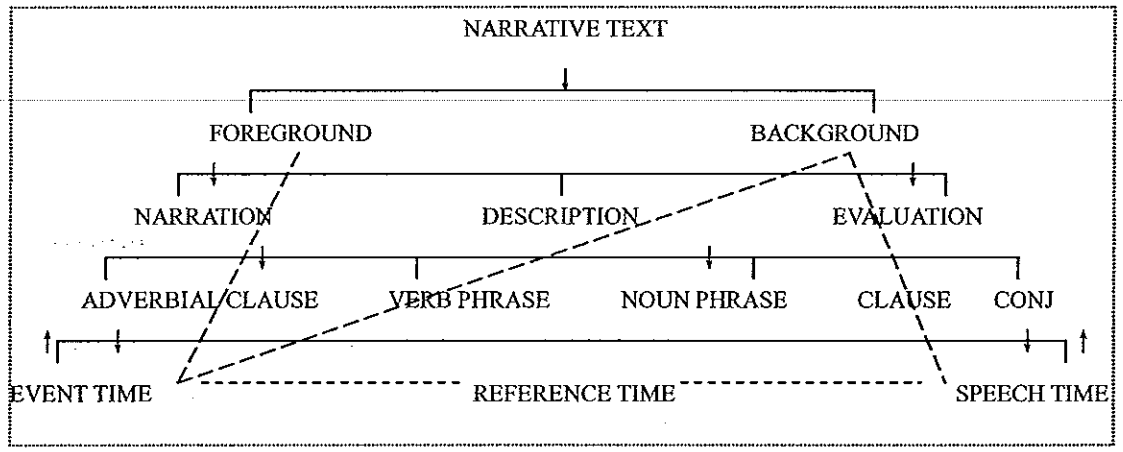


3.4.5.2 Analysis framework of temporal interpretation in narrative texts

Figure 3.1 indicates that components in the narrative texts have interior relationships with the temporality of the discourse. This narrative discourse temporality, described as *event time* and *speech time*, grounds all the potential temporal relations being unfolded with the sequential progression of the events. In narrative texts, event time is the time in which the event occurs; speech time is the time at the moment of speaking or writing. The two time concepts project their notions alternatively onto the operational discourse components. The immersed components reflect this projection. In the main story line, or the foreground, of a narrative, the events or the actions fall into the *event time* that therefore, take a past time interpretation; in the evaluation segments, or the background, *speech time* reflects the moment of making an evaluation or judgement or stating a universal truth and therefore, this part of the discourse embarks on the present tense. It may also employ the past tense if the evaluation is a specific description concerning a specific person or an incident at a specific time or a specific place or if the evaluation represents additional information in the same time frame with the event. To simplify the research at this initial stage, only the present tense has been included in evaluation. Evaluation framed in past time is categorized within the event sequences. Analysis of subjects' time conceptions and factors that influenced the time conceptions in narrative texts was based on this temporal relationship between the *event time* and the foreground and between the *speech time* and the background.

Figure 3.2 outlines this relationship inside narrative texts.

Figure 3.2. Components functioning in narrative texts.



Reconstructed from Bardovi-Harlig (1995) and Labov (1972).

3.4.6 Factors contributing to temporal interpretation in narrative texts

Figure 3.2 shows that the event time and speech time connect with the narrative discourse components and represent the baseline to interpret time in narrative texts. How would learners get to this narrative discourse time concept and what factors that contribute to their access to this narrative text temporality? The literature reviewed suggested that three factors might be at work in the learners' temporal interpretation: linguistic elements, discourse context and cultural differences. We start from the linguistic elements. In reality, the readers locate their time inference by reading the linguistic units in a sentence. These linguistic units are noun phrases, verb phrases, adverbial phrases and clauses. To the readers, they represent pieces of the meaning of the story, including meanings of the temporal indication in the story. These linguistic units are used in this study as optional choices in the testing instrument to track down the subjects' temporal interpretation in narrative texts, to establish if these units render the subjects' temporal perception in the sentence and if their perception of the event time and speech time is similar to that of native speakers. The subjects were asked to state their reasons for choosing these linguistic elements which they believe played a role in their temporal interpretation. The study thus seeks

out the factors that might contribute to the subjects' temporal interpretations in narrative texts.

An in-depth discussion of the three narrative texts in the cloze test and factors that might contribute to the temporal interpretation in the cloze test is conducted as a prelude to the factor identification task in narrative reading and further in narrative writing.

3.4.6.1 Three narrative texts in the cloze test

The three narrative texts designed as the cloze test took three modes of narratives: narration, news reporting, and narration with description. All three passages fell under the heading of narrative discourse. Passage 1, test units (1)-(12), was about Napoleon and the text's story line was set in the past time frame with the evaluation in the present time frame. Passage 2, test units (13)-(25), was made up of two pieces of local news reporting. Passage 3, test units (26)-(39), was about travelling experience in Nepal and contained descriptions of a journey and the country as the writer observed it. Passages 1 & 3 tested the subjects' temporal interpretation from the perspective of the discourse structure of the foreground and the background entailing the discourse time concept: event time and speech time. In Text 1, "Napoleon" for example, the event described in test units (1) & (2) (the foreground) fall within the event time while the comments included in test units (3)-(5) fall within the speech time. In Passage 2, the event time and the speech time of the discourse came to the surface, since the testing passage was made up of two pieces of news reporting, in which the event time and the speech time were alternatively interwoven and became the prime point for time reference in the discourse. The subjects' performance in producing verb forms in the passages and their statements of the reasons for the performed verb forms were intended to give a clue to identifying the factors that contribute to their temporal interpretation in narrative texts.

3.4.6.2 Tentative analysis of temporal interpretation factors

The analysis of factors that influence the learners' temporal interpretation in narrative texts in this study is based on the concepts of event time and speech time underlying the narrative sequences. A tentative analysis of temporal factors in the cloze was carried out to investigate the assumption. In this analysis, the sentence constituents were treated as functional units. An adverbial phrase (AP) signifies the meanings of the time and modifies a verb clause (VP); a verb phrase (VP) signifies the meanings that describe the event or the action; a noun phrase (NP) signifies the substance relating to the event; a clause (CL) signifies the meanings of the context; and a conjunction (CONJ) signifies the directions of the two connected clauses. These semantic units were designed as optional choices in the cloze-test questionnaire and treated as the analytic units to signify the time entailed in those units. These semantic units which signify the foreground and the background under which the event time and the speech time stand, were then categorized with reference of the subjects' statements and explanations, and recorded as factors to see how the subjects successfully or unsuccessfully interpret time in narrative reading texts. An analysis of factors of temporal interpretation in writing texts was then conducted with reference to this approach.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the data analysis and discusses the findings. It is knit through answering the four research questions to tackle the main purpose of the study: to investigate how Chinese students interpret time when reading and writing English narrative texts. There are four sections in this chapter: section 1 relates to the analysis of the verb forms performed by the two subject groups in the cloze test and the writing test, both qualitative and quantitative; section 2 relates to the analysis of factors that influence subjects' temporal interpretation in narrative reading and writing texts, both qualitative and quantitative; section 3 relates to the comparison of the differences between the subjects' receptive performance and their productive performance in temporal interpretation; and section 4 examines the extent to which the subjects at the high and the low language proficiency levels behaved differently in temporal interpretation. Conclusions are given at the end of each section.

4.1 Verb Forms Given in Narrative Reading and Writing Texts

By the first research question which aims to study the verb forms given in English narrative reading and writing texts by the 3rd year Chinese law students from university of SWUPL at Chongqing, China, it is presented under two subtitles: the verb forms given in the cloze test and the verb forms given in the writing test. The study of verb forms in this research concentrates only on the ungrammatical verb forms given by the subjects, the correct ones not being specifically considered. It is expected that the discussion of the ungrammatical verb forms would indicate to what extent the subjects unsuccessfully performed their temporal interpretation and at

which grammar points their temporal interpretation failed. The ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test are discussed first.

4.1.1 Ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test

The ungrammatical verb forms in this study were verb forms or test units lacking certain grammar properties of the correct tense forms. Based on data analysis, it was found that the ungrammatical verb forms which appeared in the cloze test could be categorized into nine types, namely: (1) modal auxiliary and past verb (modal + v-ed); (2) passive voice structure (be + past participle); (3) progressive tense structure (be + present participle); (4) perfect tense structure (have + v); (5) pure present participles (v-ing); (6) analogy (past irregular); (7) subject-verb disagreement (plural-singular); (8) word classes (parts of speech); (9) misspelling (misspelling).

Table 4.1

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

	Types	Ungrammatical verb forms			
		Number		Percentage (%)	
		High group (n = 85)	Low group (n = 85)	High group	Low group
1.	Modal + v-ed	6	3	1.50	0.46
2.	Be + past participle	22	51	5.49	7.85
3.	Be + present participle	12	22	2.99	3.39
4.	Have / has / had + v.	11	27	2.74	4.15
5.	V-ing	19	57	4.74	8.77
6.	Past irregular	45	91	11.22	14.00
7.	Plural-singular	228	305	56.85	46.92
8.	Parts of speech	3	13	0.75	2.00
9.	Misspelling	55	81	13.72	12.46
Total		401	650	100%	100%

From Table 4.1, *plural and singular subject-verb disagreement*, *misspelling*, *past irregular verbs*, and *be + past participles* represented the top four ungrammatical verb forms with respect to both the high and low groups (v-ing errors were clustered

in *hitting*. Considering the potential syntactic difficulties in the sentence which enclosed *hitting*, the number may not truly reflect errors). They were the most common errors found in the cloze test which interfered with tense and temporal interpretation. The errors in *past irregular verbs* and in *be + past participles* which were taking a form of the passive voice in English were the top two ungrammatical verb forms connected directly with tense formation. Discussion with special attention to some typical ungrammatical verb forms follows.

4.1.1.1 Ungrammatical verb forms with modal and past verb

It was found that the subjects occasionally used past verbs after auxiliaries. The examples could be observed in *will/would closed* and *will started*. Nine subjects used this **"modal + v-ed"** structure as verb forms in the test. According to Quirk, Leech & Svartvik's (1972) description of modals, this structure could be called "modal auxiliary + v-ed". Two things were notable. One was that this structure was preferred by more learners at a higher proficiency level (6 subjects) than learners at a lower proficiency level (3 subjects). Another was that the erroneous verb forms in this pattern were projected onto just two verbs: to *close* and to *start* out of 20 action verbs in the test. This suggested that even though few in numbers, this deviation could not be "lapses" or "mistakes" (Norrish, 1993). The two exclusive verbs to *close* and to *start* were punctual verbs, or "telic predicates" with a clear terminal point of process (Crystal, 1985). Punctual verbs entail meaning of completeness and achievement (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p. 359). Errors like this give an insight into the role that lexical aspect of verbs plays on the learner's temporal interpretation. We assume that the subject first chose an auxiliary, but the completeness entailed in the following punctual verb (achievement verb) was strong enough that his attention never shifted to coordinate the tense form of the verb required by grammar. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) called this "double marking(s)" errors in L2 learners' tense formation. But that explanation does not fully explain *will started* and *will closed* as used by the subjects

in this case. Because under the "double marking" assumption, the first modal auxiliary marked future time (the present tense according to Richards, et al., 1992) and the subjects were expected to place the tense marker on both words such as in *He doesn't knows my name* or *We didn't went there* (Dulay, et al., p. 156). If these subjects were following the general rule of English tense formation which is to place the tense marker on the first verb, the verb forms would most likely be *will close* and *will start* instead of the *will closed* and *will started.*

Therefore, this might be a case showing that the subjects' temporal interpretation was influenced by the inherent meaning of the verbs and this inherent aspectual meaning of verbs seemed to influence subjects at a higher proficiency level more than subjects at a lower proficiency level when they were inferring the time of verbs in sentences. In the text, the expected forms of the two verbs were respectively "will close" and "started".

4.1.1.2 Ungrammatical verb forms with passive voice structure

The unnecessary "be" was found in use with the past or the past participles, which led to the passive voice structures, **"be + past** or **past participle"** such as *is died, was died, was fighted, was closed, was provided* and *are escaped.* A considerable number of verbs were offered by the subjects in this form, 22 for the high group and 51 for the low group. To establish possible reasons why these ungrammatical verb forms were used by the subjects to signify the unnecessary meaning which is the meaning of the passive voice structure, these verbs were approached from two perspectives. From the perspective of the lexical aspect, it was noted that the mistaken forms concerned the punctual (telic) verbs (accomplishments and achievements): *to die, to escape, to announce, to close, to provide, to start, to hit, to accuse* and *to care*; and the durative verbs (activity verbs): *to fight, to do* and *to sleep.* From the perspective of "sentence construction" (Crystal, 1985), it was noted that the errors affected both the transitive verbs: *to announce, to close, to provide, to start, to hit, to*

accuse, to fight, to do and *to sleep*; and the intransitive verbs: *to die, to escape, to care, to fight* and *to sleep*.

With regard to the transitive constructions in the use of verbs, in Chinese, the learners' first language, the subject of a sentence is not required as strictly as is the case for an English sentence (Fang, 2001). In many cases, the subject is not needed or is omitted from a sentence. Second, Chinese syntax places the word or the set of words that are to be centred in description at the beginning of a sentence as the subject and neglects the potential relationship between the subject and the predicate as exists in English syntax. The subject, therefore, is not necessarily as meaningful as a subject in an English sentence (ibid.). The following three sentences may help to explain.

(a) 他们说， 今天 来帮助我们 修房子。 (ibid., p. 7)
They said **today** were coming to help us with our house repair.
[adverbial] [predicate] [complement]

(b) 窗外 飘着 雪花儿。 (ibid., p. 6)
Outside the window is blowing snow.
[subject] [predicate] [object]

(c) 他 死了 父亲。 (ibid., p. 6)
He died his father.
[subject] [predicate] [object]

The three Chinese sentences exemplified the typical non-subject or irrelevant-subject characteristic of Chinese syntax and may partly explain why the Chinese learners preferred the use of the passive voice structure. They developed a remedy from L2 for the habitual omission of the sentence subject or the irrelevance of the subject to the predicate in their L1 practice when performing L2 verb forms. And the transitivity of verbs in the cloze test such as *announce, close, provide, start, hit, accuse* and *do* facilitated this innovation, as the English passive voice structure does not need "a performer of the action" (Crystal, 1985).

At this point, we make a bold assumption that during the process of the learners' remedial practice of the L2 passive voice structure, they have developed a sense of the completion of the action described in that passive voice structure "be + past participle", for the past participle bears meanings of completeness. Actually, in Chinese EFL classrooms, the students have been told that the English "be + past participle" structure suggests two meanings: one is the passiveness and the other is completeness.

Now we can explain those intransitive verbs (*die, escape, care, fight* and *sleep*) given in a passive voice structure by the subjects. *Die* and *escape* are punctual or telic verbs bearing an implication of accomplishment of an action, so it was easier for the learners to connect them with a passive voice structure. The two telic or punctual verbs (achievements) with a clear terminal point of action were rendered in the passive voice structure by subjects, being either aware or unaware.

Fight and *sleep* are two durative or atelic verbs (activities) and in many cases are used intransitively in English. But in Chinese they are verbs that take an inner predicate-object structure (述宾关系，Fang, 2001, p. 21) in their word formation: 睡-觉 (to sleep a sleep) / 打-仗 (to fight a battle). In this sense, they are transitive verbs in Chinese. So it was easy for the Chinese subjects to use the two verbs in an English passive voice structure.

Care is a stative verb "of inert perception and cognition" (Quirk et al., 1972, p. 96) which appeared in this case in a passive voice structure. But it is possible that most subjects misinterpreted the meaning of this verb as the transitive "look after" and thus rendered it in a passive voice structure.

Three points can be made in conclusion to this discussion. First, the use with numerous verbs of the unneeded *be* in "be + past or past participle" structures suggests that this is a common practice among the learners. Second, this type of errors is influenced by L1 sentence structure as well as by L2 temporal interpretation at the point of the aspectual meanings of verbs. Because analysis suggests that lexical aspect

could be a factor to facilitate the use of this "be + past participle" structure. Thirdly, this type of errors is reflective of L1 interfering inversely to the degree of L2 proficiency. 22 and 51 persons respectively in the high and the low groups used this passive voice structure. It is obvious that learners at the lower proficiency level more often employed this type of ungrammatical verb forms.

By their use of the passive voice structure, the subjects temporal interpretation of the sentence was easy to detect since they marked time by the "be" of the structure as for instance in: *is died* and *was dies, are hit* and *was hit, will be accused* and *was accused*. Thus, from the above analysis, this misuse of a passive voice structure mostly involves L1 transfer (Odlin, 1989) and partly involves the aspectual meaning of L2 verbs.

4.1.1.3 Ungrammatical verb forms with progressive tense structure

Together with the "be + past or past participle" structures just discussed, the structure **"be + present participle"** was found among the data. The subjects used verb forms such as *was being, was coming, is closing, was closing, is hitting* and *was starting* to express a past continuous state or action. Superficially, these expressions were all framed grammatically in the progressive tense structure. They were, nevertheless, wrong by nature in terms of the aspectual constraints of the progressive tense and the testing context. Quirk et al (1972) described several cases in which the progressive is not admitted. The first is "stative" (kind of verbs used to describe states, conditions, relations and inert perception, see Ch. 1) as in the sentences **The girl is now being a student*; **She was seeing that it rained all day*; and **John was knowing the answer* (p. 39). Quirk et al. also mentioned that punctual and momentary (telic) verbs admit the progressive only in case of suggesting repetition, for instance, *The child jumped* (once) *for joy* and *The child was jumping* (several times) *for joy*. So in the context where the verbs occurred in the cloze test, the progressive *be + closing, starting, hitting* offered by the subjects represented ungrammatical verb forms.

According to Quirk et al., when transitional event verbs such as to *arrive,* to *come,* to *fall* and to *lose* are used in the progressive, "the progressive implies inception, *i.e.*, only the approach to the transition" (ibid., p. 95). "*Be + coming*" was contrary to this indicated use in a proportion of the cases. Among the total 12 and 22 misuses of the progressive tense, 8 subjects in the high group and 10 in the low group offered *be + coming*. Some explained this as a future case. Some believed this to be a case of transitional process. Still others took this as a state. There were therefore various kinds of temporal interpretation. It was also noticed that among the errors, there were quite a few cases of "*was being*" and "*is being*". On a surface level, the subjects generalized a progressive tense "*be + being*" for a continuous existence in their mind. They also generalized "*be + closing, starting, hitting*" from "*be + coming*", which was taught in classrooms to be used to express future time. But a second possibility is that in this deviated progressive tense form, the subjects treated "was" and "is" as a time marker and "v-ing" as a progressive tense. This would explain the uniform formula "*be + v-ing*" in the subjects' erroneous verb forms and this provides us with another means to look at the incorrect passive voice structure used for temporal interpretation by the learners.

4.1.1.4 Ungrammatical verb forms with perfect tense structure

Ungrammatical verb forms associated with the use of the past perfect tense and the present perfect tense were found in **have/has/had + present participle; had/have/has + infinitive; having + infinitive;** and **having + past participle** or **present participle**. The subjects produced confusing and erroneous perfect tense forms such as *had leading, has escape, having escape* and *having closed*. The errors increased in the lower proficiency level. There were 11 verb forms demonstrating this kind of errors in the high group and 27 in the low group. The most observed errors in using "to have" found in the data was its miscellaneous forms, which were damaging the subjects' tense expressions. This suggested that some of the learners had confusing

ideas about using perfect tense formation and lacked the ability to construct correct perfect tense structures.

Identification of the subjects' intended temporal interpretation in using these aberrant perfect tense structures, especially **having + infinitive** and **having + past participle,** had to be derived from the subjects' statements of tense use in questionnaires.

4.1.1.5 Ungrammatical verb forms with pure present participles

The use of the pure present participle **v-ing** as a finite verb was found in the data analysis. The subjects used verb forms such as *hitting, fighting, coming, escaping* and *being* as finite verbs to express an on-going event or state. This lack of concepts of finites and non-finites and using the present participles as the progressive tense reinforces the argument in 4.1.1.3 that the subjects used "be" (*was, is*, etc.) as a time marker and the present participle "v-ing" as the progressive tense (Richards, 1974, pp. 178-180). It was found that most errors of this kind occurred with two non-finites: *closing* and *hitting* (see Table E1, Appendix E), which were embedded in their respectively complex sentences. This may imply that syntactic under-acquisition prevented the learners from constructing correct tenses.

Identification of the subjects' temporal interpretation in this group of verb forms was based on their declaration of tense choice in the questionnaires.

4.1.1.6 Ungrammatical verb forms by analogy

This type of incorrect verb forms arises in a manner described by Crystal (1985). It is basically a phenomenon happening during the process of language acquisition in which the regularization of the grammar of a language affects the exceptional forms in that language. In English verbs, it happened to the use of irregular past verbs into regularized past verbs. Crystal described this kind of errors by

L2 learners as "analogy". It has other names: overgeneralization, overextension (Richards, et al., 1992) and regularization errors (Dulay, et al., 1982). There were three types of analogy errors found in the subjects' given verb forms: (a) using **irregular verbs** as **regular**; (b) using **regular verbs** as **irregular**; and (c) using one **irregular verb** of one group as another **irregular** of the other group. The examples were found in the verbs (a) *leaded, losed, hited, taked*; (b) *hoot, heet*; and (c) *lead, faught, fighten, hitten*. The analogical creation of irregular verbs into regular past verbs and of irregular verbs into incorrect irregular verb forms was notoriously seen in verbs like *lead* (10 errors in the high group and 19 in the low group), *fight* (11 errors in the high group and 22 in the low group), and *hit* (11 errors in the high group and 19 in the low group). The two subject groups "created" 45 and 91 errors in the seven irregular verbs of the cloze test (see also Table E1, Appendix E). There was no problem in interpreting the tense frames among these verbs in the subjects' answers because each form clearly represented the past or the present in itself.

4.1.1.7 Ungrammatical verb forms with subject-verb disagreement

This kind of ungrammatical verb forms came from the use of verbs with violations of subject-verb agreement rules. For example, the testees used a singular verb *was* instead of the desired *were* in the sentence **The ancient buses and cars was hooting loudly, *but the cow do not care* (Test Unit [27]). Typical examples of this obvious violation of the subject-verb agreement rules were seen in Test Units (27), (33), (37), (38) and (39). These were sentences **There was a lot there for the adventurous tourists* (Test Unit [33]). **There was/is no nightclubs* (Test Unit [37]). **Ninety-nine per cent of the population was/is in bed by 10 pm* (Test Unit [38]). **Our seven days in Nepal is/was wonderful* (Test Unit [39]). The erroneous examples (Test Units [33], [38] and [39]) suggested that there might be some problems with local classroom instruction of subject-verb agreement rules or that some factors (hints from Test Units [27] and [37]) that affected the learners' cognition interferes with the

subject-verb agreement of these sentence. However, this is still ambiguous and the point is not able to be proved at the moment.

From Table 4.1, we can see that subject-verb disagreement remained a big problem interrupting L2 learners' smooth temporal expression in China. Errors in "*to be*" disagreement were 165 among the high group and 212 for the low group. Errors in "to do" disagreement were 63 for the high group and 93 for the low group (see Table E1, Appendix E). The total errors for the two subject groups in subject-verb agreement for the 39 verbs in the cloze test were 228 and 305 among the high and the low groups respectively. There was no problem in establishing the subjects' temporal interpretation with this group of ungrammatical verb forms.

4.1.1. 8 Ungrammatical verb forms with word classes

Ungrammatical verb forms of this type were revealed in the subjects' use of an adjective or a noun in place of a verb, both of which were cognates in the word family. The major misuses of this kind of verbs in the cloze test were *dead* for *died, loose* for *lost, heat* for *hit*. The errors showed the subjects' under-acquisition of these English verbs.

Not many ill forms of this type were produced by the subjects since the cloze test was a predetermined test in which the verbs could not vary as those in the free writing test could. There were 3 such errors from the high group and 13 from the low group. There was no problem in understanding the subjects' time reference in these misspelled verbs.

4.1.1.9 Ungrammatical verb forms with misspelling

Misspelling is common with all L2 learners in their linguistic performance, and the subjects in the cloze test clearly exhibited this problem. However, the ungrammatical verb forms caused by spelling errors by the subjects in this test carried

their own characteristics. The major misspelling found in the cloze test was the verb *control*, which needed the subjects to make some changes before producing the correct simple past, progressive and perfect tenses. The subjects gave **controled*, *controling* or *had controled*. There were 55 misspelling cases found in the high group and 81 in the low group, of which the misspellings of the verb *control* made up 42 and 61 respectively in the two subject groups. This should serve as a reminder that some attention be paid to verbs when inflections are added in tense formation. This group of ungrammatical verb forms presented no problems in temporal interpretation while recording the data.

In conclusion, data in 39 verb units in the cloze test was collected and the frequencies of the ungrammatical verb forms were tallied (Table 4.1). There were totally 405 (12.22%) and 663 (20.00%) ungrammatical verb forms in the high group and the low group respectively out of the 3,315 tokens for each group in the cloze test, of which 401 and 650 were respectively calculated and categorized into the nine error types for the two subject groups as shown in Table 4.1. Errors such as "*be*", "*to be*", "*be done*", "*has*", and "*should*" were not categorized because of their small numbers. A further macro-perspective of ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test is provided in Table F1 (Appendix F).

4.1.2 Ungrammatical verb forms in the writing test

In parallel with the study of ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test, this section deals with ungrammatical verb forms in the writing test. Each of the subjects was asked to write a 120-150-word composition talking about his/her experience and the influence that experience had on their present work and life. It was a topic-guided narrative writing, in which the subjects were free to make any decision in choosing verbs, setting up tense frames and producing verb forms. The temporal interpretation of the event in this context would be more close to its true meanings.

A total of 1,885 and 1,676 verb forms were collected from subjects in the high group and the low group respectively. The number of verbs used by each subject varied from 10-39 and the average number of verbs that each subject produced in his/her writing was 24.48 verbs in the high group and 21.22 verbs in the low group.

Ungrammatical verb forms were then identified and categorized. The categories used were those used to analyse the ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test. They were used as tentative frames to initiate the analysis of the ungrammatical verb forms in the writing test in the hope of seeing at which grammar points, the subjects' temporal interpretation failed, and whether this was similar to or different from the ungrammatical verb forms produced in the cloze test.

The nine groups of ungrammatical verb forms were: modal auxiliary and past verb (modal auxiliary + v-ed); (2) passive voice structure (be + past participle); (3) progressive tense structure (be + present participle); (4) perfect tense structure (have + v); (5) pure present participles (v-ing); (6) analogy (past irregular); (7) subject-verb disagreement (plural-singular); (8) word classes (parts of speech); (9) misspelling (misspelling). The details were illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

	Types	**Ungrammatical verb forms**					
		Number				Percentage (%)	
		High group (n = 77)		Low group (n = 79)		High group	Low group
1.	Modal auxiliary + v-ed	5	(7.97)	7	(12.87)	7.46	5.51
2.	Be + past participle	13	(20.71)	20	(36.76)	**19.40**	**15.75**
3.	Be + present participle	3	(4.78)	7	(12.87)	4.48	5.51
4.	Have / has / had + v.	7	(11.15)	8	(14.70)	10.45	6.30
5.	V-ing	0	(0)	2	(3.68)	0	1.58
6.	Past irregular	15	(23.90)	34	(62.49)	**22.39**	**26.77**
7.	Plural-singular	4	(6.37)	7	(12.87)	5.97	5.51
8.	Parts of speech	11	(17.52)	14	(25.73)	**16.42**	**11.02**
9.	Misspelling	9	(14.34)	28	(51.46)	**13.43**	**22.05**
Total		**67**	**(106.74)**	**127**	**(233.43)**	**100%**	**100%**

Note. Numbers in brackets are the transformed data to the standard of the test unit number in Table 4.1 which adds

up to 39.

As shown in Table 4.2, *irregular past verbs* ranked top of the ungrammatical verb forms, followed by the *be + past participle structure*, *misspelling* and *incorrect word classes*. They were the most common errors as they were in the cloze test and interfered with the expression of temporal interpretation. Errors in *past irregular verbs* and *be + past participles* which were forms of the passive voice in English were the top two ungrammatical verb forms connected directly with tense formations. Discussion with comparisons of ungrammatical verb forms in the writing test and in the cloze test is given in the following sections.

4.1.2.1 Ungrammatical verb forms with modal auxiliary structure

In parallel with the cloze test, the subjects were found to use the "**modal auxiliary + v-ed**" structure as a verb tense form in writing. Unlike the preferential use of this structure by the high group in the controlled cloze test, this time, 5 learners in the high group and 7 in the low group employed wrong verb forms of this type such as *can't accepted, could finished, wouldn't forgot* and *couldn't said*. Once again, the verbs misused in this structure were found to entail meanings of completeness, or accomplishment (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Crystal, 1985). The findings in the writing reinforced the assumption that the inherent meaning of verbs influenced the learners' temporal interpretation. it has to be accepted that the "double marking" proposition (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 156) is reasonable at other places such as in *be + the progressive* structures, and reasonable at a point in this case, as was found when one subject double marked the time in the sentence **This will always affects my work and my life.* But we believe that the "double markings" assumption remains a partial feature on the surface structure of this practice by L2 learners since it cannot fully explain ungrammatical verb forms such as *will closed* and *will started*.

Interpretation of the subjects' time references in this kind of ill forms had to

consult their clarification statements in the questionnaires where the subjects were asked to tick "□ the past tense; □ the present tense" appropriately before giving reasons for their temporal interpretation of the sentence.

4.1.2.2 Ungrammatical verb forms with passive voice structure

In common with the cloze test, the unneeded "be" used with the past or the past participles occurred in the subjects' writing. The passive voice structures, "**be + past** or **past participle**" were found in the uses of *was becomed, was been, was came from, was disappeared, was fight, was happened* and *was hesitated*, etc. The number of the tokens of these ungrammatical verb forms was 13 in the high group and 20 in the low group, being moderately high in comparison with other types of errors made by the subjects in the writing (see Table 4.2). This coherence with what was found in the cloze reading test proves that passive voice structures exist in the learners' verb forms, and most of the verbs that occurred in these structures were verbs with a sense of accomplishment either in an English interpretation or in a Chinese interpretation. Some verbs of inert perception and cognition (Quirk et al., 1972, p. 96) such as *care, confuse, appreciate, fear, hesitate*, etc. are also observed occurring in this error type.

4.1.2.3 Ungrammatical verb forms with progressive tense structures

As a parallel structure with "*be + past* or *past participle*", little use of the structure **"be + present participle"** was found in the writing data. There were only 3 and 7 occurrences of this structure in the two subject groups. One reason might be that writing appeared to be more challenging to the subjects' verb creation and their use of a variety of tenses. The ungrammatical verb forms with a progressive structure were observed to involve two verb types: telic and punctual verbs as in *was becoming, was beginning* and *is always giving*; and stative verbs of inert perception and cognition as in *was depressing, was despairing* and *was intending*. Even if small in numbers, this

fact is in coherence with what was found in the cloze test. That is, the subjects incorrectly used the telic verbs and stative verbs to express a progressive meaning. The subjects used a pair-fabric system for their time reference. They double marked their time reference. The subjects treated "was" and "is" as a time marker and "v-ing" as the progressive tense. This explained the uniform formula "be + v-ing" in the subjects' incorrect verb forms such as *is* or *was* + *being* and *is/was* + *becoming*. This might represent a further and different approach to considering the passive voice structure "be + past participle" as discussed in the previous section.

4.1.2.4 Ungrammatical verb forms with perfect tense structure

The ungrammatical verb forms in use with the past perfect tense and the present perfect tense as in ***have/has/had*** + ***present*** or ***past participle*** and ***had/have/has*** + ***infinitive*** in the writing were not as confusing and erroneous as those produced by the subjects in the cloze test and the number was smaller. There were 7 and 8 errors of this error type found in the high and the low groups respectively. The reason might be the same as that mentioned in regard to the cloze test. Writing is more challenging to verb creation and the subjects might choose to avoid difficult verbs and complicated structures. The incorrect verb forms with the perfect tense were found in *haven't meet, have try, had take, had took, haven't seeing*, etc. Once again, these incorrect perfect tense forms suggested that the learners were lacking in the ability to make correct perfect verb forms.

4.1.2.5 Ungrammatical verb forms with present participle structure

The use of the pure present participle **v-ing** as a finite verb was not or was rarely found in the two subject groups in the writing test. The zero case in the high group and 2 cases in the low group implied that this ungrammatical v-ing finite use might be caused by some provisional factors such as sophisticated syntax as we

mentioned in the cloze test. The present participles used as finite verbs in writing were *didn't cooking* and *didn't thinking*. This group of ill forms appeared to be different from those found in the cloze test with the auxiliary *did* and *not* added.

Interpretation of the subjects' tense choice was decided by the first auxiliary in the verb forms.

4.1.2.6 Ungrammatical verb forms by analogy

The ungrammatical past irregular verbs by analogy appeared in the largest number among the groups of incorrect verb forms in the writing test.

Fifteen of them were found in the high group and 34 of them found in the low group. There were three types of analogy errors in the subjects' verb forms in their writing: (a) using **irregular verbs** as **regular** such as *bursted, catched, choosed, falled* and *feeled*; (b) using **irregular verbs** as **irregular** such as *run, sit, had knew,* and *known*; and (c) using **irregular to irregular then to regular** such as *camed, founded* and *saided*. The analogy errors of type (c) were not found previously in the cloze test.

The analogy errors in the writing test similar to those found in the cloze test reveal that analogy of irregular verbs is a major problem to bar learners' temporal expression.

4.1.2.7 Ungrammatical verb forms with subject-verb disagreement

Only a few ungrammatical verb forms with subject-verb disagreement were found in the writing test. The high subject group recorded 4 and the low subject group recorded 7 while in the cloze test, the high group got 228 and the low group got 305. The subject-verb disagreement errors in the cloze test clustered around test unit *to be*. Similarly in writing, the subject-verb disagreement was centered on the verb *to be* in the present tense.

The sterile subject-verb disagreement errors in writing might be due to the

fact that the subjects wrote simple stories with simple plots which might not have triggered many complex subject-verb relationships. But the most justified reason might be that the subjects wrote fewer verbs that took the present tense than those in the cloze test. There were 16 test units of the present tense in the cloze test for both groups while the subjects in the high group wrote an average of 7 and the subjects in the low group wrote an average of 5.58 verbs which took the present tense.

4.1.2.8 Ungrammatical verb forms with word classes

More ungrammatical verb forms with incorrect word class were found in writing compared with those found in the cloze test. There were 11 in the high group and 14 in the low group. These misuses of parts of speech could be seen in verb forms such as *didn't angry*, *had educationed*, *most loyalty*, *can't responsible*, *was satisfy* and *successed*. Some other verbs demonstrating this kind of errors were those words that were likely to be confused with their corresponding nouns. The following were expressed by the subjects incorrectly: *can't breath, will company, couraged, effected, couldn't image* and *laughted*.

Teachers need to emphasize the different parts of speech of words in classrooms and to distinguish their functions by illustrating those incorrect forms found in the students' work.

4.1.2.9 Ungrammatical verb forms with misspelling

Misspelling in the writing test was unevenly distributed between the two subject groups, the high group committing 9 and the low group 28. These misspellings fell into three divisions. One group was those words misspelled due to under-acquisition such as *arrenged* (arranged), *congrated* (congratulated), *centenced* (sentenced), *dout* (doubt), *experied* (experienced) and *espect* (expect). Another group consisted of verbs missing one of a doubled consonant when changed into an

inflectional form, for example, *claped* (clapped), *have noded* (nodded), *droped* (dropped), commited (committed) and *have hiden* (hidden). The last group were mis-forms such as *flys, teachs,* and *payed.*

4.1.3 Conclusion

Of those ungrammatical verb forms in the cloze test, the most numerous were those of subject-predicate disagreement. Irregular past verbs and misspelling were the second most frequent. Incorrect use of passive voice structures came third. Of those in the writing test, the most numerous were irregular past verbs, followed by passive voice structures, misspelling and incorrect word classes. Save for subject-predicate disagreement, all the other three kinds of major ungrammatical verb forms existed in both narrative reading and writing productions. Irregular past verbs and passive voice structure use were incorrect verb forms directly related to tense forms. The nine types of errors observed in the cloze test and the writing test shared similar features and came from four areas.

1. **L1 influence or *language transfer*** Ungrammatical verb forms produced by the subjects exhibited interference from their mother tongue (Richards & Sampson, 1974). In sentences such as *I was hesitated* and *I was feared that* ..., it can be seen that the verb forms were shaped in a similar way to the equivalent Chinese verb structure *我很犹豫* and *我对...感到恐惧*. This "shape" suggests that the subjects looked for an English verb form while their thoughts were set out in Chinese. They used a passive voice structure to express meanings which were demanded in an active voice structure of English. Error Type 2 represents examples of this source of error.

2. **Intralingual interference** Ungrammatical verb forms produced by the subjects revealed that the learners developed their own rules when practicing the L2 (Richards & Sampson, 1974). These rules were neither from their mother tongue nor from the target language. Errors thus produced reflect the subjects' incomplete acquisition of the target language and wrong analogy of the target language rules.

They double marked the verbs when giving tense forms. They used analogy to make irregular past verbs. Error Types 2, 3, and 6 represent the examples of this source of error.

3. **Aspectual meanings of verbs** Ungrammatical verb forms produced by the subjects exhibited their unawareness or awareness of the aspectual constraints of verbs (Bardovi-harlig, 1995; Crystal, 1985; Quirk et al., 1972). They tended to connect the sense of completeness entailed in some punctual or telic verbs with past forms or passive voice structures such as *would closed, was escaped* and *becomed*, and durative or atelic verbs with the progressive forms such as *was knowing* and *was being*.

4. **Under-acquisition** Ungrammatical verb forms produced by the subjects showed their lack of ability in using the target language grammar in tense forms. Error Types 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 illustrated the learners' insufficient acquisition of the target language. Some of the errors were connected with tense forms such as *have try, have been used being* and *teached*, and some were common errors of L2 learners such as misspelling errors. But both of these sources would interfere with the learners' smooth expression of time reference.

Lastly, it must be pointed out that the two subject groups behaved quite differently in giving ungrammatical verb forms. This might suggest that errors in tense formation may fall under the category of developmental errors in L2 acquisition.

4.2 Factors Contributing to Temporal Interpretation in Narrative Reading and Writing Texts

In an attempt to answer the second research question "What factors contribute to their past and present temporal interpretation in English narrative reading and writing texts?", the concept of event time and speech time upon which stand other narrative components forms the foundation of the analysis. This section is subdivided

into two parts: factors reported in the cloze-test questionnaire and factors reported in the writing-test questionnaire.

4.2.1 Factors reported in the cloze-test questionnaires

The factors reported by the subjects to have influenced their tense uses in the cloze test were recorded in four tables. Table 4.3 outlines the total frequency and percentage of the choices and statements of reasons for temporal interpretation given by the subjects. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 describe how these factors function in the two time frames of narrative texts: event time and speech time. Table 4.6 reports the effect of the multiple-choice scores in the close-test questionnaires calculated by Pearson's chi-square test.

Table 4.3

Factors Reported in Cloze Test that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Factors	**Temporal interpretation in the cloze test**											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		**Total**		Correct		Incorrect		**Total**	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	614	540	115	153	729	693	19.11	17.10	3.58	4.84	**22.69**	**21.94**
2 CONJ.	179	188	32	46	211	234	5.57	5.95	1.00	1.46	6.57	7.41
3 NP	426	366	116	185	542	551	13.26	11.59	3.61	5.86	**16.87**	**17.45**
4 $V_{to\ do}$	115	127	41	54	156	181	3.58	4.02	1.28	1.71	4.85	5.73
5 $V_{to\ be}$	57	42	39	33	96	75	1.77	1.33	1.21	1.04	2.99	2.37
6 V NP/AP	308	265	30	48	338	313	9.59	8.39	0.93	1.52	**10.52**	**9.91**
7 Patterns	60	53	10	11	70	64	1.87	1.68	0.31	0.35	2.18	2.03
Discourse units												
8 Context	283	293	148	168	431	461	8.81	9.28	4.60	5.32	**13.41**	**14.60**
9 Event	220	186	148	160	368	346	6.85	5.89	4.61	5.07	**11.45**	**10.96**
10 Evaluation	73	76	36	22	109	98	2.27	2.41	1.12	0.70	3.39	3.10
Conception												
11 Conception	103	74	60	68	163	142	3.21	2.34	1.87	2.15	5.08	4.50
Total					**3213**	**3158**					**100**	**100**

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 85); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 85).

As shown in Table 4.3, the reported factors were categorized into 11 factor groups. The 3-multiple-choices and explanations and statements of verb tense use in the cloze test questionnaire from each subject were recorded at three domains: linguistic, textual and conceptual. Of the syntactic units, data were recorded as adverbial phrases of time (AP), conjunctions (CONJ), noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP [$V_{to\ do}$, $V_{to\ be}$, V NP/AP]) and sentence patterns (pattern). Of discourse units, data were recorded as context and text (event and evaluation). Subjects also gave a number of unspecified statements of their perception of time, which were verbalized as such "this is past", "this is about the present situation". They were recorded as time conceptions.

In Table 4.3, the dominant factor reported by the subjects to work on their temporal interpretation was *adverbial phrase of time* (AP), 22.69% in the high group and 21.94% in the low group. The second influential factor was *Noun phrase* (NP), 16.87% and 17.45%, followed by *context* with 13.41% in the high group and 14.60% in the low group. *Event*, which was 11.45 % and 10.96%, and *verb phrase* (V NP/AP), 10.52% and 9.91%, also played their roles in subjects' temporal interpretation.

To clarify the issue, information about factors of temporal interpretation in event time and in speech time was reported respectively in the following two tables.

Table 4.4

Factors Reported in Cloze Test that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation in the Event Time Frame

Factors	Temporal interpretation in the event time frame of reading											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	423	398	79	98	502	496	22.20	21.20	4.15	5.22	**26.35**	**26.42**
2 CONJ.	115	124	**29**	**42**	144	166	6.04	6.60	1.52	2.24	7.56	8.84
3 NP	221	179	**76**	**123**	297	302	11.60	9.54	3.99	6.55	**15.59**	**16.09**
4 $V_{to\ do}$	89	97	28	26	117	123	4.67	5.17	1.47	1.38	6.14	6.55
5 $V_{to\ be}$	3	7	**19**	**17**	22	24	0.16	0.37	1.00	0.91	1.16	1.28
6 V NP/AP	208	176	19	**36**	227	212	10.92	9.38	1.00	1.92	**11.92**	**11.30**
7 Patterns	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Discourse units												
8 Context	194	179	69	76	263	255	10.18	9.54	3.62	4.05	**13.81**	**13.59**
9 Event	96	81	**91**	**87**	187	168	5.04	4.31	4.78	4.64	**9.82**	**8.95**
10 Evaluation	27	21	14	8	41	29	1.42	1.12	0.73	0.43	2.15	1.55
Conception												
11 Conception	64	54	41	48	105	102	3.36	2.88	2.15	2.55	5.51	5.43
Total					**1905**	**1877**					**100**	**100**

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 85); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 85).

Table 4.4 shows that in the event time frame, where the past tense is dominant in describing the event, *adverbial phrase* (AP) was the most convenient time marker for the subjects in narrative reading (26.35% and 26.42%) for both groups. Following the general tendency in the summary table 4.3, *noun phrase* (NP) came as a second factor to explain the subjects' tense use, followed by *context* and *verb phrase* (VP). There were 50 options and statements missing in the high group and 78 missing in the low group.

Table 4.5

Factors Reported in Cloze Test that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation in the Speech Time Frame

Factors	Temporal interpretation in the speech time frame of reading											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	191	142	36	55	227	197	14.60	11.09	2.76	4.29	17.36	15.38
2 CONJ.	64	64	3	4	67	68	4.89	5.00	0.23	0.31	5.12	5.31
3 NP	205	187	40	62	245	249	15.67	14.60	3.06	4.84	18.73	19.44
4 $V_{to\ do}$	26	30	13	28	39	58	1.99	2.34	0.99	2.19	2.98	4.53
5 $V_{to\ be}$	54	35	20	16	74	51	4.12	2.73	1.53	1.25	5.65	3.98
6 V NP/AP	100	89	11	12	111	101	7.65	6.95	0.84	0.93	8.49	7.88
7 Patterns	60	53	10	11	70	64	4.59	4.13	0.76	0.86	5.35	4.99
Discourse units												
8 Context	89	114	79	92	168	206	6.80	8.90	6.04	7.18	12.84	16.08
9 Event	124	105	57	73	181	178	9.48	8.20	4.36	5.70	13.84	13.90
10 Evaluation	46	55	22	14	68	69	3.52	4.29	1.68	1.09	5.20	5.38
Conception												
11 Conception	39	20	19	20	58	40	2.98	1.56	1.45	1.56	4.43	3.12
Total					1308	1281					99.99	99.99

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 85); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 85).

In the speech time frame, where the present tense is required, *adverbial of time* (AP) still collected large numbers of endorsements, but this time, *noun phrase* (NP) was higher than adverbial phrase (AP). Then came *Event* and *Context*, followed by *Verb phrase* (VP). These were also the five major factors reported to influence the subjects' temporal interpretation in the event time frame. 52 choices and statements in the high group and 79 in the low group related to the speech time frame performance were found to be missing from the cloze-test questionnaires.

All the frequency scores by the two subject groups in the cloze-test questionnaire were subject to a Chi Square test. The results are presented in Tables 4.6. and 4.7, in which [1] = AP; [2] = CONJ; [3] = NP; [4] = $V_{to\ do}$; [5] = $V_{to\ be}$; [6] = V NP/AP; [7] = Pattern; [8] = Context; [9] = Event; [10] = Evaluation; [11] = Conception).

Table 4.6

Distributions of Options and Frequency Scores of the High Group in Cloze Test

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	Total
Options	14	7	18	15	15	10	5	15	10	8	0	117
	0.1196	0.0598	0.1538	0.1282	0.1282	0.0854	0.0427	0.1282	0.0854	0.0683	0.0000	1.00
Frequency scores	729	211	542	157	96	337	70	431	339	121	180	3213*
	0.2268	0.0656	0.1686	0.0488	0.0298	0.1048	0.0217	0.1341	0.1055	0.0376	0.0560	1.00
Total	743	218	560	172	111	347	75	446	349	129	180	3330
	0.2231	0.0655	0.1682	0.0516	0.0333	0.1042	0.0225	0.1339	0.1048	0.0387	0.0540	1.00

*X^2 (10) = 64.90, p = 4.236e-10 (p < .05).

Table 4.7

Distributions of Options and Frequency Scores of the Low Group in Cloze Test

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	Total
Options	14	7	18	15	15	10	5	15	10	8	0	117
	0.1196	0.0598	0.1538	0.1282	0.1282	0.0854	0.0427	0.1282	0.0854	0.0683	0.0000	1.00
Frequency scores	693	234	551	189	121	259	64	461	207	154	225	3158*
	0.2194	0.0741	0.1745	0.0598	0.0383	0.0820	0.0203	0.1459	0.0655	0.0487	0.0712	1.00
Total	707	241	569	204	136	269	69	476	217	162	225	3275
	0.2158	0.0735	0.1737	0.0622	0.0415	0.0821	0.0210	0.1453	0.0622	0.0494	0.0687	1.00

*X^2 (10) = 49.06, p = 3.969e-07 (p < .05).

As indicated in Tables 4.6 and 4.7, the frequency scores of each factor group in the subjects' choices and statements were independent of the option scores. The derived value of Chi Square of 64.90 (in high subject group) and 49.06 (in low subject group) displayed respectively a significant difference between the two sets of cell frequencies (p = 4.236e-10; p = 3.969e-07). The p-values was significant at the level α = 0.001. They rejected H_o and accepted H_a. Statistical analysis confirmed the validity of the frequency scores by the subjects in the two groups.

Discussion of these factor groups is given in the following sections. The *Pattern* (sentence patterns) group will be discussed later with its counterpart in the writing.

4.2.1.1 Adverbial phrase

It was found that the subjects preferred to use adverbs, prepositional phrases, and adverbial clauses that signified time to guide their temporal interpretation in narrative reading texts. The following groups of words were *adverbial phrases of time* (AP) in the cloze test: *always, at one time, early this evening, in this military campaign, from that time to the present, when he decide(d) to attack Russia*, etc.

The three sets of numbers of endorsements of AP's among the two subject groups were 22.69% and 21.94% occurrences in general description (Table 4.3), 26.35% and 26.42% in the event time (Table 4.4), and 17.36% and 15.38% in the speech time (Table 4.5). These calculation indicated that (a) to the subjects this group of words was the most obvious and easiest access to time in sentences; (b) in the event time frame, where the past tense is dominant in describing the event, adverbial phrases were the most convenient time marker for the subjects in narrative reading; and (c) adverbial phrases did not function as strongly in the present time frame as they did in the past time frame.

One notable fact is that even with this level of endorsement of AP's as the most beneficial factor in determining the time frame, there were still 15.78% (115/729) incorrect time references from the high group and 22.10% (153/693) from the low group (Table 4.3). These errors were found mostly with test units (3), (19), and (29). (Appendix B). The three operating adverbials were *from that time to the present, in recent years* and *always in most of the time every day*, of which the first two signified the present and the latter signified the past in the texts. However, according to some subjects' explanations, *from that time to the present* and *in recent years* gave them a sense of past time and in that time frame, something happened and was accomplished, while *always in most of the time every day* dealt with a reoccurring happening or a fact because *always* and *every day* entailed that meaning. This shows that (a) the subjects are not familiar with some adverbial phrases which have obvious connection

with the present in English; and (b) when adverbials that signify clear time references become a factor to contribute to the learners' temporal interpretation, adverbs of frequency can be misleading for the learners' time coding.

4.2.1.2 Conjunction

There were two typical conjunctions in the testing passages, *and* and *but*. Some subjects counted *that* in the sentence *There is no doubt that he was a very sick man* ...as a conjunction. Some others counted *when* that introduced an adverbial clause of time in the text as a conjunction to introduce a verb tense coherence in the main clause. *That* and *when* were therefore included in this group in the case that the subject explicitly stated that *that* and *when* were being used as conjunctions. *Conjunction* (CONJ)'s such as *but* and *and* that connect two independent clauses provided an easy way for the subjects to approach the time in sentences. It was easy because, according to the subjects, a conjunction helped them to interpret the time of the connected clause easily. However, this simplification of using conjunction for time inference of a sentence can be misleading. The figures in Table 4.4 reflect this problem. There were 20.14% (29/144) errors with the high group and 25.30% (42/166) with the low group when they misinterpreted event time in a clause which was then in conjunction with a clause speaking the comment (see the above quoted sentence *there is no doubt that* ...). They believed that the two clauses in one sentence should be verb tense coherent.

This use of grammatical conjunctions for temporal interpretation is superficial and risky, for time reference in a clause is definite and specific and constrained in a larger time frame. Test unit (27) was a case in point demonstrating the danger in simplification of conjunction use in temporal interpretation. The sentence read *Ancient buses and cars* (*were*) *hoot*(*ing*) *loudly, but the cow* (*did*) *not care*. If the first clause is set in the wrong time reference, the verb in the second clause will be wrong too because of the functioning of the conjunction *but* and its assumed role in

necessitating verb coherence. Part of the reason for this may be due to false classroom instruction, where students have been taught to interpret the identical time in two clauses connected by grammatical conjunctions. This is at best a superficial way to teach students about tense.

4.2.1.3 Noun phrase

After adverbial phrase of time, *noun phrase* (NP) was found as the second major element influencing the subjects' temporal interpretation, the endorsement being 16.87% in the high group and 17.45% in the low group (Table 4.3). The subjects used semantic meaning entailed in a concrete word or in a string of words to decode the meaning of time in that sentence. This encoding involves subjects' schemata of the event or the action described in that string of words, and also their "knowledge of the world" (Klein, 1986). For example, they interpreted the word *Napoleon* as "a person dead", "a historical person", or "a person in the past" and placed *Napoleon* in a past time, while they tapped the meaning of *a brilliant military leader* into their current world judgement (which should be interpreted as a past event according to the discourse time frame). They connected *experienced workers* with the past event in which "the workers had years of working experience". The substance of a noun or a noun phrase triggers the subjects' cognitive-code of the time in that context. It was interesting that the subjects' competence in interpreting the event time by using the substance words of a noun phrase were related to their English proficiency level. The high group misinterpreted 25.59% (76/297) of this group of substance words in the event time frame and the low group misinterpreted 40.73% (123/302) of them (Table 4.4).

4.2.1.4 Verb phrase

Like noun phrase, *verb phrase* (VP) was another resource the subjects used to

decode the meaning of time in sentences. For convenience of discussion, this group of words were recorded as action verb ($V_{to\ do}$), stative verb ($V_{to\ be}$), and verb phrase (V NP/AP). In the cloze test, action verbs were verbs such as *lead, die, control, fight, come* and *decide*; stative verbs were verb *be*; verb phrases were verbs plus a noun phrase or an adverbial phrase or an infinitive or a prepositional phrase such as *lose most of his army, hoot loudly, decide to attack Russia* or *die in his bed.* Some researchers have suggested that verbs that claim a sense of action accomplishment and achievement are past tense orientated (Bardovi-Harlig, et al., 1995). In the data collected in this study, almost all the subjects who chose single verbs mentioned the features of accomplishment and achievement of the verbs as a factor to evoke their past time interpretation as in "*die*--when death happens, it finishes at the same time" and "*announce*-- announcement is an instant action". More errors of temporal interpretation in these verbs appeared in the speech time frame, in which the high group gave 33.33% (13/39) inappropriate past tense verbs and the low group gave 48.28% (28/58). (Table 4.5). This suggested that subjects were likely to over-interpret the accomplishment and achievement entailed in some action verbs at the cost of the context. The typical verb concerned was *close* in the cloze test. The stative verb *be* got a small number. But subjects preferred to link stative *be* with the description of the present situation. The error rates 86.36% (19/22) of the high group and 70.83% (17/24) of the low group in the event time of demonstrate this clearly (Table 4.4).

Comparatively, more data were collected for the V NP/AP group. It was found that when the subjects used verb phrases to interpret time in a sentence, the lexical aspect of the verb and its complements influenced their coding. For example, they explained the verb phrase *start as ordinary factory workers* in two ways: one was that the verb *start* was "a punctual verb (achievement verb) and the action finished at the moment of starting"; the other was that *start as ordinary workers* indicated "realization of a past action". This showed that the subjects interpreted temporal meaning of the verb by interpreting the semantics of the verb and of its adjacent NP or

AP. This is coherent with what they did with noun phrases when affecting temporal interpretation. Another case in point was the stative *be* plus a preposition phrase or an adjective phrase such as in *be in critical condition, be with the company all their working lives, be friendly* and *be unable to find similar work.* It was found that *be* phrases influenced the subjects' temporal interpretation particularly by virtue of their complements. When some subjects mentioned that the stative *be* stated an existing condition in *be in critical condition* at the moment of speaking (speech time), they emphasized the word *condition* in the verb *be*-phrase as "*be* talks about a state and the word *condition* implies the present status quo". Their cognitive-code of temporal interpretation was seen to be based on the substance word *condition.* In the same way, subjects who chose *be friendly* as a factor to motivate their past time interpretation reported that the word *friendly* connect the sentence time with the meaning of the past time "then" and "at that time".

The subjects' temporal interpretation by using verb phrases appeared successful in the test, as was shown in Table 4.3. There were only 8.89% (30/338) errors in the high group and 15.33% (48/313) errors in the low group.

4.2.1.5 Context

Like adverbial phrase of time, noun phrase and *verb* phrase, *context* plays a role in temporal interpretation. In contrast to the previous three groups of factors from inside the sentence which influenced the subjects' temporal interpretation, context exists outside the sentence and at an intra-sentential discourse level, or as a fact, existing as the overall meaning of the passage (Crystal, 1985). Interpretation of time by using context involves the subjects' recognition of the sequences of the events and the segments created by the sequences of the events or the actions. As is described in Chapter 3, narrative discourse is characteristic of sequences which segment the foreground and background of the story. Sequences move forward between sentences and paragraphs. Take the text *Nepal* (Appendix A) for example, the story started with

the first five sentences describing a scene in which *the cars* and *the buses*, *the cow*, and *the travellers* involved in activities at that time at *the gate of Kathmandu* and created an episode of the event, taking the past tense. The next segment came with the author's introduction of the city and his knowledge of *Nepal*. Sentences within this segment took the present tense. The third episode started and moved to the next. Sentences within one segment and outside that segment are meaningful in terms of temporal interpretation. If a subject successfully identifies one episode from the other, that is, if he can start and finish his past or present time interpretation at the right boundary of the segment, he then successfully recognizes the event time and the speech time of the event and of the action. So the researcher designed pre- and after-going sentences which had significance in temporal interpretation for the subjects.

However, during the data analysis, it was found that the subjects had treated the context as a route to their temporal interpretation in two ways: one was by treating the context created by the pre- and after- going sentences as specifically meaningful and allowing it to influence their inference of time; the other was by attending to the tense coherence of the context and deducing their inference of time by virtue of the verb accordance rule in context. In the same way as was noted with the effect of the use of conjunctions discussed in 4.2.1.2, this kind of contextual temporal interpretation was based more on verb tense accordance with the previous connected sentences than on a temporal interpretation based on the understanding of time inference in the sentences. The error rate of 34.34% (148/431) for the high group and 36.44% (168/461) for the low group (Table 4.3) in the choices from the two subject groups is a warning against the potentially misleading use of verb coherence within contexts as a means of deducing temporal interpretations.

4.2.1.6 Event and Evaluation

The subjects' choices of those options which described the sequences of a narrative text and their statements of the passage structure were categorized as *Event*

and *Evaluation.*

Of the three testing passages, Passages 1 and 3 required the subjects to interpret the event time and the speech time indirectly from the narrative and descriptive lexis, and from the sentences. When they believed substance nouns or verbs or conjunctions or adverbials gave them hints to the time reference, they were indirectly describing the event time or the speech time. There were instances in which the subjects recognized the main story line and its additional information and evaluation as background, and mentioned them. Passage 2 is news reporting, a narrative mode in which the event time and the speech time are the primary factors for the time reference in a sentence. The subjects established their time reference by stating "it is the foreground of the story", "this is concerned with the background information" or "the objective facts", etc. These statements were categorized as textual units of *event* and *evaluation.* The subjects' temporal interpretation of the events in the texts was 48.66% (91/187) wrong with the high group and 51.79% (87/168) wrong with the low group (see Table 4.4); their interpretation of evaluations or the background information was 32.35% (22/68) wrong for the high group and 20.29% (14/69) for the low group (Table 4.5). The high error rates for both subject groups' temporal interpretation of the event (an happening in the past time) suggested that the subjects had insufficient knowledge of the narrative discourse structure and used the present tense in wrong places of the discourse.

4.2.1.7 Conception

This group included those unspecified statements such as "this is in the past", "this situation is at present", etc. in the cloze-test questionnaire. These non-specific statements are treated as subjects' perception of the event time and the speech time and thus recorded as a factor under the topic *conception.* The subjects' perception of time in reading texts was reported as 36.81% (60/163) incorrect for the high group and 47.89% (68/142) incorrect for the low group in the cloze test (Table 4.3).

4.2.2 Factors reported in the writing-test questionnaires

In parallel with the cloze-test questionnaire, the writing-test questionnaire was intended to identify the factors that contributed to the subjects' temporal interpretation in their writing. Without given verbs and without linguistic units as optional choices like those in the cloze-test questionnaire, the subjects were asked to give reasons for the tense they chose for each verb in their writings (Appendix D). Similar factors were found in subjects' writings except for the NP group. The subjects specified other factors which were later included in grammar category. The statements and explanations in the writing questionnaires were grouped in a similar way to the data from the cloze-test questionnaires and seven groups were obtained. They were (1) adverbial phrase of time, (2) conjunction, (3) grammar (set phrases and sentence patterns, grammatical meanings of the present perfect tense), (4) verb phrase, (5) context, (6) text (event and evaluation, including general facts), and (7) conceptions of the narrative time frames.

The subjects' statements and explanations for tense choice, most of which were in Chinese, with some in English, some in half Chinese and half English were translated into English and recorded with the original statements and explanations in brackets.

Table 4.8 outlines the factors reported by the subjects in the writing-questionnaires.

Table 4.8

Factors Reported in Writing-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Factors	Temporal interpretation in the writing test											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	47	35	0	5	47	40	3.15	2.54	0	0.36	3.15	2.90
2 CONJ	33	17	--	--	33	17	2.21	1.23	--	--	2.21	1.23
3 Grammar	36	25	47	43	83	68	2.41	1.82	3.15	3.12	5.56	4.94
4 V	72	32	10	21	82	53	4.82	2.32	0.67	1.52	5.49	3.84
Discourse units												
5 Context	92	74	9	7	101	81	6.16	5.37	0.60	0.51	6.77	5.88
6 Text	547	387	22	84	569	471	36.64	28.08	1.47	6.10	38.11	34.18
Conception												
7 Conception	502	513	76	135	578	648	33.62	37.23	5.09	9.80	38.71	47.03
Total					1493	1378					100	100

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 77); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 79).

As is shown in Table 4.8, there were only 1493 statements in the high group and 1378 in the low group, more than half of data being missing from writing-test questionnaires, an unsatisfactory number compared with 3213 and 3158 choices and statements of temporal interpretation by the two subject groups in cloze-test questionnaires.

According to the table, most explanations for tense choice clustered around *text* and *conception*, which made up around two thirds of the total statements. Without any leading or directions, the subjects did not specify their statements and explanations onto syntactic units very much. When writing was more of an activity of idea organization and text organization, the subjects' temporal interpretation in the narrative discourse seemed to be conceptually (38.71% and 47.03%) and textually (38.11% and 34.18%) graded at the same time. While their time inference was more at a macro-level, the three sets of figures in the table suggested that *context, grammar*

elements and *verb phrase* worked as influential factors to the subjects' temporal interpretation. The factors contributing to the subjects' temporal interpretations will be examined further in the event time and speech time frames respectively in the following sections.

Table 4.9

Factors Reported in Writing-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation in the Event Time Frame

Factors	**Temporal interpretation in the event time frame of writing**											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		**Total**		Correct		Incorrect		**Total**	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	38	30	--	--	38	30	3.73	3.63	--	--	3.73	3.63
2 CONJ	26	13	--	--	26	13	2.55	1.58	--	--	2.55	1.58
3 Set phrase	16	11	16	19	32	30	1.57	1.33	1.57	2.30	3.14	3.63
Pre-perfect	--	--	14	10	14	10	--	--	1.37	1.21	1.37	1.21
4 $V_{to\ do}$	43	12	3	2	46	14	4.22	1.46	0.29	0.24	**4.51**	**1.70**
Discourse units												
5 Context	71	62	6	0	77	62	6.96	7.52	0.59	0	**7.55**	**7.52**
6 Event	378	289	3	5	381	294	37.06	35.03	0.29	0.61	**37.35**	**35.64**
Evaluation	33	7	1	2	34	9	3.24	0.85	0.10	0.24	**3.33**	**1.09**
Conception												
7 Conception	350	347	22	16	372	363	34.31	42.06	2.16	1.94	**36.47**	**44.00**
Total					**1020**	**825**					**100**	**100**

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 77); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 79).

Within the event time frame, no difference in factor occurrences was seen between the high and the low proficiency groups. As with those in the general table 4.9, most explanations for tense choice in the event time frame clustered around *text* and *conception*. After that, *context* came as the third factor followed by *verb phrase* ($V_{to\ do}$). Adverbial phrases of time did not work effectively as it did in the event time of the cloze reading test. It was noticed that except for *set phrase* and the *present perfect tense*, other factors appeared to facilitate temporal interpretation in the event

time frame, as the low error rates shown in the table.

Table 4.10 extends the information about the factors influencing the subjects' tense uses in the speech time frame.

Table 4.10

Factors Reported in Writing-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation in the Speech Time Frame

Factors	**Temporal interpretation in the speech time frame of writing**											
	Number						Percentage (%)					
	Correct		Incorrect		**Total**		Correct		Incorrect		**Total**	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Syntactic units												
1 AP	9	5	0	5	9	10	1.90	0.90	0	0.90	1.90	1.81
2 CONJ	7	4	--	--	7	4	1.48	0.72	--	--	1.48	0.72
3 Set phrase	16	8	16	6	32	14	3.38	1.45	3.38	1.08	6.77	2.53
4 $V_{to\ do}$	29	20	7	19	36	39	6.13	3.62	1.48	3.44	7.61	7.05
Discourse units												
5 Context	21	12	3	7	24	19	4.44	2.17	0.63	1.27	5.07	3.44
6 Organization	4	6	1	8	5	14	0.85	1.08	0.21	1.45	1.06	2.53
Evaluation	19	46	11	55	30	101	4.01	8.32	2.33	9.95	6.34	18.26
General-fact	117	45	7	22	124	67	24.74	8.14	1.48	3.98	26.22	12.12
Conception												
8 Conception	152	166	54	119	206	285	32.14	30.02	11.41	21.52	43.55	51.54
Total					473	553					100	100

Note. *High* stands for the high subject group (n = 77); *Low* stands for the low subject group (n = 79).

In the speech time frame, *conception* and *text* (evaluation and general-fact) were still as dominant in the factor list as they were in the event time frame and in the total discourse. *Verbs* ($V_{to\ do}$), *set phrases* and *context* followed. One notable feature is that the low subject group performed poorly in the speech time frame. The highlighted numbers, when compared with the total number, show a high error rate. Subjects from both groups had some problems using set phrases for time inference, being 50% (16/32) wrong for the high group and 42.86% (6/14) wrong for the low group. Some of them did not perceive speech time correctly.

Discussion of factors that functioned on temporal interpretation in writing comes in the following subsections.

4.2.2.1 Adverbial phrase

Adverbial phrases of time (AP) were reported as "according to 'that time'" (根据 'that time'), "before this sentence, there was 'in the past'(前面用的是 'in the past'), "happened at a specific past time"(发生在过去一个确定的时间里。), "after the match"(比赛之后), etc. Unlike the predominant role they played in the narrative reading texts with the two groups, adverbials of time did not seem to be the subjects' major concern when they talked about factors influencing their tense choices in writing. But reading the subjects' compositions, it was found that almost every story was narrated in at a specific time phase and a specified place. This could be inferred as being the subjects' different approaches to temporality in narrative reading and writing texts. When a subject started reading a narrative text, he anchored his time reference by looking for a word or a phrase which specified the temporal meaning of the text. Adverbial phrases of time, therefore, became the target. But when the subject started writing a story, his role changed from a participant to that of the manager. He set the time of the narrative in his mind and in the writing as well and the time interpreting problem did not further concern him unlike when he was confronted with a totally new situation in his narrative reading. Judging by the two closely matched sets of figures from the two groups in the cloze and the writing questionnaires (25.68% vs. 25.37; 16.69% vs. 14.48% in reading, and 3.73% vs. 3.63%; 1.90 vs. 0.90% in writing), it can be said that adverbial phrases of time functioning as a discourse time marker work at the same level in influencing the subjects' temporal interpretation.

However, one thing needs to be pointed out: the subjects used adverbs of frequency to link their tense choices. For example, they connected the lexical meanings of *often, always, every day* and *as usual* with a present time interpretation

and *once in a while* with a past time interpretation. This connection was mentioned in both the cloze-test and the writing-test questionnaires.

4.2.2.2 Conjunction

Conjunctions (CONJ) functioning on temporal interpretation were another factor mentioned by the subjects. 13 (2.55%) in the high group and 13 (1.58%) subjects in the low group mentioned the use of conjunctions in the past time reference; 7 (1.48%) and 4 (0.72%) subjects in the two groups mentioned its use in the present time reference. They explained its temporal inference functions as "because of 'and'" （因为有 and）or "sentences connected by *when* take the same tense"（when 连接的句子时态相同。）. The fewer uses by the low subject group of these connectives alternatively suggested that the subjects in the low group wrote fewer independent or embedded clauses in their writing. The conjunctions reported by the subjects in the two groups were the three that were reported in the cloze-test questionnaire: *and, but* and *when*.

4.2.2.3 Grammar

Grammar here refers to three subdivisions that influenced the subjects' temporal interpretation or tense expressions. They were (1) sentence structures, (2) set phrases, proverbs and mottos, and (3) grammatical meanings of the present perfect tense. In the cloze-test questionnaire, the subjects admitted that the sentence structure *There be no doubt that ...* gave a present time inference. The similar preference was found in the writing-questionnaire. Subjects reported that sentence structures such as "*There be*"; "*It's*"; "*That's*"; "*The reason is that ...*"; "*spoke as loudly as I can*"; and "*How time flies*" decided the tense in sentence.

Most incorrect use of set phrases and sentence structures in the event time frame came from *it's* or *that's* sentence structures. The reason behind this is, as a

common practice, almost all set phrases and sentence structures take the present time when they are presented in the glossary or in the grammar category of a textbook. This became a practice by the subjects in this experiment. However, when past time reference is desired, this simple way of replication is wrong. Use of these set phrases and sentence structures was 56.63% (47/83) incorrect for the high group and 63.32% (43/68) incorrect for the low group (see Table 4.8). A simple pedagogical awareness can help students avoid such mistakes.

Another factor in the grammar group was the present perfect tense. Some subjects mentioned that the tense meaning of the present perfect functioned on their temporal interpretation. Although not many cases of this were reported (14 occurrences for the high group and 10 occurrence for the low group), all the cases of using the present perfect in the event time frame were wrong. These 14 subjects from the high group and 10 from the low group stated definitely that "the present perfect tense be used to describe a past happening" (现在完成时表示/描述过去发生的事情。), "present perfect is used to express the past happening"(现在完成时表示过去。). Only one reported that "a general declarative sentence structure requires the present perfect tense" (一般陈述性语句用现在完成时。). This finding was consistent with that from Fan and Lin's (2002) research, who had reported that Chinese L2 learners tended to use the present perfect tense with a past time and a past place owing to the influence of Chinese perfective aspect patterns. Reports from the subjects confirmed Fan and Lin's assertion.

4.2.2.4 Verb phrase

In the study of the cloze-test questionnaire, verb phrase (VP) was separated into three subsets: action verbs, stative verbs *be* and verb phrase (V NP/AP) for the convenience of discussion. In the writing-test questionnaire, only single verbs (V) were reported, most of which were action verbs ($V_{to\ be}$ was not recorded because of its very small number). None of the subjects who used verbs as a source for temporal

interpretation source included V + NP/AP in their reporting. This was different from what was observed in the cloze-test questionnaire, where VP (V NP/AP) was mentioned as a major factor influencing the subjects' tense choice.

In the writing-test questionnaire, single action verbs occurring in the event time frame were 46 for the high group and 14 for the low group (Table 4.9); 36 for the high group and 39 for the low group in the speech time frame (Table 4.10). The two sets of numbers suggested that subjects behaved similarly when using action verbs in the present tense. But in the event time frame, the subjects of the high group seemed to be more active than those of the low group in using verbs to interpret time in sentences. This might imply that the semantics of verbs is more meaningful to learners at a higher proficiency level and may partly explain the non-reporting of V NP/AP by the two groups in the writing-test questionnaires. The subjects were apparently not proficient enough to construct sophisticated and meaningful verb phrases in their writing.

From the writing-test questionnaire reports, it was observed that the subjects showed an approach typical of the Chinese learners of English as an L2 to the temporal meanings entailed in verbs. They mapped a verb to the meaning of its Chinese translation or connected the aspectual meaning of verbs with their time inference. For example, quite a few subjects explained that the verb *remember* suggested "meaning of being remembered" (*remember* 表示这件事情仍然被记得。), verbs *forget* suggested "have been forgotten" (*forget* 表示已经被忘记。), and *happen* "have happened" (*happen* 表示事情已经发生。). Jiang (2002) claimed that explanation for this phenomenon was that "L2 lexical forms are often mapped to the existing semantic content of their first language (L1) translations rather than to new semantic specifications of their own" (p. 617). In fact, in this study, mapping occurred not only in verb forms, it worked with words in other places as well. A few subjects evaluated *friend* in the sentence "I want to be friends with them" as a word "inducing the present tense to the verb *want*" (*friend* 一词意味着永久，所以用一般现在时。)

which should then be interpreted in a past time frame. The subjects interpreted the meaning of *friends* based on his L1 translation in which *friend* was inferred as a permanent argument. A very typical word is *still* in the cloze test (see Item 4, Appendix B). This adverb can appear in either the event time frame or the speech time frame according to native speakers. However, almost all the subjects claimed that *it (be) still a mystery* should take the present tense because *still* meant "up to now; now" (see Item 4, Appendix B). The meaning "now" in *still* is very definite in Chinese translation and this was mapped by the subjects to its L2 meaning and led them to a present time inference.

Apart from the verbs of *remember, forget* and *happen*, mapping in writing was found in other verbs of *believed, changed, decided, finished, happened* and *reached* in which the subjects stated that the verbs "state of a past happening; gave the finished meaning of the action and these verbs could only express an instant action" （讲述了过去动作已发生的一个状态；动作已完成；动作已经结束；动词 *change, happen, finish, reach*, etc. 等只能表示在瞬间完成。）. In Chinese, these verbs constituted two semantic components: action + action complement（forget: 忘-记; happen: 发-生; change: 改-变; decide: 决-定; finish: 完-成; reach: 到-达）. The structure affirms a semantic completeness in these verbs. Besides, in the Chinese interpretation, *change* entails the meaning of "produce and bring about"; *happen* entails "bring into birth"; *finish* entails "be done"; *reach* entails "reach the place"; and *forget* "lose memory or not in the mind any more". L1 interference evoked the L1 semantic accomplishment in these verbs to influence the subjects' temporal interpretation. Another example can be seen in *remember*, which includes the semantic component "now, at the present". Some subjects mapped this L1 meaning into the L2 verb's present tense despite the fact that that was a past happening in their writings.

4.2.2.5 Context

The use of contexts as a facilitator for temporal interpretation was a common practice reported by the subjects in both the cloze-test and the writing-test questionnaires. Table 4.8 lists *context* as the third factor in the order reported by the subjects. Subjects' statements such as "to be coherent with tense of the whole paragraph/text" (与全段/全文时态一致。); "in tense accordance with that of the pre- or after- going sentences" (与前后句时态一致。); "Since the whole text is in the past tense, so I use the past tense to be coherent with that of the whole text" (全文都用过去时，为了保持一致，用过去时。). The high frequency and the low error rate (0.59% for the high group and zero error for the low group in the event time frame; 0.63% for the high group and 1.27% for the low group in the speech time frame) recorded in the use of contexts suggests that context is a favourable and preferential factor for L2 learners to make time inferences in writing.

However, this beneficial factor was found to work mostly in a controlled and simple text by the subjects. When inferring time in a sentence, context is chosen by subjects more based on grammatical or structural elements than on the basis of its meanings in the discourse. That is, when context is a factor functioning on time inference in a sentence expressing an immediate situation (Hurford & Heasley, 1983) it is the tense of the pre- or after- going sentences that performs this function. This variation from the common understanding of context in language use was frequently found in this study. It was also similarly shared by subjects in both the high and low groups and was practised in both reading and writing, there being a near parallel occurrences of 13.41% for the high group and 14.60% for the low group in the cloze-test questionnaires (Table 4.3), and 6.77% occurrences for the high group and 5.88% for the low group in the writing-test questionnaires (Table 4.8).

4.2.2.6 Event and evaluation

Event and *evaluation* are two groups of factors under text. In narrative texts, the event descriptions are undertaken in the past time (event time) frame. The following statements and explanations were grouped under *Event*. They were those such as "to be telling what was happening then"（讲述当时正在发生的事。）; "to tell a past experience"（讲述过去的一次经历。）; "to describe a specific action at the moment （描述当时的一个具体行为。）"; "this is the situation at that time" (这是那时的事情。); "The action started at the moment in that past time" （行为从过去那一刻开始。）. Analysis showed that almost all the subjects, in both the high group and in the low group had a clear sense of past events at a specific time. There were few mistakes in their temporal interpretations (378 correct and 3 incorrect for the high group; 289 correct and 5 incorrect for the low group; see Table 4.9).

Data for *evaluation* in the writing-test questionnaires were recorded in two subsets: *evaluation* and *general fact*, the former being comments, personal views or added information while the latter is specified general fact, common sense or geographical knowledge. This *general fact* group has been singled out from *evaluation* for discussion because, as can be seen from Table 4.10, the high group focused on *general fact* (26.22% occurrences) but the low group were concerned more about comments and personal views (18.26% occurrences). This might be interpreted that when giving evaluations in narrative writing, subjects at the lower proficiency level tended to be more subjective. That is, they depended more on personal views than on other potential factors in the text. The following quotations could be supportive of this assumption: "to be telling about my feeling now（讲述我此时的心情。）"; "This is what I always want." （这是我一直想要的。）; "I often have this feeling." （我常常有这种感受。）; "I want to be friends with them."（我想要跟他们做朋友。）; "I feel this way." （这是我的主观感受。）; "to tell a past fact" （陈述过去的事实。）; "evaluation of the whole incident"（对整个事件的评价。）; "to

describe a person objectively"（客观地描述一个人。)and "to describe my state"（描述我的状态。）.

Conversely, subjects in the high group tended to concentrate on the evaluation of general facts showing that they evaluated situations in texts less according to personal views. Data collected and recorded as factors in this group was based on subjects' statements such as "common sense"(常识); "to state a public fact"（陈述一个公众事实。）; "to state an acknowledged fact"（陈述一个众所周知的事实。); "to state a general fact"(陈述一个普通的事实。); "to tell the name of a place"（告诉一个地名。 Chicago is a beautiful city.）; "to tell a geographical fact"（讲述一个地理事实，当年读书的学校还在。My hometown is 30 miles away from the school [I was at the time studying at the middle school.] and it is still there now.）; "a consistent state; always this way"（一种常态。）and so on. Analysis revealed very different behaviours between the two subject groups. While the high group recorded a large number of such statements with few errors (124 occurrences with 7 [5.64%] errors), the low group did not show the same interest in expressing general facts in their writing (67 occurrences with 22 [33%] errors; see Table 4.10).

4.2.2.7 Discourse organization

The third factor mentioned by the subjects as influencing their temporal interpretation under the heading of *text* was narrative discourse organization. Some subjects believed that the present tense should be used to sum up the story or the experience, as it embodied truth or a morality（故事结尾，告诉了一个道理。用一般现在时。）. Some subjects thought that the beginning part of a story or an experience account is present time connected （故事的开头，用现在时。）. This accorded with a distinctive writing pattern for almost all the subjects of "beginning-body-conclusion", in which the tense uses were "present-past-present". One typical report demonstrated this point, in which the subject wrote: "The story took place in this summer. The beginning of the story should use the present simple

tense." （故事发生在这个夏天。故事的开头应用一般现在时。）.

As a third subset in the text group, discourse organization as a factor functioning on temporal interpretation in the speech time frame was not as salient. Only 5 people from the high group (1.06%) and 14 from the low group (2.53%) mentioned its influence. The errors were higher than the correct use with the low group (1.08% correct vs. 1.45% incorrect). This represented a very moderate report, but is a reminder that subjects may sometimes depend on discourse structure for temporal interpretation.

4.2.2.8 Conception

The last factor group, *Conception*, was an inclusive and accommodating group into which anything stated by the subjects to have affected their temporal interpretation which did not obviously fall into one of the other groups could be recorded. In parallel with the *conception* group in the cloze-test questionnaire, all those general statements made by the subjects who declared their perceptions of the time in this unelaborated and unspecific way as a conceptual factor that functioned on temporal interpretation were grouped together in *Conception*. It included statements such as "state of the past / past state（过去的状态）"; "past things（过去的事）"; "past happening（发生在过去的事）"; "frequently happened in the past（过去经常发生）"; "state a past fact（讲述过去的一个事实。）"; "a general statement of the past/present（对过去/现在的一般陈述）"; "a statement of the past fact（对过去事实的陈述）"; "past（过去）"; "past tense（过去时）"; "[simple] present tense（[一般]现在时）"; "present situations（现在的情况）"; "by language sense（凭语感）"; "by feeling（凭感觉）", etc.

This *conception* factor formed the largest group in the subjects' statements of temporal interpretation reasons (38.71% occurrences for the high group and 47.03% occurrences for the low group). (Table 4.8). Subjects did not show many problems in the perception of the time of events (Table 4.9). They did not however report much

correct perception of speech time. There were 26.21% incorrect interpretations (54/206) in the high group and 41.75% (119/285) incorrect interpretations in the low group (Table 4.10).

4.2.3 Conclusion

The conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of the factors that contributed to the subjects' temporal interpretation reported in the cloze-test and the writing-test questionnaires are as follows.

1. **Adverbial phrase of time (AP)** In reading, adverbial phrase of time was the most important factor facilitating subjects' inference of time in sentences, especially, when the story was framed in past time sequences. But adverbs of frequency were apt to be misleading, as the literal meaning of an adverb of frequency codes regularity and repetition, which suggest a present time interpretation. In writing, adverbial phrase of time did not work as impressively as they did in reading. The reason may be that the writer sets up a mental time frame while writing and this functions as the main means of establishing his mental perception of time.

2. **Conjunction (CONJ)** Both in reading and in writing, *conjunction* played its role as a syntactic facilitator for temporal interpretation. It might be risky for subjects to depend totally on its syntactic function of connection for temporal interpretation in two connected clauses, especially in reading.

3. **Noun phrase (NP)** In reading, *noun phrase* was the second most important factor for temporal inference. Temporal interpretation at this level was more of a cognitive activity in which the subjects interpreted the meanings entailed in a noun phrase and then projected their comprehension onto the sentence in order to make a time inference. During the process, L1 translation of the noun phrase was mapped to L2 lexical meaning before the noun phrase was used for the inference of time in the sentence. Subjects in the high proficiency group gave more correct interpretations of time based on noun phrases than subjects in the low group,

especially in the event time frame (15.14% higher). Analysis of correct past time interpretations by the two different proficiency groups suggested that subjects' temporal interpretation ability might be affected by their language proficiency. There was no reporting of using NP as a factor in writing.

4. **Verb phrase (VP)** In reading, accomplishment and achievement meanings entailed in verbs of action were significant in temporal interpretation. Punctual or telic verbs tended to be interpreted as verbs which finished their activity in the past time frame. The stative verb *be* did not seem to operate much as a factor because only a small number of subjects mentioned its connection with the present status quo of the objects. In V NP/AP phrases, subjects interpreted time by interpreting the meaning entailed in complements with the lexical aspect of the verb. In this, they behaved quite similarly to the way they did with NP. They interpreted the temporal meaning of the verb by interpreting the semantics of the verb and of its adjacent NP or AP. Mapping took place in writing too. In writing, the subjects' focus on the meaning of words became more obvious by their mapping of the L1 translation of verbs into L2 verb meanings and using that translation to interpret the time of the verbs.

To sum this up, *verb phrase* is a factor influencing subjects' temporal interpretation in two aspects: (1). the lexical meaning of the verbs; (2). the mapped meaning of L1 translation. In an appropriate context, for example, writing, mapping will take place first, followed by interpretation of the aspect entailed in the translation of that verb.

5. **Grammar** In reading, sentence patterns led the subjects into inferring present tense in a sentence. In writing, together with sentences patterns, set phrases and proverbs were a factor working on present tense use. But this way of time inference was potentially misleading in the event time frame. In writing, the present perfect was in regular contrast with past simple. Subjects used the present perfect tense to interpret a past happening. The past time implication in the present perfect

was overemphasized. L1 interference was seen in the subjects' use of the present perfect tense. In writing, narrative discourse organization was also a factor influencing a number of subjects' tense choices in particular sections.

6. **Context** In both reading and writing, context was mentioned by a large number of subjects as a factor affecting temporal interpretation. However, when inferring time in a sentence, context was chosen by subjects more because of grammatical or structural elements than by virtue of its meaning in the discourse. Subjects used context more for tense accordance with the pre- or post-going sentences than for perceiving the true meaning of the time indicated in that sentence.

4.3 Temporal Interpretation in Receptive and Productive Performance in English Narrative Texts

The previous section discussed the factors that influenced subjects' temporal interpretation in narrative reading and writing texts. This section will attempt to answer the third question that asks if there are any differences in the subjects' receptive and productive performance of temporal interpretation in narrative texts. Among the four language skills, reading skill is described as a receptive skill and writing skill as a productive one. Similarly, in this study, the subjects' performance in the cloze test was defined as receptive performance of temporal interpretation and their performance in the writing test was defined as productive performance of temporal interpretation.

The rationale for investigating the subjects' performance in the two contexts is that if narrative reading texts set up an objective condition under which the subjects' competence of English tense is intended, writing texts, from the other way around, allow the subjects to use their knowledge of the tense rules in the process of the subjective interpretation of the time in the discourse and enable us "to determine from the data of performance the underlying system of rules that has been mastered by the

speaker-hearer and that he puts to use in actual sentences" (Chomsky, as cited in Boey, 1975, p. 58).

4.3.1 Differences in receptive and productive performances of temporal interpretation

Subjects' receptive performance of temporal interpretation in the cloze test and the productive performance of temporal interpretation in the writing test were compared respectively within the language proficiency groups. To clarify the differences, tables are used to report the results.

4.3.1.1 Temporal interpretation of receptive and productive performances of the high English proficiency group

There were 77 valid compositions in the high subject group. The scores of the close test from these 77 subjects were paired with the scores of their writings for comparison. In contrast to the fixed 39 items of test units in the cloze test, the test units for each of the subjects in the writing test varied from 12 to 41. To compare the differences of their performances in the cloze test and the writing test, an SPSS 11.0 Paired Samples *t*-test was used. Before computation, the scores from the writing test of each subject were transformed to accord with the scoring system in the cloze reading test, which produced a total of 39 scores. The result was as follows.

Table 4.11

Temporal Interpretation of Receptive and Productive Performances of High Group

Text	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$(\bar{D})$	T_{cal}	T_{tabl}
Reading	77	29.19	3.26			
				- 4.43	- 8.30***	3.37
Writing	77	33.62	4.73			

***Significant at .001 level (2-tailed). $r = .357$

Table 4.11 shows the high subject group's performance in the narrative reading and narrative writing tests, from which we can see that the high English proficiency group's receptive performance in temporal interpretation was significantly different from their productive performance at the significance level of .001 (t = - 8.30). The correlation between the receptive performance and the productive performance by the high proficiency group was moderate (r = .357). The coefficient of determination r^2 = .1274. About 13% of the subjects' productive performance can be explained by its relationship to the receptive performance of temporal interpretation in the cloze test.

4.3.1.2 Temporal interpretation of receptive and productive performances of the low English proficiency group

There were 79 valid compositions in the low subject group. The scores of the close test from these 79 subjects were paired with the scores of their writings for comparison. The test units in each of the writing compositions of the low group varied from 9 to 37. To compare the differences of their performances in the cloze test and the writing test, an SPSS 11.0 Paired Samples t-test was used. Before computing, the scores from the writing test of each subject were transformed to accord with the scoring system in the cloze reading test, which produced a total of 39 scores. The result was as follows.

Table 4.12

Temporal Interpretation of Receptive and Productive Performances of Low Group

Text	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$(\bar{D})$	T_{cal}	T_{tabl}
Reading	79	26.86	3.48			
				- 4.17	- 5.70***	3.37
Writing	79	31.03	5.58			

***Significant at .001 level (2-tailed). r = .026

With regard to the analysed data in Table 4.12, the receptive and productive performance of temporal interpretation among the low group was significantly different at the level of .001 (t = - 5.70). The correlation between the respective performance and the productive performance by the low proficiency group was very weak (r = .026). The coefficient of determination r^2 = .000676. Less than 1% of the subjects' productive performance can be explained by its relationship to the receptive performance of temporal interpretation in the cloze test.

To gain an overview of the information about the subjects' temporal interpretation in reading and writing, the comparison was further processed among the total of 156 subjects by using a Paired Samples t-test to compute its t-value and correlation coefficient. Table 4.13 presents the result.

Table 4.13

Temporal Interpretation of Receptive and Productive Performances of All Subjects

Text	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$(\bar{D})$	T_{cal}	T_{tabl}
Reading	156	28.01	3.56			
				- 4.30	- 9.49***	3.29
Writing	156	32.31	5.32			

***Significant at .001 level (2-tailed). r = .237.

4.3.2 Discussion

The significant difference (p < .001) between the receptive performance and the productive performance of the subjects (n = 156, Table 4.13) shows that the subjects behaved quite differently in temporal interpretation when reading and writing narrative texts. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = .0561) of their temporal interpretation performances in the two contexts confirmed this difference. Less than 6% of the subjects' performance in writing was correlated with that in reading. This different behavior by the subjects suggests two possibilities: (1) their temporal

interpretation ability in narrative reading and that in narrative writing might be different; or (2) their temporal interpretation in the receptive performance of narrative reading and that in the productive performance of narrative writing might be inconsistent. Since measures of the construct *language ability* or *language competence* involves other variables (Schohamy 1996), this discussion will focus on the second hypothesis: that the subjects' temporal interpretation in narrative reading and writing is inconsistent.

With regard to the analysed data, the subjects' productive performance in writing outperformed their performance in reading. The gap between the mean scores of reading and writing was obvious (MD = - 4.30, Table 4.13). The subjects' productive performance outperformed their receptive performance. We will discuss this deviance by focusing on two variables: the texts and the subjects.

4.3.2.1 Text and text production

Based on the statistics, a relationship was observed existing between text and text production. Within the narrative frame, the texts in the cloze test were three narrative passages with 39 blanks for verb units. The subjects were supposed to complete those blanks with verb forms which entailed their time references. There were 23 verb units requiring the event time interpretation and 16 verb units functioning as evaluations at a background level, requiring the subjects' comprehension of speech time. The cloze texts limited the verbs, the verb forms and the verb numbers, which in turn limited the time frames in the sequences of the events. But in the writing test, the texts could vary according to each subject and were not subject to these limitations. Except for the provided topic which was *My Unforgettable Experience*, the subjects in their writing texts were free to choose any verbs and write those verbs in any form they believed justified. The number of verbs was not fixed as was that in the cloze texts. In the low group, one subject wrote the shortest passage containing only 9 verbs while the longest passage presented 41 in the

high group. Moreover, free of constraints from the time frames designed by other people who wrote the reading texts, the subjects in their writings were the writers and created their own time frames in which they told their stories and life experiences. They could therefore better interpret time in the sentences they wrote.

So the difference between the cloze reading texts and the writing texts was that one was objective-orientated while the other allowed for a subjective inference of time. Temporal interpretation of sentences in the writing texts was more of a "free will" production in which the producers were in control. The gap of the mean scores between the reading and the writing as shown in Tables 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13 (MD = - 4.43; MD = - 4.17; MD = - 4.30) reflects the effect of the two different text types on the subjects' temporal interpretation in receptive and productive performances.

4.3.2.2 Text and text structure

The text factors discussed above partly explained the low correlation between the subjects' temporal interpretation performances in the reading and writing tests. There were some other factors that might affect the subjects' performance in writing. For example, the effect might take place on practicing a narrative writing after the reading test. During analysis, it was also noticed that texts were functioning on text structures. In reading texts, sequences of the events progressed with foreground and background interlaced. Sequence boundaries were situationally concerned. The ending segment (*resolution*, Labov, 1972) was about how the story came to its end. But in writing texts, interference of L1 discourse structure was seen in the subjects' production. Most subjects, especially those in the low group, wrote their stories in a typical tri-paragraph structure: an opening paragraph to start the story; a body paragraph to describe the main story; and a conclusion paragraph to summarize what they learned from the experience. Organized as such, stories became tri-episodes and time in the texts was simply referred as present tense, past tense, and then present tense. This interaction of the text and text structure is another factor to make easy

temporal interpretation in the text and to differentiate the subjects' performance in narrative reading and writing.

4.3.2.3 Receptive and productive performances in the high and the low English proficiency groups

While significant differences between subjects' receptive performance and productive performance in temporal interpretation were observed, the size of this difference was distorted by the language proficiency involved. 13% of the subjects in the high group displayed their temporal interpretation competence consistently in English narrative reading and narrative writing (r^2 = .1274). But less than 1% of the subjects in the low group displayed this competence (r^2 = .000676). The question then is: what constrained the low group subjects' temporal interpretation performance in the cloze test and what facilitated their better performance in writing?

As a form of reading test (Heaton, 1990), a cloze test controls its testees to a great extent. The printed text has set the content, and the language as well before the reader starts reading and getting his comprehension of the text. "You are in a relatively determined context" (Firth, as cited in Stubbs, 1996, p. 41). Topics, contents and sentences given by the author in a cloze test might be new to the reader and thus become obstructs to his successful comprehension of the reading text, including his temporal interpretation in the discourse. But temporal interpretation in writing texts is personally decided. The writer might use verbs he is familiar with and the verb forms of which he is sure. It is possible that the writer gives up writing complex sentences which he thinks are beyond his L2 competence and which potentially otherwise induce less successful temporal interpretation performance as the elaboration requires. This was illustrated in the juxtaposed coefficients r = .357 of the reading and the writing test scores from the high group and r = .026 from the low group. Subjects in the high group can be assumed to be more confident of their ability in composing sentences and to have adventured elaborated sentences that posed contemporary

demands on their successful temporal interpretation. This behaviour correlated with the challenges they met in reading texts and resulted in the correlation of their performances in reading and writing with the group. The fact that subjects from the high group wrote more complex sentences and subjects from the low group wrote more simple sentences is supported to an extent by the researcher's own observation. To be supportive, two subjects were randomly picked in number counterparts from the two groups and one counterpart paragraph was recorded in which Subject No.1 from the high group, talking about how he felt about a basketball match he played, wrote:

"**Time elapsed but this thing is impressed* (✗) *deeply in my memory* (S1). *I couldn't forgive my weekness* (S2), *I couldn't forget the mistake I made* (S3), *I couldn't forget the words they told me* (S4). *I should have devoted myself into that game,*if I give* (✗) *myself more confidence, more strength* (S5), **I think I will not scold* (✗) *myself at least* (S6)."

And Subject No.1 from the low group, talking about how he felt about a past experience wrote:

"*Now, *when I remember this thing, I think I have diden wrong* (S7). *Do you believe it* (S8), *Can you receive it?* (S9)"

The two paragraphs were the final concluding paragraph in the two texts by the two subjects from respectively the high and the low groups. In the first example, the subject from the high group wrote six sentences of which three were complex sentences (S3, S4, S5) and one compound sentence (S1). But in the second example, there was only one complex sentence. The subject from the low group allowed himself less chance to make incorrect temporal interpretations.

Such differences in syntax structure which embody simple and complex temporal interpretation were also observed in many other writings by subjects from different proficiency groups.

4.3.3 Conclusion

As a conclusion, the researcher would submit that differences in receptive

performance and productive performance of temporal interpretation come from the differences in texts: one being controlling (reading) and the other being controlled (writing); one being requested (reading) and the other being independent (writing). When reading a narrative text, the subjects had to perceive time underlying the text's temporality which had been set beforehand and to follow the writer's time reference. But in making a narrative writing text, they set up time frames by themselves and constructed coherent temporality in that time frame on the basis of their knowledge of the time referred to. They enjoyed more freedom in the text temporality and made their own decisions about the time reference. This brought about the correct temporal interpretation they themselves designed. That is why they made fewer tense mistakes in their writing tasks than in their reading cloze test. This difference in texts (individual instances of the genre, to be more accurate) played a role in subjects' different temporal interpretation performances within the groups, because this textual variability produced variation in discourse structures (Stubbs, 1996), which led to subjects' different temporal interpretation performances.

The researcher would also argue that different language proficiency levels contribute to different temporal interpretation performances in narrative reading and writing texts based on the correlation coefficients for the respective groups: $r = .357$ (high group); $r = .026$ (low group). The two sets of numbers might be interpreted as this: learners of higher proficiency write their narrative compositions closer to what L2 compositions are supposed to be than learners at a lower proficiency level.

Lastly, the researcher would suggest that Chinese university students showed different temporal interpretation ability in English narrative reading and writing texts. Whether this different ability is due to their different language competence or some other effect is not answered here. Text type, however, is a factor to cause that difference in temporal interpretation of narrative reading and writing texts.

4.4 Temporal Interpretation Performance Between the High and the Low English Proficiency Groups

In this study, temporal interpretation was investigated in an environment of comparison of a high English proficiency group and a low English proficiency group. The fourth research question which aims to investigate the relationship between temporal interpretation performance and English proficiency, is discussed in this section in two parts: (a) temporal interpretation performance of the high group and the low group in the cloze test, and (b) temporal interpretation performance of the high group and the low group in the writing test.

4.4.1 Temporal interpretation performance by the high and the low groups in the cloze test

The temporal interpretation performance of the high and the low groups in the cloze test is summarized in Tables 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16. Table 4.14 outlines the result of computing the two subject groups' tense scores in the cloze test through an SPSS 11.0 Independent Samples *t*-test; Tables 4.15 and 4.16 gave details of the two subject groups' temporal interpretation specified in the event time frame and the speech time frame of the cloze texts. They are presented as follows.

Table 4.14

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in Cloze Test

Subjects	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$(\bar{D})$	T_{cal}	T_{tabl}
High group	85	29.16	3.29			
				2.39	4.58***	3.291
Low group	85	26.77	3.50			

***Significant at .001 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 4.14, a significant difference at $p < .001$ was found

between the high and the low group scores for temporal interpretation in the cloze test, with the mean difference at 2.39. The statistical calculation showed that the high subject group's temporal interpretation performance in narrative reading texts was significantly different from that of the low subject group.

In the cloze reading texts, 39 verb units were divided into 23 verbs taking the past tense and 16 verbs taking the present tense. They were distributed in sequences of the narrative events in the texts. To get closer to their temporal interpretation ability for different time frames in the texts, the subjects' performance from the perspectives of the event time and the speech time of the narrative discourse will be examined.

Table 4.15

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in the Event Time Frame in Cloze Test

Cloze test	Subjects' performance			
	High group (n = 85)		Low group (n = 85)	
	$\bar{x}$	%	$\bar{x}$	%
Correct past tense verbs	17.17	**74.63**	15.91	**69.16**
Incorrect present tense verbs	5.83	25.37	7.09	30.84
Total	23	100	23	100

Table 4.15 shows that 74.63% of the subjects in the high group and 69.16% in the low group could interpret the time of the events in the narrative reading texts correctly. The simple past tense was the major tense used by them (not shown in the table) for the event time references in the texts.

Table 4.16

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in the Speech Time Frame in Cloze Test

Cloze test	Subjects' performance			
	High group (n = 85)		Low group (n = 85)	
	$\bar{x}$	%	$\bar{x}$	%
Correct present tense verbs	12.01	**75.06**	10.82	**67.65**
Incorrect past tense verbs	3.99	24.94	5.18	32.35
Total	16	100	16	100

Table 4.16 shows that 75.06% of the subjects in the high group and 67.65% in the low group could distinguish speech time in the narrative reading texts. The simple present tense, like the simple past in the event time frame, was still the subjects' majority choice (not shown in the table) in dealing with the speech time frame.

4.4.2 Temporal interpretation performance by the high and the low groups in the writing test

In parallel, the two subject groups' temporal interpretation performance in the writing test was investigated, and like that in the cloze test, the temporal interpretation performance analysed here represents the scores in the writing test. Table 4.17 presents the *p*-value of the tense scores of the two groups in the writing test computed through Independent Samples *t*-test procedures. The subjects' temporal performance was evaluated by grading the correct scores of tenses in the past time (the event time frame) and in the present time (the speech time frame) in their writing. The grading rule was based on the tense system specified and exemplified in grammar books and grammar textbooks. These tense usages and uses were discussed in Chapter 2, Literature Review.

Table 4.17

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in Writing Test

Subjects	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$(\bar{D})$	T_{cal}	T_{tabl}
High group	77	33.62	4.73			
				2.59	3.13**	2.58
Low group	79	31.03	5.58			

**Significant at .01 level.

In contrast to the number of 170 subjects in the cloze reading test, the total number available for temporal performance analysis in writing after the narrative texts filtering process, was 156 subjects, with 77 in the high group and 79 in the low group. As shown in Table 4.17, a significant difference at the $p < .01$, was found indicating that the subjects' temporal interpretation performance in writing between the high and the low groups was significantly different. This result was consistent with the result of their performance in the cloze reading test.

In the same way as for the cloze test, the subjects' temporal interpretation ability specified in narrative sequences will be examined from the perspective of the event time and the speech time of the narrative discourse. The following tables show the results.

Table 4.18

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in the Event Time Frame in Writing Test

Writing test	Subjects' performance			
	High group (n=77)		Low group (n=79)	
	$\bar{x}$	%	$\bar{x}$	%
Correct past tense verbs	15.06	**86.17**	11.68	**74.74**
Incorrect present tense verbs	2.42	13.83	3.95	25.26
Total	17.48	100	15.63	100

Table 4.18 shows that the high group employed 86.17% of the past tense verbs correctly and the low group 74.74%. There was an 11.5% gap between the two subjects groups' temporal interpretation performance in the event time frame. The simple past tense was the majority tense used by both the high and the low groups (not shown in the table). The subjects' temporal interpretation of the speech time in their writing is presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Temporal Interpretation Performance of High and Low Groups in the Speech Time Frame in Writing Test

Writing test	Subjects' performance			
	High group (n=77)		Low group (n=79)	
	$\bar{x}$	%	$\bar{x}$	%
Correct present tense verbs	6.42	**91.65**	4.90	**87.76**
Incorrect past tense verbs	0.58	8.35	0.68	12.24
Total	7.00	100	5.58	100

Table 4.19 shows the two subject groups' performance in the speech time frame. They were 91.65% correct for the high group and 87.76% for the low group. The difference of the two subject groups' performance for the present tense was only about 4%.

The data shown in Tables 4.18 and 4.19 revealed that the subjects' temporal interpretation ability in the event time frame (story-telling main line) was reflected in two sets of similar figures which show 74.63% of the event time interpretation to be correct and 75% of the speech time interpretation to be correct for the high group and 69% and 68% of the event time and speech time interpretations respectively to be correct for the low group.

4.4.3 Discussion

1. As has been shown in the statistics, the two subject groups' temporal

interpretation performance in the cloze test was significantly different. The subjects' temporal interpretation ability is related to their language proficiency. At this time when degree of proficiency a learner achieves is based on more than simply his mastery of the grammatical structures of the language and when the focus has been shifted from traditional grammar to the functional use of language (Halliday, 1994) and when much attention is given to the communicative proficiency of learners (Yalden, 1987), this outcome indicates that grammatical competence plays a positive role in developing the learners' communicative competence.

2. Associated with the narrative text structure, the two subject groups' performance in the temporal interpretation performance of the sequences of the events in the narrative reading texts proved out to be interesting. As shown in Tables 4.15 and 4.16, each group achieved very close scores for their performance in the event time frame (sequences of the story) and in speech time frame (sequences of the evaluation): 74.63% correct past tense use and 75.06% correct present tense use for the high group; 69.16% correct past tense use and 67.65% correct present tense use for the low group. The two sets of unified figures suggest that the subjects in both groups approached time in the sequences of the events in narrative reading texts in a similar way. That is, they behaved similarly or they used the same methods (whether linguistic or conceptual which is not clear) to interpret time in the sequenced processes of story-telling and evaluation. For the subjects in both groups, their ability in making either past or present time inferences was consistent, employing stereotypes or schemata (Widdowson, 1983) and not interrupted by the sequential development of the story, suggesting "that underlying all cognitive activity is a more perfect system than that displayed by the record of behaviour itself" (Pylyshyn, cited in Gass & Schachter, 1989, p. 24). This intersystem of temporal interpretation of the learners, whatever it should be, is beyond the limitation of the present research. This small case argues for Chomsky's universal grammar.

3. In case of the high and the low groups' temporal interpretation

performance in the writing test, as has been reported in Tables 4.18 and 4.19, the 12% gap between the high and the low groups' temporal interpretation performance in the event time frame suggests that subjects in the high group have better ability in using the past tense in writing than subjects in the low group. This 12% gap also implies that subjects from the low group used more present tense than was required by need to establish the story's time frame. The small gap of 4% between the two groups in using the correct present tense in writing helps to illustrate the point. It was observed that, in writing, a number of subjects from the low group used a lot of present tense verbs in giving evaluation or talking about their personal views or feelings on the story they experienced in the concluding paragraph. This increased their chances of correct performance in the present tense.

4.4.4 Conclusion

It is clearly seen that learners' ability to use tense correctly in narrative texts, either in reading or in writing, is related to their language proficiency. Conversely, learners' temporal interpretation performance could be in a way reflecting their language proficiency levels.

When experiencing a more controlling narrative reading text, this temporal interpretation ability of learners is consistent all through the text either in the story-telling sequences or in the evaluation sequences, whether this ability is low or high. But when experiencing a less or non-controlling narrative writing text, the temporal interpretation ability is differentiated by the learners' focusing on story telling sequences (most likely by the higher proficiency group) or on evaluation sequences coming at the end of the text (most likely by the lower proficiency group).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated Chinese university students' tense and temporal interpretation in English narrative texts. The data collected in this study included 170 cloze test papers, 170 cloze-test questionnaires, 156 writing compositions and 156 writing-test questionnaires. Two types of data analysis were conducted: quantitative analysis of the students' tense performance and qualitative analysis of their temporal interpretation. The main issues dealt with in the quantitative analysis were the frequencies of ungrammatical verb forms in tense formation in both the cloze test and the writing test and the values of the cloze test scores and the writing test scores of the two subject groups were also computed; the qualitative analysis analysed the factors mentioned by the students in the cloze-test and the writing-test questionnaires that had affected their temporal interpretation, based on Bardovi-Harlig's (1995) and Labov's (1972) narrative texts models. The findings and implications are presented as follows.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

1. Nine types of ungrammatical verb forms were observed. They were the use of *modals and past verbs* (modal + v-ed), the unnecessary use of the *passive voice structure* (be + past verb), the wrong use of the *progressive tense structure* (be + present participle), the ill forms of the *perfect tense structure* (to have + v), the use of *pure present participles* (v-ing) at the finite verb place, the *analogy* (past irregular verb), the *subject-verb disagreement* (plural-singular), the misuse of some *word classes* (parts of speech) and the use of *misspelled words* (misspelling), of which past irregular verb errors and incorrect use *be + past verb* were the most conspicuous

ungrammatical verb forms involved with tense formation.

2. Eight factors which contributed to temporal interpretation were identified in this study and were categorized at three levels: syntactic, textual and conceptual. They were: *adverbial phrases* of time (AP), *conjunctions* (CONJ), *noun phrases* (NP), *verb phrases* (VP), *grammar* (sentence patterns and grammatical meanings of tense), *context*, *texts* (text structure, event and evaluation) and *conceptions*. Among these factors, the adverbial phrases, the noun phrases, the context and the verb phrases most facilitated the subjects' temporal interpretation in reading texts. The most decisive factors influencing the students' temporal interpretation in writing texts were their knowledge of the text structure and general understanding of the event. Context and action verbs also played their roles in the subjects' temporal interpretation.

3. Different behaviours were found in the subjects' temporal interpretation performance in narrative reading and writing. More correct tenses and temporal interpretations were given in the writings than in the readings.

4. Subjects' temporal interpretation ability was found to be associated with their English proficiency levels. The high English proficiency group outperformed the low English proficiency group both in correct verb forms and in temporal interpretation.

There were some characteristic similarities in the subjects' identification of temporal interpretation factors.

5. Linguistic elements at the syntactic level were the most direct and accessible factors for the subjects. Adverbial phrases of time, noun phrases associated directly in meaning with the event or with the people in time frames, conjunctions such as *and* and *but* used to connect two independent clauses and *when* used to introduce an embedded clause are good markers for time reference.

6. Context as a factor to influence temporal interpretation worked more as a syntactic unit to accord the tense of the pre- or after-going sentences. It was rarely considered from the perspective of the discourse. To most subjects, temporal

interpretation in embedded clauses is subject to the time determined in the main clause.

7. Mapping was found in the subjects' use of noun phrase (NP) and verb phrase (VP) for time interpretation. The meanings entailed in NP or VP from L1 translation were often mapped to the L2 temporal interpretation of the past and the present. In other words, the semantic content of the first language was often mapped to L2 lexical forms, to be specific, mapped to verb forms indicating time reference in this study. This finding conforms to the research about form-meaning mapping in vocabulary acquisition in second language (Jiang, 2002) from another direction.

8. The lexical aspect of verbs influenced the subjects' temporal interpretation to an extent as had been hypothesized by other researchers (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynold, 1995; Bardovi-Harlig, 1998, 1999; Collins, 2002). Subjects tended to link verbs of accomplishment and achievement with the use of the past tense. The stative verb "to be" was not found particularly marking the present tense.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings from the study on Chinese students' tense and temporal interpretation have some implications for EFL teachers as follows.

1. The nine types of errors concerning with tense formation come from four areas: (1) L1 influence or *language transfer* (Richards & Sampson, 1974), which is most obvious with the subjects' incorrect use of passive voice structure in sentences such as *I was hesitated* and *it was fought*. This conforms to what Fries stated: "Learning a second language therefore constitutes a very different task from learning the first language. The basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves but primarily out of the special 'set' created by the first language habits" (Fries, as cited in Duley, et al., 1982, p. 98). (2) Intralingual interference (Richards & Sampson, 1974), which is most obvious with the

subjects' use of irregular past verbs, in which they analogized (Crystal, 1985) or overgenralized (Richards, 1974), or regularized (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982) past verbs such as *goed* (go) and *hoot* (hoot), or double marked past verbs such as *camed* (come) and *hitted* (hit). (3) The influence of aspectual meanings of verbs (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Crystal, 1985; Quirk et al., 1972), which prompted the subjects' misuse of punctual or telic verbs in *would closed*, *will finished*, and misuse of durative or atelic verbs with the progressive forms such as *was knowing* and *was being*. Their misuse of the passive voice structure "be + v-ed" with verbs most of which are accomplishments and achievements shows this lexical aspect influence. (4) Under-acquisition. This might be used to explain all the ungrammatical verb forms occurring in the subjects' narrative reading and writing. Those incorrect verb forms such as *have try*, *have been used being* and *teached*, and other errors such as misspelling and subject-verb disagreement were more observed with the low subject group. This implies that grammatical competence is associated with the learners' L2 language proficiency. Ungrammatical verb forms will decrease when learners enhance their L2 competence.

2. The study suggests that the Chinese university students' processing of time inference in English narrative reading texts involves two levels of activity: linguistic and conceptual. Linguistically, they looked for adverbials, conjunctions and clauses to set up syntactic context to locate time in each sentence. After that, with the process of message reading, they would refer to substance words or action words for locating specific time. This happened especially when their reading or writing came to the next segment of the sequences of the events and the time markers such as adverbial phrases of time were distant and ambiguous to the new sequence. Conceptually, when they could not specify their justification of time in sentences, they used their individual experience of the story, of the time in that situation to infer time in a sentence, which could either lead them to a correct inference or be misleading. English teachers might focus more on other elements concerned with time in narrative texts rather than

simply focusing linguistic elements such as adverbials phrases of time, conjunctions or clause tense coherence. These elements are easy and accessible for students and reliance of tense grammar instruction totally on these elements is dangerous because there are many other factors which influence temporal interpretation in narrative texts.

3. The study suggests it would be beneficial to tell students that there are associations between narrative segments and tense use. Tense instruction in the classroom can change from separate, unrelated accounts of how each of the past or the present tense is used in different circumstances to general patterns of tense employment in discourse. Teachers should guide students to "observe regular correlations between discourse types and the predominance of certain tense and aspect choices in the clause" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 59). Teaching students to observe genre-specific tense use could offer a shortcut to L2 tense acquisition.

4. Teachers might usefully design their instruction by using text types as a medium for students' English tense acquisition and might reconsider the traditional pedagogical practice of teaching tense. That is, to guide students into the way that native speakers or writers interpret time in different situations by demonstrating tense uses in various text types such as narrative, expositive and argumentative. Because text types are goal-directed and rhetorical structured, the rhetorical structure of a specific text type will affect grammatical choice. A case in point is foreground and background of narrative texts in this study. When the story progresses to a sequence of evaluation (comments on the event), the present tense which expresses a universal truth or a general fact is adopted (sure enough, when the comment or evaluation is about people and events in the past, the past tense is adopted). The present tense changes from the past tense under the principle prescribed by narrative rhetorical structure that progression from specific event description to more general statement in a narrative text takes the present tense, or vice versa.

5. Teachers should guide students to interpret the meaning of *context* correctly. In the past, when talking about teaching our students tense in context in

texts, the context was actually not identified as what it should be. It was simply stated that tense in a context should be coherent. This misled students into thinking that a correct interpretation may be achieved simply by harmonizing the tense in two clauses connected by conjunctions, or clauses embedded in another clause, or adjacent clauses, which may fail to produce a true temporal interpretation in these sentences. This briefness and oversimplification of narrative temporality sometimes misleads our students. Examples of this were found in this study. The problem revealed is that once students decided on an incorrect temporal interpretation, the tense employment in the following sentences or in the whole paragraphs may be wrong. This study tells us that the context in narrative texts is actually the event time frame and the speech time frame, which needs to be clarified in teaching. Specifying the context is helpful to appropriate temporal interpretation, that is, the correct tense use in sequences of a narrative text. When forms such as adverbial phrases, noun phrases and verb phrases are found functioning as meaningful components on subjects' temporal interpretation, the necessity of teaching students to use language in context should not be overlooked. That is, teach them to make appropriate temporal interpretations by considering time from the discourse perspective, the event time and the speech time where narrative texts are concerned. This approach from text to tense, from *content* to *form*, will make up for students' insufficient knowledge of the time attributes in L2 and make the form more consolidated and the content more productive.

6. It may be better to treat students' errors in tense formation differently. More ungrammatical verb forms were observed with the low subject group. This suggests that some ungrammatical verb forms might be developmental errors and they might decrease when the learners' language proficiency level increases. Pedagogical attention may as well go to those frequent errors in tense formation. These errors may evoke negative emotional reactions from other teachers or writing evaluators and often prevent them from properly evaluating the writers' ideas and organization and lead them to rate such kind of writings as unacceptable or at lower levels

(Celce-Murcia, 1985). Errors like these found in this study are analogy of the past irregular verbs, subject-verb disagreements and misspelling.

7. Teachers should alert students to errors that reflect L1 transfer or errors from the students' intralingual system. These errors such as *was/were + v-ed*, for example, *was fighted*, *was hesitated*, and irregular verb forms such as *taked* and *camed* made by analogy. This consciousness-raising pedagogy will remind students of the systematic errors that may otherwise not be eradicated even at an advanced level. This strategy might be fruitful with adult L2 learners, like groups of university students in this research, who are accordingly mature in language learning philosophy. Errors of this type found in this study include double marking errors, irregular past tense errors and incorrect passive voice errors evoked by the completion sense of verbs in L1 semantics.

8. It will provide a more efficient way for students to acquire L2 tense use in narrative texts if the problematic areas of temporal interpretation in narrative texts are demonstrated. The study reveals that most problems in narrative text time arise from the background information and evaluation, which involves either present time or past time interpretation. By demonstrating these problems, the features of tense which require special attention by our students can be identified and the quality of tense teaching may thus be enhanced.

9. Both the cloze test and the writing test scores between the two subject groups indicate that language proficiency level plays an important role in the performance of the subjects' temporal interpretation. This finding suggests that L2 grammar synchronically develops with L2 proficiency. The pedagogical implication is that English teachers should not overlook learners' grammatical competence as it constitutes a part of communicative competence.

10. Lastly, this study suggests that pedagogical tense grammar in narrative reading texts can help students be aware of appropriate tense in writing narrative texts.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

There are limitations in this study which should be noted.

1. The nature of different data sources in the research did not easily allow for systematic comparison of the subjects' temporal interpretation performance between those of the well designed cloze test and those of the writing test. The number of the test units in the writing test could not be controlled. This was shown in the correlation coefficients of determination with the two subject groups when the receptive performance data and the productive performance data were compared.

2. The questionnaire asking for the subjects' reasons and explanations about their temporal interpretation in writing did not work as effectively as the one for the cloze reading test. In the writing-test questionnaire, some subjects were not active enough to respond to the open-ended questions, nor did they specify their reasons for temporal interpretation. A post-test interview revealed that some subjects felt at a loss to fill in the writing questionnaire exactly without certain clues. An elaborated questionnaire to activate the subjects to give detailed reasons for their temporal interpretation is lacking for the writing test.

3. Measurement of incorrect tense use in writing underlying the subjects' temporal interpretation is a tough job. Justification of other people's temporal interpretation can vary among researchers because, except for the threshold of the prescriptions of tense grammar and the context constraint, there is not a roof under which all classifications on correct and incorrect tenses by L2 learners in narrative texts come together. Besides, the writer's perspective and personal point of view and his communication target are underlying and become another factor to swing the evaluation pendulum. All this potentially allows for alternative interpretation of those tense errors.

4. Some doubtful problems could not be rechecked with the subjects because of the long distance from Thailand, the place of research conducting, to China, where

the subjects lived. Some responses by the subjects in their writing could be better known if rechecked.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Study

1. The findings of this study were based on the data from law students in one university. To strengthen the claims about Chinese university students' tense and temporal interpretation, the research should be replicated with students from different academic disciplines and in more universities.

2. The study investigated Chinese university students' tense and temporal interpretation in narrative texts. To help students better perceive time concepts in English and properly use tense in different contexts, the study may extend to other text types such as expositives and argumentatives.

3. Language reflects cultures. A questionnaire that focuses on the interaction of the L2 tense system and L1 culture will help us get some information about the social and cultural factors that contribute to L2 learners' temporal interpretation as well as linguistic elements and discourse structures. A questionnaire designed in this way will be informative and complementary on researches on this area.

References

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1992). The relationship of form and meaning: A cross-sectional study of tense and aspect in the interlanguage of learners of English as a second language. *Applied Psycholinguisitcs, 13,* 252-278.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1995). A narrative perspective on the development of the tense/aspect system in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 17,* 263-291.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Reynolds, D. W. (1995). The role of lexical aspect in the acquisition of tense and aspect. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 107-131.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). From morpheme studies to temporal semantics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 21,* 341-382.

Bestgen, Y., & Vonk, W. (2000). Temporal adverbials as segmentation markers in discourse comprehension. *Journal of Memory and Language, 42,* 74-78.

Boey, K. L. (1975). *An introduction to linguistics for the language teacher.* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Boning, A. R. (Ed.). (1990). *Multiple reading skills: G.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Brazil, D. (1995). *A grammar of speech.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butt, D., Fahey, R., Feez, S., Spinks, S., & Yallop, C. (2000). *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide* (2nd ed.). Sydney: Macquarie University.

Celce-Murcia, M. (1985). Making informed decisions about the role of grammar in language teaching. *TESOL Newsletter, 19,* 4-5.

Chafe, W. L. (1970). *Meaning and the structure of language.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Chafe, W. L. (1972). Discourse structure and human knowledge. In O. Freedle & J. B.

Carroll (Eds.), *Language comprehension and the acquisition of knowledge.* Washington D.C.: V.H. Winston & Sons.

Collins, L. (2002). The role of L1 influence and lexical aspect in the acquisition of temporal morphology. *Language Learning, 52*(1), 43-94.

Coppieters, R. (1987). Competence differences between native and non-native speakers. *Language, 63,* 554-573.

Crystal, D. (Ed.). (1985). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (2nd ed.). Oxford England: Basil Blackwell.

Crystal, D. (Ed.). (2003). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DeCarrico, J. (1986). Tense, aspect and time in the English modality. *TESOL Quarterly, 20,* 665-682.

Declerk, R. (1995). Is there a relative past tense in English? *Lingua,* 97, 1-36. Retrieved 9 April 2006, from http://www.elsevier.com/ locate/lingua.

Delahunty, G., & Garvey, J. (1994). *Language, grammar, and communication.* McGraw-Hill: New York.

Doff, A., & Jones, C. (Eds.). (1994). *Language in use--self-study workbook: Intermediate.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Doherty, M. (2002). *Language processing in discourse.* London: Routledge.

Doughty, C., & Williams, J. (1998). Pedagogical choices in focus on form. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 197-261). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Downing, A., & Locke, P. (2002). *A university course in English grammar.* London: Routledge.

Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Language two.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Dunkel, P., & Lim, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Intermediate listening comprehension.* Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle.

Fan, C. R., & Lin, H. (2002). 中国学生英语时体习得中的两大“误区” [Two major errors in English tense acquisition by the Chinese students]. *外语教学与研究 2002 年第六期*。

Fang, Y. Q. (1992). *实用汉语语法* [Chinese grammar in use]. 北京：北京语言文化大学出版社。

Fang, Y. Q. (2001). *实用汉语语法* [Chinese grammar in use]. 北京：北京大学出版社。

Finch, G. (2000). *Linguistic terms and concepts.* Hampshire: Palgrave.

Gass, S. M., & Schachter, J. (1989). *Linguistic perspectives on second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (1994). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Godfrey, L. D. (1980). A discourse analysis of tense in adult ESL monologues. In D. Larsen-Freeman (Ed.), *Discourse analysis in second language research* (pp. 92-110). Massachusetts: Newbury.

Haines, S., & Stewart, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Landmark: Intermediate students' book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective.* Deakin University: Deakin University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *Functional grammar*. London: Arnold.

Heaton, J. B. (1990). *Classroom testing*. London: Longman.

Henning, G. (1987). *A guide to language testing*. Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Herman, W. (1977). *Reading, writing, rhetoric*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Hinkel, E. (1992). L2 tense and time reference. *TESOL Quarterly, 26*, 557-572.

Hinkel, E. (1997). The past tense and temporal verb meanings in a contextual frame. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(2), 289-313.

Huddleston, R. (1984). *Introduction to the grammar of English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, A. (1989). *Testing for language teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, R. (1998). From sentence to discourse: Discourse grammar and English language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(2), 263-287.

Hurford, R. J., & Heasley, B. (1983). *Semantics: A coursebook.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hutchinson, T. (Ed.). (1997). *Lifelines: Pre-intermediate student book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis.* England: Longman.

Jiang, N. (2002). Form-meaning mapping in vocabulary acquisition in a second language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 24,* 617-637.

Kirszner, L., & Mandell, S. (1980). *Patterns for college writing: A rhetorical reader and guide.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Klammer, P. T., & Schulz, R. M. (1992). *Analyzing English grammar.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Klein, W. (1986). *Second language acquisition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Langacker, W. R. (1967). *Language and its structure.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Lardiere, D. (1998a). Case and tense in the "fossilized" study state. *Second Language Research, 14,* 1-26.

Lardiere, D. (1998b). Dissociating syntax from morphology in a divergent end-state grammar. *Second Language Research, 14,* 359-75.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1980). *Discourse analysis in second language research.*

Massachusetts: Newbury.

Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, M. (1986). *The English verb: An explanation of structure and meaning.* London: Language Teaching Publications.

Li, C., & Thompson, S. (1981). *Mandarin Chinese: A functional reference grammar.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lock, G. (1996). *Functional English grammar: An introduction for second language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, J. (1995). *Linguistic semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, M. (1991). *Discourse analysis for language teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, M., & Carter, R. (1994). *Language as discourse.* London: Longman.

Naunton, J. (Ed.). (1995). *Think ahead to first certificate.* Longman, UK: Longman.

Norrish, J. (1993). *Language learners and their errors*. London: Macmillan.

Odlin, T. (1989). *Language transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Partee, B. (1973). Some structural analogies between tenses and pronouns in English. *The Journal of Philosophy 70,* 601-609.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1972). *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman.

Richards, J. C. (1974). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition* (pp. 172-188). Singapore: Longman.

Richards, J. C. & Sampson, G. (1974). The study of learner English. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition* (pp. 3-18). Singapore: Longman.

Richards, J. C., Platt, J., & Platt, H. (Eds.). (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (2nd ed.). England: Longman.

Riddle, E. (1986). The meaning and discourse function of the past tense in English. *TESOL Quarterly, 20,* 267-286.

Robinson, R. (1990). The primacy of aspect: Aspectual marking in English interlanguage. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 12,* 315-330.

Robinson, R. (1995). The aspect hypothesis revised: A cross-sectional study of tense and aspect marking in interlanguage. *Applied Linguistics, 16,* 344-370.

Sakita, I. T. (2002). *Reporting discourse, tense, and cognition* [Electronic version]. ELSEVIER.

Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approach to discourse.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Shirai, Y., & Kurono, A. (1998). The acquisition of tense-aspect marking in Japanese as a second language. *Language Learning, 48,* 245-279.

Schohamy, E. (1996). Competence and performance in language testing. In G. Brown, K. Malmkjaer, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Performance and competence in second language acquisition* (pp. 138-151). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, C. S. (2005). Tense and temporal interpretation. *Lingua, 1207.* Retrieved 11 December 2005, from http://www.elsevier.com/ locate/lingua.

Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language.* England: Basil Blackwell.

Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and corpus analysis.* UK: Blackwell.

Tannen, D (1982). The oral/literate continuum in discourse. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Spoken and written language: Exploring orality and literacy* (pp. 1-16). New Jersey: ABLEX.

Teo, A. (1995). *Analysis of newspaper editorials: a study of argumentative text structure.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois.

Ward, J. M. (1966). *The use of tenses in English.* London: Longman.

Westney, P. (1994). Rules and pedagogical grammar. In T. Odlin (Ed.), *Perspective on pedagogical grammar* (pp. 72-96). New York: Cambridge University Press.

White, L. (2002). Morphological variability in endstate L2 grammars: The question of L1 influence. In A. Do, S. Fish, & B. Skarabela (Eds.), *Proceeding of the 26th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 758-768). Somerville: Cascadilla Press.

White, L. (2003). *Second language acquisition and universal grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

White, R. (1977). Telling what happened. *TESOL Quarterly, 11*, 271-281.

Widdowson, H. G. (1979). *Explorations in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1983). *Learning purpose and language use*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vendler, Z. (1967). Verbs and times. In Z. Vendler (Ed.), *Linguistics and philosophy* (pp. 97-121). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Yalden, J. (1987). *Principles of course design for language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis*. New York: Harper & Row.

APPENDIX A

Cloze Test and Answer Sheet

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

INTRODUCTION

Introduction: You are invited to join in a research on English language learning. The results of the research can help both teachers and students in English teaching and learning. The following test consists of three parts:

Part I Personal information

Part II The cloze/questionnaire test

Part III The composition/questionnaire test

You can have a 5-minute break after the cloze/questionnaire test. Please fill in the form before the test starts. Thank you for your cooperation. (你将参加一次有关英语语言学习的调查实验。本次考试内容：1) 完型填空；2）问题调查表一；3）作文；4）问题调查表二。考试时间：3 小时。请务必完成所有的项目并认真回答每一个问题。谢谢你的合作!)

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

CANDIDATE'S PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Personal information

University Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL), China

Major in Law ✓

Academic Year 2004 ✓

Name _____ ☐ Age ☐ Male ☐ Female

Student Code _____

Class, Faculty _____

2. CET 4/6 scores

CET 4 (College English Test of Band 4) score _____/170 Date June 2006

3. Scores in your programs of studying

National College Entrance English Test score _____/150 Date June 2004

First-year English Final Examination score _____/100 Date July 2005

Second-year English Final Examination score _____/100 Date July 2006

4. Other English experiences

My English learning experience outside campus is described as: I take

☐ two-hour; ☐ four-hour; ☐ five-hour; ☐ more English classes per week.

(Give some more information if any) _____

Email _____ **Telephone** _____

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Cloze Test (40 minutes)

Instructions: The following are three passages. Read the passages carefully and fill in the blanks with the correct forms of the given verbs. **First** fill in verbs in the passages, **then** write them down on the Answer Sheet. （给出下列动词的正确形式。首先把你的答案填写在试卷上划线处；然后抄在 Answer Sheet 上面。请认真填写你的每一个答案。谢谢你的合作!）

Passage 1 – Napoleon

Napoleon (1) _____ (lead) a very exciting and dangerous life, but he (2) _____ (die) in his own bed. However, the cause of Napoleon's death (3) _____ (be) the subject of controversy from that time to the present.

The cause of Napoleon's death at the age of 51 on the island of St. Helena (4) _____ (be) still a mystery. There (5) _____ (be) no doubt that he (6) _____ (be) a very sick man at the time of his death.

Napoleon (7) _____ (be) a brilliant military leader. At one time he (8) _____ (control) most of Europe, but many countries, including England, Russia, and Australia (9) _____ (fight) fiercely against Napoleon. His defeat -- his end-- (10) _____ (come) when he (11) _____ (decide) to attack Russia. In this military campaign against Russia, he (12) _____ (lose) most of his army.

Data source: Dunkel, P., & Lim, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Intermediate listening comprehension.* Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle.

Answer key: (1) led. (2) died. (3) has been. (4) is. (5) is. (6) was. (7) was. (8) controlled. (9) fought. (10) came. (11) decided. (12) lost.

Note. *Answer Key* was not shown in the original test papers.

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Passage 2 – News Reporting

Local news -- There (13) _____ (be) a two-car crash at the intersection of Broadway and 29th Street early this evening. The driver of one of the cars (14) _____ (be) in critical condition at the university Hospital. The passengers in the other car (15) _____ (escape) injury. The identity of the injured man (16) _____ (be) not known at this time.

Local news – A PZM spokesman (17) _____ (announce) this week that PZM, one of the region's largest companies, (18) _____ (close) its main factory and offices in a week. In recent years PZM (19) _____ (provide) work for about a quarter of the town's school graduates, either in the factory or the offices. Most of the company's top managers (20) _____ (start) as ordinary factory workers.

The employees this (21) _____ (hit) hardest (22) _____ (be) those who (23) _____ (be) with the company all their working lives; A trade union spokesman (24) _____ (accuse) PZM of abandoning loyal and experienced workers at an age when most of them (25) _____ (be) unable to find similar work.

Data source: Haines, S., & Stewart, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Landmark: Intermediate students' book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Answer Key: (13) was. (14) is. (15) escaped. (16) is. (17) announced. (18) will close. (19) has provided. (20) started. (21) will hit. (22) are. (23) have been. (24) accused. (25) would be.

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Passage 3 - Nepal

The ancient buses and cars (26) _____ (hoot) loudly, but the cow (27) _____ (not care). It (28) _____ (sleep) peacefully in the middle of the road as it always (29) _____ (do) in most of the time every day. This (30) _____ (be) Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. We (31) _____ (enter) a different world.

Between India to the south and Tibet to the north, Nepal (32) _____ (be) one of the poorest countries in the world, but it (33) _____ (be) rich in culture and natural beauty, and there (34) _____ (be) a lot there for the adventurous tourists.

We (35) _____ (spend) our first day in Kathmandu and (36) _____ (take) a sightseeing tour around this fascinating city. Like People in other Asian countries, the Nepalese people (37) _____ (be) very friendly. There (38) _____ (be) no nightclubs. Ninety-nine per cent of the population (39) _____ (be) in bed by 10 pm.

Our seven days in Nepal (40) _____ (be) wonderful.

Data source: Hutchinson, T. (Ed.). (1997). *Lifeline: Pre-intermediate student book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Answer Key: (26) were hooting. (27) didn't care. (28) was sleeping. (29) did. (30) was / is*. (31) were entering. (32) is. (33) is. (34) are. (35) spent. (36) took. (37) are. (38) are. (39) are. (40) were.

*Untargeted test unit.

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Answer Sheet

Cloze Test (40 minutes)

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Faculty _____

Passage 1

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____

Passage 2

13. _____ 14. _____ 15. _____ 16. _____

17. _____ 18. _____ 19. _____ 20. _____

21. _____ 22. _____ 23. _____ 24. _____

25. _____

Passage 3

26. _____ 27. _____ 28. _____ 29. _____

30. _____ 31. _____ 32. _____ 33. _____

34. _____ 35. _____ 36. _____ 37. _____

38. _____ 39. _____ 40. _____

APPENDIX B

Cloze-test Questionnaire

(Questionnaire for Temporal Interpretation in the Cloze Test)

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Questionnaire 1 (50 minutes)

Instruction: This questionnaire is connected with the cloze test you have just finished. The items (1, 2, 3, ...40) in this questionnaire are related to the items (1, 2, 3, ... 40) in the cloze passages. You are required to explain your reasons for the verb forms you gave by:

1) copying verbs filled in the cloze passages into the given blank in each item and give a tick (✓) in the box ☐ to decide whether your verb is in the past or in the present tense frame;
2) choosing only one from a, b, c, and explain the reason for your choice in the blank (You can use either English or Chinese). Choices a, b, c in each item are words (verbs, nouns, adverbs, etc.), phrases or clauses picked out from the original sentences in the cloze test;
3) writing down your other reasons in _____ if one choice cannot explain clearly your reasons for the verb-tense, or if you have any better ideas. (You can use either English or Chinese).

（把你在 the cloze test 中所填写的动词抄在划线处。在 a, b, c,中选择一个，并解释选择该选项的理由。你可以补充你个人更多的解释以及所选动词时态的理由。你不可以改动已选定的动词时态。改动无效。谢谢你的合作!）

Passage 1

1. ***lead***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *Napoleon* (选择理由:)

b. *lead a very exciting and dangerous life* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *lead* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

2. ***die***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *but* (选择理由:)

b. *die in his own bed* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *die* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

3. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *the cause of Napoleon's death* (选择理由:)

b. *from that time to the present* (选择理由:)

c. *be the subject of controversy* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

4. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *The cause of Napoleon's death at the age of 51 on the island of St. Helena* (选择理由:)

b. *but* in the pre-going sentence (选择理由:)

c. *be still a mystery* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

5. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *that* in the following clause (选择理由:)

b. *there be no doubt that* (选择理由:)

c. this verb phrase *there be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

6. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *a very sick man* (选择理由:)

b. *at the time of his death* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

7. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *Napoleon* (选择理由:)

b. *a brilliant military leader* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

8. ***control***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *at one time* (选择理由:)

b. sentences going after (选择理由:)

c. this verb *control* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

9. ***fight***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *but* (选择理由:)

b. *many countries fight against him* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *fight* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

10. ***come***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *His defeat --his end--* (选择理由:)

b. *when he decide to attack Russia* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *come* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

11. ***decide***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *His defeat - his end- come* (选择理由:)

b. this *when*-clause (选择理由:)

c. *decide to attack Russia* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

12. ***lose***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *in this military campaign* (选择理由:)

b. *lose most of his army* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *lose* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

Passage 2, Local news 1

13. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *early this evening* (选择理由:)

b. *a two-car crash at the interaction of Broadway and 29th Street* (选择理由:)

c. this verb phrase *there be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

14. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. a two-car crash at the intersection of Broadway and 29th Street (选择理由:)

b. the following sentence (选择理由:)

c. be in critical condition (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

15. ***escape***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. the passengers in the other car (选择理由:)

b. the pre-going sentence (选择理由:)

c. escape injury (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

16. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. the identity of the injured man (选择理由:)

b. at this time (选择理由:)

c. be not known (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

Passage *2*, Local news 2

17. ***announce***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. this week (选择理由:)

b. close its main factory and offices (选择理由:)

c. this verb *announce* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

18. ***close***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *announce* (选择理由:)

b. it being in a *local news* reporting (选择理由:)

c. this verb *close* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

19. ***provide***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *In recent years* (选择理由:)

b. *this week* in the beginning sentence (选择理由:)

c. *provide work* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

20. ***start***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. pre-going sentence (选择理由:)

b. *most of the company's top managers* (选择理由:)

c. *start as ordinary factory workers* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

21. ***hit***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *this (the closure)* in this *local news* reporting (选择理由:)

b. the sentence going after (选择理由:)

c. this verb *hit* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

22. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *The employees* (选择理由:)

b. *this hit hardest* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

23. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *be with the company all their working lives* (选择理由:)

b. the pre-going sentence (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

24. ***accuse***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *A trade union spokesman accuse PZM of abandoning loyal and experienced workers* (选择理由:)

b. the following *when*-clause (选择理由:)

c. this verb *accuse* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

25. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. the pre-going *A trade union spokesman accuse PZM of* .... (选择理由:)

b. *at an age when* .... (选择理由:)

c. *be unable to find similar work* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

Passage 3

26. ***hoot***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. the story setting (选择理由:)

b. *the ancient buses and cars* (选择理由:)

c. *hoot loudly* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

27. ***not care***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *ancient buses and cars hoot loudly* (选择理由:)

b. , *but* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *care* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

28. ***sleep***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *it* (选择理由:)

b. the sentence going after (选择理由:)

c. *sleep peacefully in the middle of the road* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

29. ***do***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *always in most of the time every day* (选择理由:)

b. the pre-going sentences (选择理由:)

c. this verb *do* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

30. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *This be Kathmandu,* (选择理由:)

b. the pre- and after-going sentences (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

31. ***enter***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *a different world* (选择理由:)

b. *ancient buses and cars hoot loudly* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *enter* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

32. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *Nepal* (选择理由:)

b. *one of the poorest countries in the world* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

33. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *, but* (选择理由:)

b. *it be rich in culture and natural beauty* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

34. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. , *and there be a lot there for the adventurous tourists* (选择理由:)

a. sentences going after (选择理由:)

b. this verb phrase *there be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

35. ***spend***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *in Kathmandu* (选择理由:)

b. sentences going after (选择理由:)

c. *spend our first day* (选择理由:)

_____ (give your own reasons)

36. ***take***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *and take a sightseeing tour* (选择理由:)

b. sentences going after (选择理由:)

c. this verb *take* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

37. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *The Nepalese people* (选择理由:)

b. sentences going after (选择理由:)

c. *be friendly* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

38. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *There be no nightclubs* (选择理由:)

b. *Ninety-nine per cent of the population be in bed by 10 pm.* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

39. ***be***: I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *There be no nightclubs.* (选择理由:)

b. *Ninety-nine per cent of the population be in bed by 10 pm.* (选择理由:)

c. this verb phrase *there be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

40. ***be*** I used this verb in the form of "_____" which is in ☐ the past tense ☐ the present tense, because of .....

a. *our seven days in Nepal* (选择理由:)

b. *be wonderful* (选择理由:)

c. this verb *be* (选择理由:)

_____ (give more reasons)

APPENDIX C

Writing Test

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Writing (35 minutes)

Instruction: Write an essay of about 120-150 words to tell about someone or something that impressed you most and now that is still influencing your daily life. You may use the topic **My Unforgettable Experience**, as suggested or create your own. Tell us about that experience and the influence that experience brings into your present work and life. Try to develop the topic as fully as possible. （根据要求，就所给的题目结合过去的经历以及这种经历对你目前的学习和生活所产生的影响写一篇 120-150 字左右的记叙文。你也可以根据要求自立题目。谢谢你的合作!）

Topic: _____

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....(Thank you for your cooperation).

APPENDIX D

Writing-test Questionnaire

(Questionnaire for Temporal Interpretation in the Writing Test)

Name _____ **Student No.** _____

Questionnaire 2 (45 minutes)

Instruction: Now you have finished your composition. The last job you are going to do is:

1. Picking up verbs you used in your composition, numbering them and filling them one by one in each blank. Give a tick (✓) in the box ☐ to decide whether your verb is in the past or in the present tense frame.
2. Giving reasons for the verb tenses you used.

（请给你作文中的动词编上号并把它们依次填在"_____"处。解释你所使用动词时态的理由。谢谢你的合作！）

Verb **Reasons**

1. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

2. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

3. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

4. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

5. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

6. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

7. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

8. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

9. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

Verb **Reasons**

10. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

...

...

Verb **Reasons**

40. _____ _____

☐ the past tense

☐ the present tense

(Thank you for your cooperation.) Sept. 29, 2006

APPENXID E

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

Table E1

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
(1)*				*Had leading* 0/2		*Leaded* 1/9	*Lead* 0/5		
						Lead 9/9			
						Lived 0/1			
(2)		*Was / is died* 0/2		*Had died* 0/1			*Die* 0/1	*Die - dead* 3/9	
(3)			*Was being* 1/1	*Has/have being* 3/4	*Being* 0/1		*Have been* 0/1		
				Had being 1/0					
(4)									
(5)							*Were / are* 2/3		
(6)			*Was being* 0/1				*Were* 0/2		
(7)									
(8)*				*Has control* 0/1					*Controled* 25/39
									Was controling 1/1
									Has/had controlled 16/21
(9)*		*Was fighted* 0/1			*Fighting* 6/5	*(Had) fighted* 9/17	*Were fighting* 4/4		*Forght* 0/1
						(Had) fighten 1/1	*Fight* 2/3		
						(Had) faught 1/4			
(10)			*Was coming* 8/10		*Coming* 3/6	*Camed* 0/1	*Come* 2/3		
(11)							*Have decided* 0/1		
							Decide 1/1		
(12)						*Losed* 1/2	*Lose* 0/1	*Lose – loose* 0/2	
(13)			*Was being* 0/1				*Were* 1/5		

Table E1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed		*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.		*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.		*Type 4* Has/have/had+V		*Type 5* V-ing		*Type 6* Past Irregular		*Type 7* Plu-Singular		*Type 8* Parts of Speech		*Type 9* Misspelling	
(14)					*Is being*	0/2	*Has being*	2/2					*Are /have been*	1/1				
(15)			*Was/are escaped*	2/3			*Has escape*	0/1	*Escaping*	0/2			*Has escaped*	4/7				
							Has escaping	0/1					*Escapes*	1/0				
							Having escaped	1/0										
(16)													*Are/were*	0/4				
													Have been/has	1/5				
(17)			*Was announced*	0/1					*Announcing*	0/1			*Announce*	2/2				
													Have announced	0/1				
(18)*	*Will closed*	2/0	*Was closed*	0/2	*Was closing*	0/1	*Having closed*	0/4	*Closing*	1/11			*Close*	1/0				
	Would closed	4/2	*Be closed*	0/1	*Is closing*	1/0							*Have closed*	0/7				
(19)			*Was provided*	0/1	*Was/is providing*	0/2	*Has privide(s)*	0/4					*Have provided*	3/8			*Privide*	0/4
							Has/had providing	0/2	*Providing*	0/1			*Provide*	1/2				
(20)	*Will started*	0/1	*Was/were/*		*Was/were starting*	1/2	*Had start*	0/1	*Starting*	0/1			*Starts*	2/3				
			Been started	1/3			*Have to start*	1/1										
							Has started	1/0										
(21)*			*Is/are hitted*	2/2	*Is hitting*	0/1			*Hitting*	6/17	*Hitten*	3/2			*Hit – heat*	0/1		
			Was/were hitted	1/2							*Hitted*	8/16						
			Were/are/be hit	7/3							*Hited*	0/1						
			Were hitten	0/1														
(22)									*Being*	1/1			*Is/was*	10/13				
(23)							*Has/have being*	2/2	*Being*	1/4			*Is/was*	7/5				

Table E1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
							Has been 6/0		
(24)		*Was accused* 0/2			*Accusing* 0/2		*Accuse* 3/4		
		Will be accused 1/0							
(25)					*Being* 0/1		*Was/is* 5/5		
(26)*					*Hooting* 1/0	*Hoot* 5/5	*Was/is hooting* 4/5	*Hoot – heat* 0/1	*(Are) hotting* 13/15
						Heet 1/4	*Hoots* 4/1		
(27)*		*Was/is/are (not) cared* 2/9	*Is not caring* 0/1				*Don't care* 16/11		
		Was/were/is/are not care 4/14							
		Were not been cared 0/1							
		Have not been cared 0/1							
		Not be care 0/1							
(28)		*Is slept* 1/0			*Sleeping* 0/4	*Sleepted* 2/5	*Are sleeping* 0/1		
		Has been slept 1/0				*Has sleepted* 0/1	*Sleep* 1/1		
(29)		*Be done* 0/1					*Do* 11/16		
(30)				*Have enter* 0/1	*Entering* 1/0		*Enters* 1/1		
(31)							*Are* 0/1		
(32)			*Is being* 1/0				*Were* 0/1		
(33)*							*Is / was* 27/19		
(34)						*Spended* 3/11	*Has spent* 0/1		
						Have spended 1/0	*Spends* 0/1		
(35)						*Taked* 0/2	*Takes* 0/2		

Table E1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Cloze Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular		*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
(36)							*Is/was*	4 /12		
(37)*							*Is / was*	30/45		
(38)*							*Is / was*	35/37		
							Has been	3 / 0		
(39)*							*Was / is*	33/53		
Total Frequency	**6 / 3**	**22 / 51**	**12 /22**	**11 /27**	**19 / 57**	**45 / 91**	**228 / 305**		**3 / 13**	**55 / 81**

Note. Figures in the parentheses ( ) represent each of the test units in the cloze test (totally 39). Figures on the left of "/" are for the high group (n=85) and the right "/" for the low group (n=85).

*Ungrammatical verb forms of > 30% of frequency that occurred in the cloze test.

APPENDIX F

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Table F1

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
(A)			*Was abandoning* 0/1					*Was afraid* 1/1	
	Can't accepted 1/0								
		Am/were appreciate 1/1						*Didn't angry* 1/1	
	Will always affects 0/1								
									Are arrenged 1/0
(B)		*Was been* 1/0							
									Reback (go back) 0/1
								Better 0/1	
		Was becomed 0/1	*Are becoming* 1/0						
							Break –s out 0/1		
								Can't breath 0/1	
		Are benefit 1/0							
			Was beginning 0/1						*Beggined (began)* 0/1
		Was benign 1/0							*Begun* 0/1
						Bursted 0/1			
		Was brought 1/0							
(C)		*Must be care for* 0/1			*Didn't cooking* 0/1		*Care - s* 1/0		*Claped* 1/0
		Is connect 0/1							
						Catched 0/1			
		Was came from 0/1							
		Was choose 1/0				*Choosed* 1/0			

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
								Will company 1/0	
		Are complicated 1/0							
									Congrated (congratulate) 0/1
		I am so confuse 0/1							
						Camed 0/1			
								Couraged 1/0	
									Commited 0/1
(D)									*Droped* 0/1
				Has died 0/1					
			Was despairing 0/1						
		Was disappeared 0/1							
									Doub (doubt) 0/1
(E)									*Espect* 1/0
								Effected 1/0	
							Had educationed 0/1		
			Is expressing 0/1						
									Experied (experienced) 0/1
(F)	*Could finished* 0/1								
		Was fight 0/1				*(Have) fought* 0/2			
						Falled 0/1			
	Wouldn't forgot 1/0								

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
		Were frighten 0/1							
		Am feel 0/1				*Feeled* 0/4			
						Finded 0/1			
						Founded 1/0			
		Was feared 0/1							
									Flys 0/2
(G)			*Are greeting* 1/0	*Have been grown up* 1/0					
						Goed 0/1			
			Is always giving 0/1						
	Didn't got 0/1	*Couldn't be get* 1/0							
		Had been got 0/1							*Guilded (guilt)* 0/1
(H)	*Did not had* 1/0								
	Would had 0/1								
				Have happened 0/2					
									Helpted 0/1
		Was happened 0/1							*Have hiden* 1/0
								Will happy 1/1	
									Will be hold 0/2
						Hurted 0/2			
		Was hesitated 0/1							
									Heat (hate) 0/1

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
						Hitted 0/1			
(I)				*Has influence* 1/0					*Influents* 0/1
								Couldn't image 0/1	
									Had influed 1/0
							Instended (substitute, take place) 0/1		
			Was intending 1/0						
	Did impressed 1/0	*Is impressed* 1/0							
							Is – are 1/3		
(J)				*Had jump* 0/1					
(K)		*Is always keep* 1/0							
						Had knew 0/1			
						Knowned 2/0	*Know - s* 1/1		
						Known 0/1			
(L)	*Would not liked* 0/1								
						Leaved 0/1			
								Laughted 2/1	
								Most loyalty 0/1	
(M)							*Make - s* 0/1		
				Haven't meet 1/2					
						Meaned 1/0			
(N)									*Noded* 1/0

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
(O)									
(P)									*Payed* 0/1
		Was played 0/1							
									Planed 1/0
									Panned (planned) 1/1
									Pried 1/0
(Q)								*May proof* 1/0	
(R)		*Is relate* 0/1							
									Regreted 0/1
		Got read 0/1						*Can't responsible* 1/0	
						Run 2/3			
(S)	*Couldn't said* 0/1	*Was always said* 1/0				*Saided* 0/1			
				Hasn't seening 0/1					
									Am stuned 0/1
								Was satisfy 0/1	
								Successed 0/3	
			Is smile 0/1						
									Was shaked 0/1
	He is not only saved me 0/1								
						Shooted 0/2			
						Sit (sat) 2/0			

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
									Slove (solve) 0/1
						Standed 0/1			
						Sticked 1/0			
						Sweared 0/1			
									Expend (spend) 0/1
									Studied 0/1
		Was slipped 1/0							
									Centence (sentence) 0/1
		Was sounded 1/0							
									Spoken 0/1
(T)				*Have take* 1/0		*Taked* 0/1			*Thans (thanks)* 0/1
				Had took 1/0		*Had took* 1/0			
				Have try 0/1					
					Didn't thinking 0/1	*Thinked* 0/1			
						Tought 4/3			
						Teached 0/2			*Teachs* 0/1
							There is (are) 0/1	*There maybe* 1/0	
							Those is 1/0		
(U)	*Can't understood* 0/1			*Have use* 1/0					
				Has been used being 1/0					
		Wasn't use 0/1							

Table F1 (Continued)

Ungrammatical Verb Forms in Writing Test

Unit	*Type 1* Mod. Auxiliary+ V-ed	*Type 2* Be+Past/Past parti.	*Type 3* Be+ Present parti.	*Type 4* Has/have/had+V	*Type 5* V-ing	*Type 6* Past Irregular	*Type 7* Plu-Singular	*Type 8* Parts of Speech	*Type 9* Misspelling
(W)	*Can't went* 1/0								
						Waked up 0/1			
		Was not want 0/1							
			Am work 0/1						
Total Frequency									
	5 / 7	**13 / 20**	**3 / 7**	**7 / 8**	**0 / 2**	**15 / 34**	**4 / 7**	**11 / 14**	**9 / 28**

Note. Letters in the parentheses ( ) are alphabetically arranged ungrammatical verb forms occurred in the writing test. Figures on the left of "/" are for the high subject group (n=77) and the right "/" for the low subject group (n=79).

APPENXID G

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires

Table G1

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Verb	Factors																					
Unit	Event time (past)											Speech time (present)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte.	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce
(1) 1/0	--	--	63 /50	1 / 5	--	14/14	--	2 / 3	1 / 2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(2 / 5)	--	--	(1 / 5)	--	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(2) 2/1	--	23 /33	--	25 /16	--	27 /30	--	7 / 3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	(1 / 0)	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(3) 4/10	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	54 /40	--	5 / 2	--	--	2 /0	--	2 / 1	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(11/16)	--	(7/14)	--	--	(0 / 1)	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--
(4) 6/5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7 / 7	--	--	54 /53	--	1 / 0	0 / 1	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(11/ 13)	(6 / 5)	--	(0/1)	--	--	--	--	--
(5) 2/2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3 / 3	--	--	60 /53	4 / 5	1 / 4	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(1 / 0)	--	--	(10/11)	(4 / 5)	(0 / 2)	--	--
(6) 3/1	77 /65	--	4 / 4	0 / 2	--	--	--	1 / 2	0 / 1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0 / 6)	--	(0 / 4)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(7) 0/3	--	--	54 /42	1 / 2	--	--	--	3 / 2	3 / 2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(21/30)	(1 / 2)	--	--	--	--	(2 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(8) 5/1	69 /74	--	1 / 0	--	--	--	--	5 / 5	3 / 1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(2 /2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	0 / 2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(9) 6/0	--	36 /37	--	11 / 9	--	--	--	2 / 4	29 /23	--	0 / 10	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	(1 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table G1 (Continued)

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Verb	Factors																					
Unit	Event time (past)											Speech time (present)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte.	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce
(10) [3/5]	38/38	--	26 /22	5 / 3	--	--	--	9 / 3	--	1 / 3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(2/5)	--	(1 / 5)	--	--	--	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(11) [1/1]	27/23	--	3 / 1	0 / 7	--	30 /24	--	23 /25	1 / 1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0/2)	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(12) [0/3]	52/42	--	--	11 / 8	--	17 /19	--	1 / 4	4 / 5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0/2)	--	--	(0 / 1)	--	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(13) [2/1]	75/68	--	--	0 / 1	--	--	--	--	--	5 / 8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(0/5)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(3 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(14) [4/5]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0 / 1	--	--	5 / 1	--	38 /23	--	11 /13	11 /15	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1 / 4	--	(0 / 1)	--	(3 /10)	(12/12)	--	--
(15) [2/4]	--	--	11/ 11	0 / 2	--	26 /24	--	25 /20	--	7 / 3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(1 / 3)	--	--	(4 / 7)	--	(9 / 8)	--	(0 / 3)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(16) [2/7]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	65 /52	--	6 / 2	--	--	3 / 5	--	--	1 / 1	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(4 / 8)	--	(2 / 5)	--	--	(2 / 2)	--	--	(0 / 3)	--	--
(17) [0/4]	62/58	--	1 / 0	6 / 9	--	--	--	1 / 0	--	5 / 3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(10/7)	--	--	--	--	--	--	(0 / 2)	--	(0 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

(18) 2/6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	18 / 7	--	--	0 / 4	--	0 / 1	--	3 / 5	5 / 8	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(6 / 2)	--	(0 / 2)	(2 / 9)	--	(0 / 1)	--	(34/25)	(9 /15)	--	--

Table G1 (Continued)

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Verb	Factors																					
Unit	Event time (past)											Speech time (present)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte.	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce
(19) 2/5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	54 /41	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1 3/ 8
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(15/29)	--	--	--	--	(1 / 1)	--	--	--	--	(0 / 1)
(20) 1/4	--	--	9 / 8	--	--	34 /21	--	19 /21	4 / 4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(3 / 6)	(0 / 2)	--	(6 / 9)	--	(6 / 6)	(3 / 4)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(21) 12/12	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2 / 3	--	--	--	15 /16	--	--	26 /12
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(1 / 6)	--	--	--	(10/17)	--	--	(19/19)
(22) 3/5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	39 /28	9 / 7	--	--	--	--	17 /12	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(5/16)	(5/ 3)	--	--	--	--	(7/14)	--	--
(23) 0/2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0 / 2	44 /30	--	--	11 /13	2 / 3	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(2 / 5)	(18/12)	--	--	(8/18)	--	--	--
(24) 3/6	--	--	--	7 / 9	--	--	--	10 /20	--	--	45 /41	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	(2 / 0)	--	--	--	(5 / 0)	--	--	(13 /9)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(25) 3/7	11/13	--	--	--	2 / 5	--	--	21 /21	3 / 1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(18/13)	--	(2 / 0)	(0 / 1)	(11/11)	--	--	(11/ 8)	(3 / 5)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

(26)[4/3]	--	--	5 / 9	0 / 1	--	0 / 2	--	1 / 1	25 /12	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(6 / 9)	--	--	(0 / 3)	--	(1 / 5)	(43/40)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(27)[4/4]	--	25 /19	--	1 / 1	--	--	--	--	7 / 5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	(24/30)	--	(5 / 4)	--	--	--	--	(19/22)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table G1 (Continued)

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Verb	Factors																					
Unit	Event time (past)											Speech time (present)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte.	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce
(28) [2/0]	--	--	--	--	--	5 / 4	--	11 /13	--	--	13 /11	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	(6 / 4)	--	(21/24)	--	--	(27/29)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(29)[2/4]	8/6	--	--	1 / 1	--	--	--	9 / 6	1 / 0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	(47/52)	--	--	(3 / 4)	--	--	--	(13/10)	(1 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(30)[2/9]	--	--	6 / 5	13 /13	--	--	--	--	15 /14	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(13/13)	(16/11)	--	--	--	--	(20/20)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(31)[1/2]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	73 /65	2 / 5	--	--	--	1 / 2	5 / 5	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(2 / 5)	(0 / 1)	--	--	--	(1 / 0)	--	--	--
(32)[1/1]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0 / 1	39 /37	34 /40	--	0 / 1	--	--	--	8 / 1	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(1 / 2)	(1 / 2)	--	(1 / 0)	--	--	--	--	--	--
(33)[3/3]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	25 /27	5 / 0	--	4 / 1	--	--	35 /48	10 / 2	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(2 / 2)	--	--	--	--	--	(1 / 2)	--	--	--
(34)[3/8]	4/11	--	--	--	--	55 /38	--	9 / 8	--	7 / 4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

	(0/4)	--	--	--	--	(2 / 7)	--	(2 / 4)	--	(3 / 1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(35)[1/4]	--	31 /35	0 / 1	7 / 8	--	--	--	34 /18	--	--	6 / 2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	(3 /10)	(0 / 1)	(1 / 0)	--	--	--	(1 / 6)	--	--	(1 / 0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(36)[2/2]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	36 /41	--	--	7 / 10	--	7 / 8	4 / 4	--	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(11 /5)	--	--	(4 / 2)	--	(12/11)	(2 / 3)	--	--

Table G1 (Continued)

Factors Reported in Cloze-test Questionnaires that Contributed to Temporal Interpretation

Verb	Factors																					
Unit	Event time (past)											Speech time (present)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte.	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce	AP	CONJ	NP	$V_{to\ do}$	$V_{to\ be}$	V np/ap	Patte	Cont.	Event	Evalu	Conce
(37)[2/2]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0 / 2	--	3 / 1	--	--	0 / 3	30 /26	22/28	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(1 / 0)	--	(1 / 2)	--	--	(3 / 0)	(13/11)	(10/8)	--
(38)[0/9]	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3 / 2	--	--	0 / 1	30 /23	24/27	--
	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	(0 / 2)	--	--	(2 / 2)	(14/13)	(12/6)	--
(39)[0/5]	--	--	38/26	--	1 / 2	--	--	1 / 0	--	2 / 0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	--	--	(27/46)	--	(8 /6)	--	--	--	--	(8 /0)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	502 /	144 /	297 /	117 /	22 /	227 /	-- /	263 /	187 /	41 /	105 /	227 /	67 /	245 /	39 /	74 /	111 /	70 /	168 /	181 /	68 /	58 /
	496	166	302	123	24	212	--	255	168	29	102	197	68	249	58	51	101	64	206	178	69	40

Note. Figures on the left of "/" are for the high subject group (n = 85) and the right "/" for the low subject group (n = 85); the below row bracketed figures stand for the errors in tense in that verb unit. Figures on the right top of each verb unit are indexes for missing choices or explanations from the questionnaire.

VITAE

Name Mrs. Changqing Chen

Student ID 4892024

Educational Attainment

Degree	**Name of Institution**	**Year of Graduation**
Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics)	Prince of Songkla University Hat Yai Campus, Thailand	

Scholarship Awards during Enrolment

Scholarship from President of Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus

Work Address

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Southwest University of Political Science and Law

Lieshimu, Sha Pingba

Chongqing, 450030

China