

台灣英語學習者如何習得 英語未來時態與時貌

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摘要

第二語言習得的研究建議，母語若是缺少時態，則學習者會面臨學習英語時態的困擾。其他研究也顯示時貌的習得有連帶關係。然而，針對以中文為母語之英語學習者學習英語時態與時貌的實證研究甚少。因此，本文探討不同英語能力之學習者（含較高英語能力之英語主修學生、較低英語能力之英語主修學生、與非英語主修學生）如何在句中（單一語句層面）與句間（文脈層面）處理英語未來時態與時貌，以及了解中文如何幫助他們在英語時貌上的學習。本研究實驗包含兩份測驗卷，一份有關句中時態與時貌的使用，內容區分為三種未來情境：動詞、語彙、與語法；另一份則有關句間之使用情形。變異數與卡方統計分析顯示，各英語程度組間在句中的未來時態表現上沒有差異，但英語主修學生在三種不同的未來情境中則有顯著差異。此外，各組英語能力之差異在語法時貌與三種詞彙時貌（瞬間達成動詞、動狀動詞、與靜態動詞）之連結上有顯著影響。本研究結果不僅與 Bardovi-Harlig (1998) 所提出的時貌假設及研究發現吻合，更進一步指出「靜態動詞」是最早習得的詞彙時貌，其他依序為「瞬間達成動詞」、「成就動詞」、與「動狀動詞」。至於在句間方面，時間框架的延續性受到第一個句子中的副詞片語與後方動詞位置之距離的影響。質性分析則證明中文語法時貌能幫助英語語法時貌的學習。簡而言之，本研究可提供英語教師對其學生如何學習英語之未來時態與時貌一個重要的方向，並帶給教師一些教學的啟發。

關鍵詞：未來時態、語法時貌、詞彙時貌、情境、第二語言習得

How Do Chinese Learners of English Handle the Future Tense and Aspect?

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Abstract

Research of second language learning has often suggested that learners whose native languages are tenseless would face a difficult position of learning English tenses. Other studies have also revealed the acquisition of aspects in sequence. However, research which has empirically documented how Chinese Learners of English deal with English future tense and aspect is scant. Therefore, the aim of this paper attempts to explore how English learners of diverse English proficiency levels, namely, English majors of higher proficiency level, English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors, manage English future tense and aspect intrasententially and intersententially as well as how Mandarin facilitates their use of English aspect. This study involved an experiment, comprised of two sets of questionnaires concerning the use of tense and aspect in sentence level with three different future contexts, viz. verbal, lexical and syntactic future contexts, and the use of tense in discourse level. 66 college students participated in the study. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaires was conducted through ANOVA and Chi-square. Results of this study, in the intrasentential section, showed no discrepant use of future tense among groups, while significant differences of tense in diverse future contexts were found in English majors. Moreover, a significant effect of groups on the link between the use of grammatical aspects and three lexical aspects, that is, achievements, activities and states, were discovered. Although the results also confirmed the aspect hypothesis proposed by Bardovi-Harlig (1998) and was consistent with her findings, this study further pointed out 'states' is the best acquired lexical aspect, followed by achievements, accomplishments and activities. Regarding the intersentential section, the continuity of temporal frame was influenced by the distance between the adverbial phrase in the first sentence and the verb slots. The qualitative analysis demonstrated that Mandarin grammatical aspect assisted the use of English aspect. To conclude, this study may be of importance in providing English teachers with a better understanding of how students learn English future tense and aspect, as well as in bringing some pedagogical implications.

Key words: future tense, grammatical aspect, lexical aspect, context, second language acquisition.

Introduction

The 1990s saw a wealth of research into the tense and aspect in interlanguage (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig, 2004; Bayley & Langman, 2004; Cai, 2002; Cai, 2004; Chen, 2005; Clachar, 2005; Fan & Lin, 2002; Hinkel, 1997; Langman & Bayley, 2002; Li & Shirai, 2000; Robison, 1995; Smith, 1997). Among these studies, many paid attention to tense and aspect acquisition in the EFL or ESL literature. Studies relevant to tense have often suggested that learners whose native languages are tenseless would face a difficult position of learning English tenses. Hinkel (1997) noted that Chinese is more context dependent than it is in English; in other words, for Chinese learners, the selection of English tense depends much more on temporal context, for instance, temporal adverbials. In his study, Hinkel examined the effects of distance between a temporal adverbial phrase and verb slots on temporal frame continuity in past-time discourse frame, and discovered that emphasizing the past-time adverbial markers may not be sufficient to effectively teach the uses and contexts of the past tense. Chinese learners may need to develop new conceptualizations of the extent and boundaries of time and tense within contextual frames (cf. Chen, 2005).

The majority of research in aspect has

focused on how tense markers, namely, grammatical aspect, align with lexical aspect¹, as well as the hierarchy of acquisition of lexical aspect. It has been argued by Robison (1995) that there is significant interdependence of morphology and aspect. Learners of English tend to link *-s* with states, *-ing* with activities, and *PAST* with punctual events. The association of inflections with tense increases with proficiency level. Similar to Robison (1995), Cai (2002) addressed the relationship between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect as well as the influence of proficiency level on the relationship by investigating EFL students in China. The study showed that progressive aspect tends to co-occur with activities due to its feature of duration, whereas perfective aspect is likely to associate with achievements since it is punctual. Cai (2002) also claimed that English proficiency level carries positive impact on the work of the lexical aspect hypothesis. Other seminal works on the link between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect were carried out by Smith (1997) and Li & Shirai (2000), pinpointing out the important associations in different

¹ According to Vendler (1967), lexical aspect can be categorized into achievements, accomplishments, activities and states. Except for states, achievements, accomplishments and activities are dynamic aspect. While achievements are punctual, others embrace duration. Furthermore, achievements and accomplishments are both telic, and hence also called as events.

languages. In addition, Fan & Lin (2002) and Bayley and Langman (2004) both argued that Chinese learners of English are likely to mark perfective verbs for past tense, showing another possible influence on tense and aspect learning. Regarding the hierarchy of acquisition of lexical aspect, Bardovi-Harlig (1998) probed into oral and written past-time narratives and asserted that ESL students acquire achievements first, followed by accomplishments and activities, respectively.

In addition to the hierarchy of acquisition of lexical aspect, Bardovi-Harlig (1998) also investigated the interaction between the aspect hypothesis and the discourse hypothesis. She contended that both hypotheses are necessary to account for the distribution of verbal morphology in interlanguage. Following her study, Cai (2004) examined the effects of lexical aspect and discourse structure on the simple past marking in Chinese-English interlanguage with written narratives in China. The results showed that discourse structure behaves differently in various lexical aspect classes, stronger in activities and achievements than in states and accomplishments. Clachar's study (2005) also supported that the pattern of morphology is influenced by lexical aspect and narrative discourse.

Other than the above literature, some researchers also proposed other factors,

such as word frequency, perceptual salience, etc., would affect the use of tense and aspect (Langman & Bayley, 2002; Salaberry, 2000). However, this is not what we are concerned here, and hence leave it for future studies.

As what has been reviewed in previous literature, there have been numerous studies dealing with the contextual frames, the link between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect, as well as the interaction between aspect hypothesis and the discourse hypothesis in the past-time narratives. However, research which has empirically documented how Chinese Learners of English deal with English future tense and aspect is scant (Bardovi-Harlig, 2004). Therefore, the purpose of the study was to ascertain how learners of diverse English proficiency levels, namely, English majors of higher proficiency level, English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors, manage English future tense and aspect intra-sententially and intersententially as well as how Mandarin facilitates their use of English aspect.

In view of the preceding research purpose, five major sets of research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How do learners of English manipulate future tense in terms of different future contexts, namely, verbal, lexical and syntactic contexts?
2. How is the temporal frame continuity in

English future contexts maintained by learners of English?

3. What is the hierarchy of acquisition of the link between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect for learners of English in Taiwan?
4. What is the effect of different proficiency levels on the use of future tense, the temporal frame continuity and the hierarchy of acquisition of the link between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect?
5. How do native language facilitate learners' use of English grammatical aspect in terms of lexical aspect?

Method

A three-phase study was designed to explore the use of future tense in terms of different future contexts, the temporal frame continuity and the acquisition hierarchy of lexical aspect of learners of English in Taiwan. 116 Mandarin-speaking subjects, viz. English majors of higher proficiency level, English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors were recruited from three intact classes at a university located in the midland of Taiwan. Of all subjects, only 66 fulfilled all questions in both questionnaires; hence, there were 66 subjects in total participating in this study, 24 being classified as English majors of higher proficiency level, 20 as English majors of lower proficiency level and 22 as non-English majors.

The categorization of subjects' proficiency levels was based on their educational system. The English majors of lower proficiency were recruited from an evening classes, whose English proficiency tend to be much lower than the English proficiency of English majors of the day school.

Tests, given in the fall term of the 2008 academic year, were designed into two sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted of 20 target intrasentential questions investigating the use of future tense, 5 filler intrasentential questions, and a section of translation, in which subjects were asked to translate the 20 target intrasentential questions into Mandarin. The target and filler questions were all fill-in questions with the base forms of the prompt verbs in parentheses, mainly extracted from the grammar textbook, written by Azar (1999). Of the 20 target questions, 6 included verbal future contexts, 12 comprised lexical future contexts and 2 contained syntactic future contexts². In addition, of 20 prompt verbs, 18 were categorized by their lexical aspect,

² According to Bardovi-Harlig (2004), verbal markers contain 'morphology', such as *will*, *going to*, *present*, *progressive* and *base*, 'modals', such as *can* and *can't*, as well as 'lexical futures', such as *want to*, *have to* and *hope to*. Lexical markers include 'adverbials', such as *tomorrow*, *soon*, *in the future* and *when I am old*, 'nouns', such as *this year* and *this weekend*, as well as 'modal indicators', such as *maybe* and *I think*. Syntactic environments comprise 'conditional', 'verb of cognition', like *think*, and '*hope*'.

5 being classified as achievements (*sell, start, return, see, and die*), 5 as accomplishments (*build, translate, read, paint, and eat*), 4 as activities (*do, study, wait, and rain*), and 4 as states (*be, know, want, and need*). The grammatical aspects of these 18 prompt verbs were all base or progressive forms. Note that there was no progressive verbs in achievements and states since these two lexical aspects do not allow progressive forms. The section of translation was designed to have a better understanding of subjects' cognitive process of manipulating grammatical aspects. Since Mandarin also contain grammatical aspects, as argued by Smith (1997), Li & Bowerman (1998) and Li & Shirai (2000), it is expected to see the association between the use of English grammatical aspects and the translation of these grammatical aspects in Mandarin.

The second questionnaire consisted of the 20 identical target intrasentential questions in the first questionnaire, while each prompt verb was accompanied with its Mandarin translation. Grounded on Smith (1997), Li & Bowerman (1998), Li & Shirai (2000) and Tai (2003), the translation comprised the imperfective grammatical aspect marker *zai* when the key answer of a particular target question should be progressive. It embraced the resultative construction with the verb when the key answer of the certain target question belonged to achievements.

Following the 20 target intrasentential questions were a small passage containing intersentential questions with 15 verb slots, adopted and revised from Hinkel (1997). A future-time phrase, 2080s, embedded in the first sentence, suggesting subjects that this is a future-frame context.

Subjects were given an hour to work on both tasks. When they finished filling out the first questionnaire and gave it back to the researcher, they would get the second questionnaire to fill out so that they had no opportunities to copy the answers they had done in the first test.

In the study, both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were preformed. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaires was conducted through ANOVA and Chi-square. The qualitative analysis was done to show whether Mandarin grammatical aspect assisted the use of English aspect.

Results

The results of the ANOVA showed a near-significant effect of future contexts on the use of future tense ($F(2, 195) = 2.951, p = .055$). The Scheffé Test revealed that there was a near-significant difference between verbal and syntactic contexts ($p = .057$). The mean of the percentage of tense accuracy in verbal contexts was 44.92; that in lexical was 52.15; that in syntactic contexts was 56.82. This finding illustrates that learners

of English are able to use correct future tense best when the verb is in syntactic contexts, followed by lexical and verbal contexts, as shown in Figure 1. Concerning the effects within groups, a significant difference was found in English major of higher proficiency level ($F(2, 69) = 3.734, p < .05$). The Scheffé Test indicated that there was a significant difference between lexical and syntactic future contexts: the mean of percentage of tense accuracy in verbal context was 47.13; that in lexical context was 43.75; that in syntactic context was 62.50, as presented in Figure 2. However, regarding the effect of proficiency levels on the use of future tense in terms of future contexts, no significance was found.

As to the temporal frame continuity maintained by learners of English, the ANOVA indicated a significant effect for the distance between the temporal adverbial phrase and verb slots. The Scheffé Test revealed that there are significant differences between the 1st verb slot vs. the 3rd, 4th, and 6th to 15th verb slots. Figure 3 shows a dramatic decrease from the first verb slot. The finding seems to indicate that Chinese learners of English tend to have difficulties in future temporal frame continuity, consis-

tent with Hinkel's study (1997) on past temporal frame continuity. Furthermore, within-group analyses showed that there was a significant effect of distance on the use of future tense in English majors of higher proficiency level ($F(14, 345) = 5.076, p < .05$). The Scheffé Test indicated that the significant difference was between the 1st verb slot vs. the 7th, 8th, 9th, 13th and 14th verb slots as well as the 2nd verb vs. the 7th and 9th verb slots.

On the other hand, when the use of future tense plunged to 20% in the 3rd verb slot, a rapid increase was discovered in the use of present tense. As Figure 4 showed, the use of future tense and the use of present tense appear to be in complementary distribution. To put it more simply, the more the percentage of the use of future tense occupies, the less the percentage of the use of present tense holds, and vice versa. The present tense tends to be most frequently used tense since the 3rd verb slot. Although learners of English would use past tense as well, past tense was far more less used than present tense. Furthermore, the use of past tense never overrode the use of future tense, except for the 3rd, 4th and 13th verb slots.

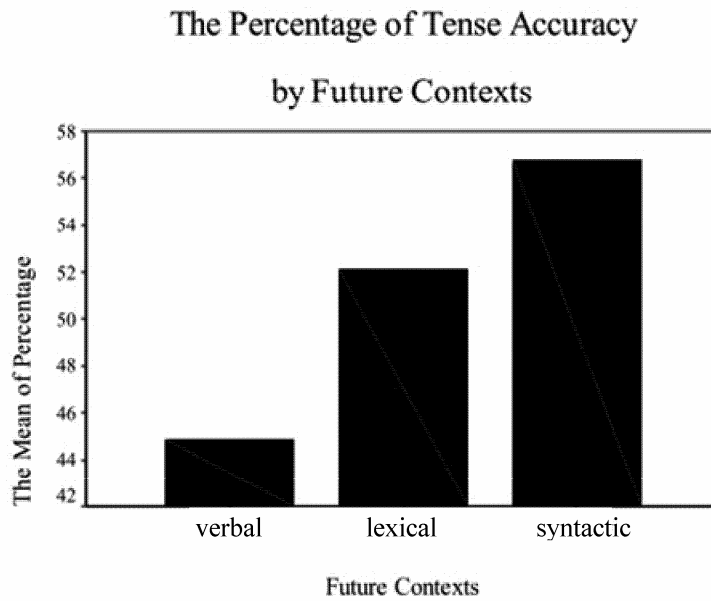


Figure 1 The Percentage of Tense Accuracy by Future Contexts

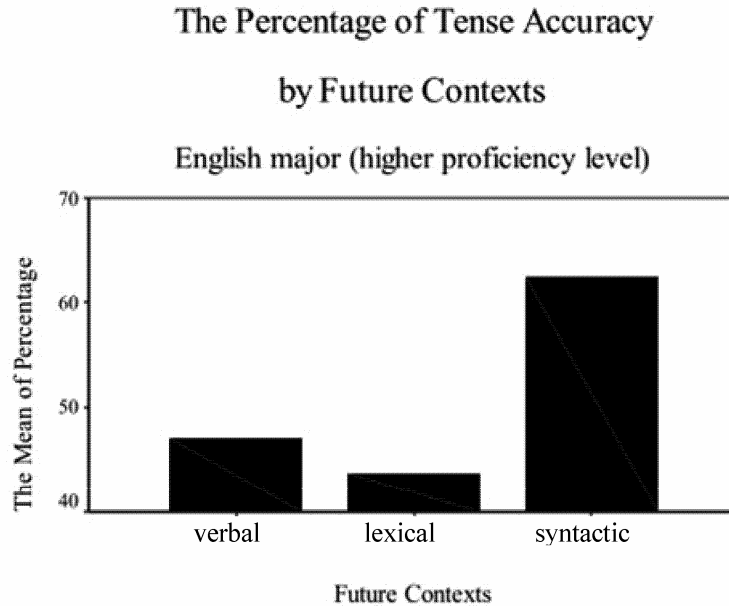


Figure 2 The Percentage of Tense Accuracy by Future Contexts (English Majors of higher proficiency level)

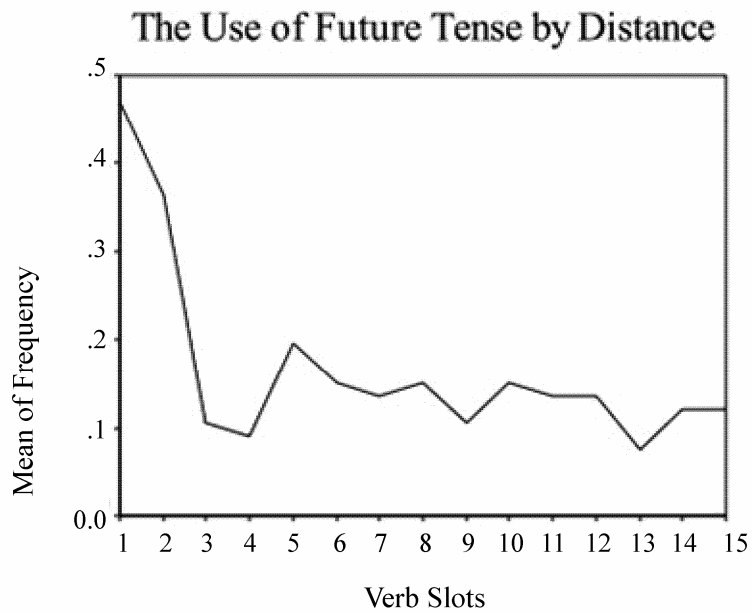


Figure 3 The Use of Future Tense by Distance between a Temporal Adverbial Phrase and Verb

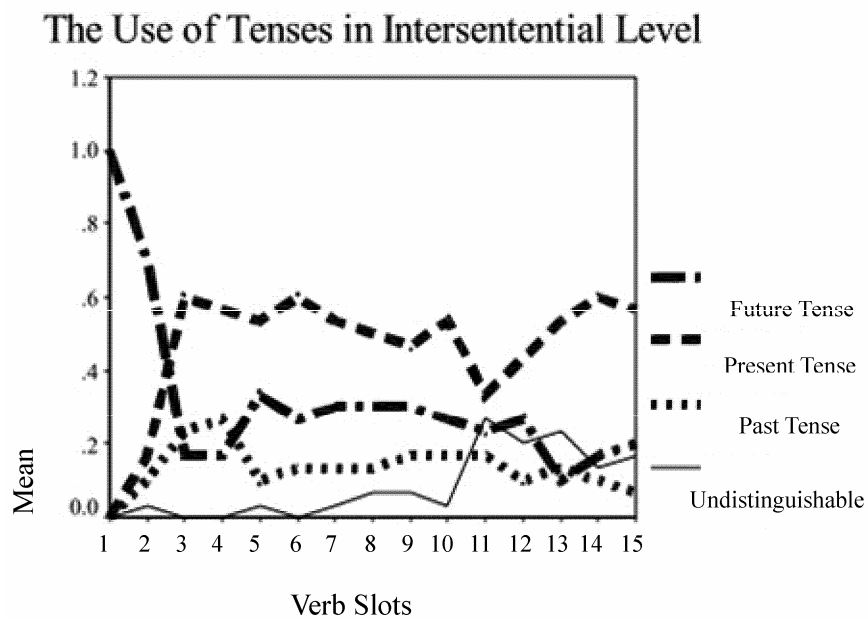


Figure 4 The Use of Tenses in Intersentential Level

When proficiency levels were taken into consideration, significant differences in the 1st ($X^2 = 7.698$, $p < .05$), 2nd ($X^2 = 17.004$, $p < .05$), 7th ($X^2 = 8.337$, $p < .05$), 8th ($X^2 = 9.01$, $p < .05$), 9th ($X^2 = 11.634$, $p < .05$), 10th ($X^2 = 8.922$, $p < .05$), 11th ($X^2 = 6.664$, $p < .05$) and 12th ($X^2 = 6.664$, $p < .05$) verb slots were found. English majors of lower proficiency level tend to use much more future tense in these verb slots than the other two groups. This might result from the fact that the English majors of higher proficiency level had received 16-week tense instruction from a grammar course before they participated in the study. Except for 8th and 9th verb slots, more English majors of higher proficiency level tend to use future tense than non-English majors do. Figure 5 reflected a slump takes place between the 2nd verb slot and the 3rd verb slot in the group of English majors of lower proficiency level, while the slump occurs between the 2nd verb slot and the 4th verb slot in the group of English majors of higher proficiency level. Compared to the English

majors of higher proficiency level, the English majors of lower proficiency level, who had just been receiving tense instruction before this study, tend to use much more future tense in all verb slots except for the 3rd to 6th and 13th to 15th verb slots.

Concerning the effects of lexical aspect on the use of grammatical aspect, significant differences were found ($F(3, 260) = 12.680$, $p < .05$). The Scheffé Test showed that there were significant differences between achievements and accomplishments, achievement and activities, accomplishments and states, as well as activities and states. This revealed that the acquisition hierarchy of the link between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect is states, achievements, accomplishments and activities, as shown in Figure 6. The result partially confirmed with Bardovi-Harlig's study (1998), in which she investigated the use of past tense to uncover the acquisition hierarchy of the lexical aspect, namely, achievements, accomplishments and activities.

The Use of Future Tense by Distance

-- Different Groups

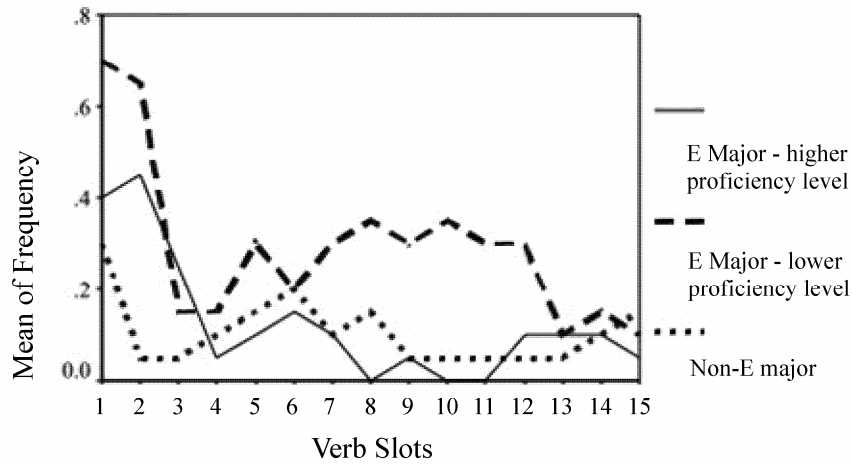


Figure 5 The Use of Future Tense by Distance among Different Groups

The Percentage of Lexical Aspect Accuracy

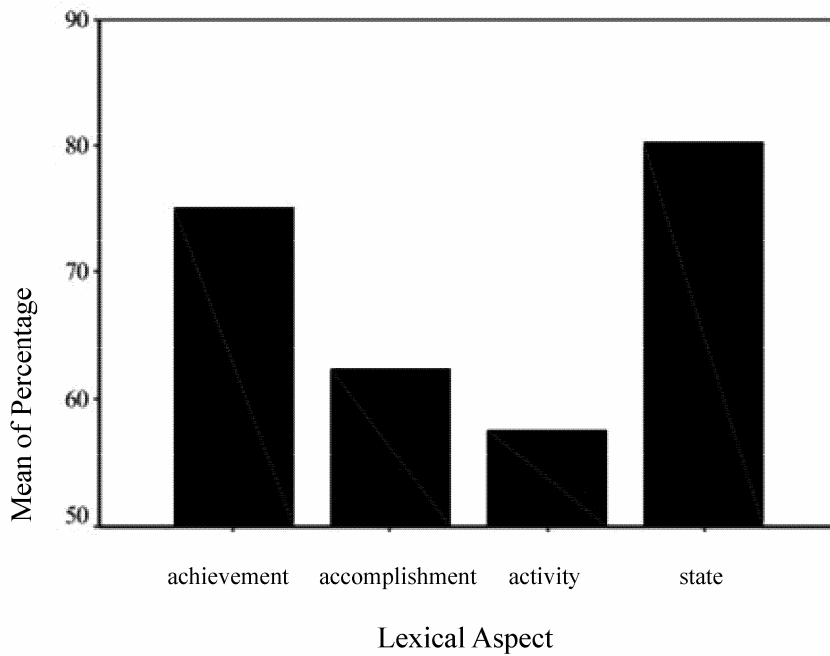


Figure 6 The Percentage of Lexical Aspect Accuracy

Within-group analyses showed that there were significant differences only in the group of English majors of higher proficiency level ($F(3, 92) = 24.572, p < .05$). The Scheffé Test indicated significant differences between achievements and accomplishments, achievements and activities, accomplishments and states, as well as activities and states.

As to between-group analyses, ANOVA revealed that there were group differences in achievements ($F(2, 63) = 7.288, p < .05$), activities ($F(2, 63) = 4.375, p < .05$) and states ($F(2, 63) = 4.506, p < .05$). The Scheffé Test indicated that the significant difference in achievements was between English majors of higher proficiency level and English majors of lower proficiency level as well as English majors of higher proficiency level and non-English majors; the significant difference in activities was between English majors of higher proficiency level and English majors of lower proficiency level; the significant difference in states was between English majors of higher proficiency level and non-English majors. Details of the use of grammatical aspect by groups was displayed in Figure 7.

This figure showed that English

majors of higher proficiency level tend to produce much more correct grammatical aspects when dealing with states and achievements than when tackling accomplishments and activities. By contrast, although it seems that there is a tendency of acquiring states first, achievements the second, followed by activities and accomplishments, English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors appear to encounter a difficulty in solving the interference among the four lexical aspects. In other words, English majors of higher proficiency level have been well aware that progressive forms do not align with achievements and states, whereas the other two groups have just begun to notice this point. Compared to English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors, the weaker connection between the use of grammatical aspect and two lexical aspects, accomplishments and activities, found in English majors of higher proficiency level illustrates that they are experiencing a learning process of establishing the association between the use of grammatical aspects and achievements vs. states, hence leaving and suppressing the acquisition of accomplishments and activities.

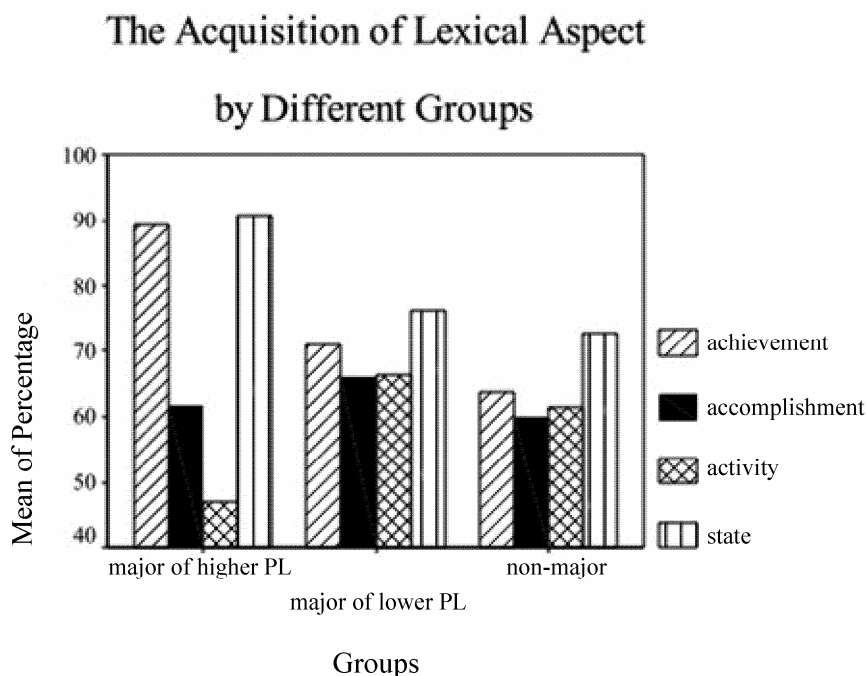


Figure 7 The Acquisition of Lexical Aspect by Different Groups

Regarding the errors of grammatical aspect used with lexical aspect, significant effects of groups on both progressive forms used in achievements ($F(2, 63) = 9.747, p < .05$) and those used in states ($F(2, 63) = 5.847, p < .05$) were found. The Scheffé Test indicated that non-English majors significantly use more progressive forms with achievement verbs than English majors of higher proficiency level. In addition, non-English majors also significantly use more progressive forms with state

verbs than both groups of English majors. Figure 8 further demonstrated the differences among the three groups.

In this study, how Mandarin facilitates learners' use of English grammatical aspect in terms of lexical aspect was also examined. More specifically, this study was also concerned with whether the translation of the achievement verbs and the state verbs in Mandarin helps learners' judgement on the choice of grammatical aspects. The results showed that 50% of learners who chose progres-

sive forms for achievement verbs tend to use base forms when the Mandarin translation with resultative construction are presented with the prompt verbs, while 42% who chose progressive forms for state verbs tend to use base forms when the prompt verbs are with Mandarin translation. The different percentages between these two lexical aspects might be attributable to the fact that state verbs in Mandarin do not show clear morpho-

logical construction as Mandarin achievement verbs do, namely, the resultative construction. This might also result from the different features the two lexical aspects carry; that is, achievement verbs are [+punctual], which entails that progressive forms are not possible, whereas state verbs are [-punctual], which does not provide a clue for making the judgement.

**The Percentage of Error Use of Lexical Aspects
by Different Groups**

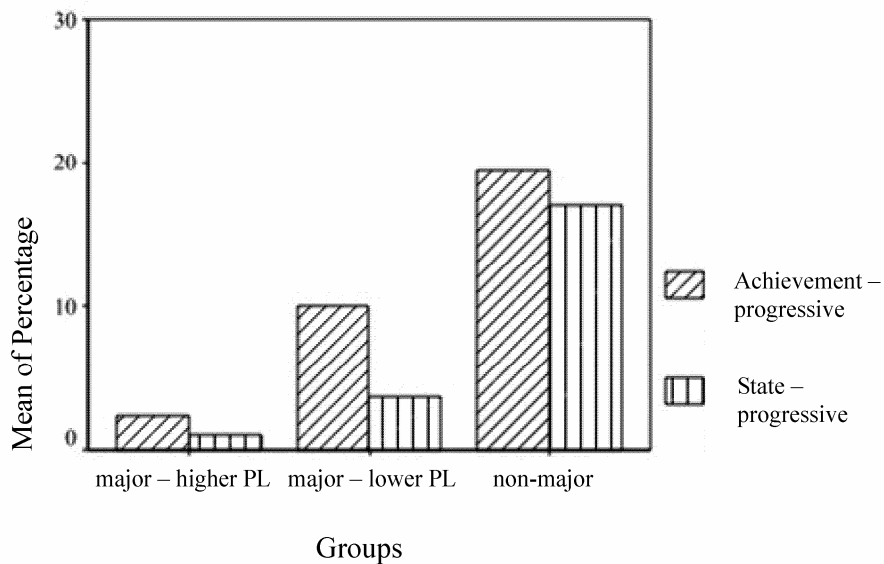


Figure 8 The Percentage of Error Use of Lexical Aspects by Different Groups

Qualitative data from the translation completed by the subjects brought out several interesting points relevant to learners cognitive process of deciding on the choice of grammatical aspects. Only a few subjects who were able to translate the achievement verbs into Mandarin with the resultative construction generated progressive forms. Most subjects who produced progressive forms aligned with achievements either did not know how to associate the prompt verbs with their native language or were only able to translate them into one character word, showing no grammatical aspect. The findings reflect that the low ability of selecting correct grammatical aspects might be due to the fact that learners do not learn target language based on their native language and have no knowledge of analyzing the analogies between the target and native languages.

Discussion

In this paper, we present the effects of future contexts on the use of future tense, the temporal frame continuity maintained by learners, the hierarchy of acquisition of the link between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect, the influences of different proficiency levels on the above items and how native language facilitate learners' use of English

grammatical aspect in terms of lexical aspect. Five chief findings are worth summarizing.

Firstly, learners of English are able to use correct future tense best when the verb is in syntactic contexts, followed by lexical and verbal contexts. The syntactic contexts designed in this study only include conditionals. Owing to the fact that the subordinate clauses are assumptions and contain present tense, which does not denote the past time, learners are more likely to choose future tense for the verbs in the main clauses. Lexical future contexts are the second helpful contexts for selecting future tense since they are very salient in informing learners about when the event takes place. The lexical future contexts designed in this study contain phrases or clauses such as *next month, this evening, tomorrow morning, when I graduate, by the time I see you tonight, when class is over, etc.* The reason for the lowest accuracy of using future tense in verbal contexts is the fact that they are rather unclear to convey the necessity of using future tense. The verbal contexts designed in this study comprise *want to, can/can't, going to, have to and won't.*

Secondly, Chinese learners of English tend to have difficulties in future temporal frame continuity. There is a

drop on the use of future tense at the beginning of the passage, and the use of future tense never exceeds 20%. On the other hand, learners tend to use present tense after the second verb slot, consistent with Hinkel's finding (1997). We interpret this to mean the influence of Mandarin because Mandarin is a language which carries present time if there is no temporal adverbial indicating the time frame. This is the reason why Chinese learners would use present tense when the temporal adverbial phrase is a bit far away from the verb slot they are coping with.

Thirdly, the acquisition hierarchy of the link between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect is states, achievements, accomplishments and activities. This partially confirms with Bardovi-Harlig's study (1998), in which she investigated the use of past tense to uncover the acquisition hierarchy of the lexical aspect, namely, achievements, accomplishments and activities. The more likely explanation of the result that state verbs are the best acquired rests in the nature of the fact that state verbs are seldom accompanied with progressive forms. In other words, learners only have to make a decision on whether to use base forms or perfect forms, and hence need less efforts to find the correct

grammatical aspect, compared to accomplishments and activities.

Fourthly, the effects of different proficiency levels on the distance between the temporal adverbial phrase and verb slots, as well as on the acquisition of grammatical aspect in terms of lexical aspect were found. Concerning the distance between the temporal adverbial phrase and verb slots, English majors of lower proficiency level tend to maintain future tense than the other two groups. This may attribute to their receiving 16-week grammar instruction; nevertheless, they have worse abilities in selecting correct grammatical aspects. We may reasonably conclude that future tense is easier to be acquired than grammatical aspects. Moreover, this study also showed that English majors of higher proficiency level tend to produce much more correct grammatical aspects when dealing with states and achievements than when tackling accomplishments and activities, while English majors of lower proficiency level and non-English majors appear to encounter a difficulty in solving the interference among the four lexical aspects. The English majors of higher proficiency level in this study are in fact still low-achievers³, compared to

³ All of them do not pass TOEFL 520.

students of other national universities. Therefore, we expect to see higher accuracy of the use of grammatical aspects in accomplishments and activities from advanced learners of English in future studies. However, the current study still shows that learners of English tend to acquire states and achievements earlier than accomplishments and activities.

Finally, Mandarin facilitates Chinese learners' use of English grammatical aspect in terms of lexical aspect. Since the so-called resultative construction in Mandarin belongs to achievements, the Mandarin translation accompanying with the prompt achievement verbs provide a great deal of help in selecting grammatical aspects. Although there is no such a special construction in state verbs in Mandarin, almost half of the learners who chose wrong grammatical aspects in the first questionnaire, namely, without Mandarin translation, made correct judgments in the second questionnaire, namely, with Mandarin translation. This indicates that learners of English could make better decisions in state verbs after their second thought. This further illuminates EFL teachers that bridging students' native language and target language by comparing and contrasting the two would help them learn the tense and aspect of the target

language.

Conclusion

On these grounds mentioned in previous section, we have arrived at five main conclusions. First of all, Chinese learners of English tend to rely on syntactic contexts much more than lexical and verb contexts to choose future tense. Next, Chinese learners of English produce no temporal frame continuity in future tense. Moreover, the use of grammatical aspects is closely associated with the type of lexical aspects. In addition, learners of different English proficiency levels tend to generate different temporal frame continuity and different accuracy degree of employing grammatical aspects. Finally, there is a positive influence of Mandarin on the English grammatical aspect acquisition. In this paper, the results support Bardovi-Harlig's (1998) and Hinkel's (1997) finding, sustain the aspect hypothesis and provide some fresh understanding of future tense and grammatical aspect.

Several pedagogical implications can be drawn from this study. The findings suggest that students should be instructed the importance of discourse. Teachers are recommended to supply their students with intersentential exercises rather than merely giving them in-

trasentential exercises. Besides, since grammatical aspects are closely related to the type of lexical aspects, and Mandarin translation helps Chinese learners of English acquire the ability of utilizing grammatical aspects, teachers are advised to lead their students to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between their native language and the target language. It would be better to tell the students that the translation in dictionaries may not denote the precise meaning of a verb in a sentence since the morphological constructions between Mandarin and English are not identical. Therefore, teachers may encourage their students to translate the particular sentence into Mandarin and reconsider whether the grammatical aspect they selected is compatible with the one in Mandarin. This may help students notice the relationship between grammatical aspects and lexical aspects, as well as help them recognize the different types of lexical aspects to some extent.

Even though this body of research has the undeniable merit of offering valuable insights into the tense and aspect acquisition, it has some limitations. Since the English majors of lower proficiency level had been receiving a semester grammar instruction before the study took place, their grammar ability

would definitely be improved. Further studies may recruit a group of English majors of lower proficiency level who are on the same footing with the group of English majors of higher proficiency level. Furthermore, the English majors of higher proficiency level in this study are still lower-achievers compared to most college students in Taiwan. Perhaps future research could examine the production of advanced learners and provide a more intact view of future tense and grammatical aspects acquisition. In addition, the sample of this study is subject to one university only, and hence, it may not be able to represent the overall situation in Taiwan. In pursuit of revealing a representative report of how Chinese learners of English handle the future tense and aspect, future studies are suggested to recruit subjects from universities in different areas of Taiwan.

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