



## **A Study of Tense-aspect Use in English Writing by Chinese EFL Learners from the Perspective of Markedness**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis aims to examine English tense-aspect use by Chinese EFL learners from the perspective of markedness. In the past few decades, applied linguists have conducted a number of studies on learners' English tense-aspect use from different perspectives. A general review of previous studies reveals that lexical aspect and verb saliency are the two most noteworthy factors that receive the most attention from researchers while other factors are rarely discussed. So further studies of learners' tense-aspect use need to be conducted from a distinctive perspective. The study reported in this thesis focuses on the effect of linguistic markedness on Chinese EFL learners' English tense-aspect use. Based on previous findings in this domain, four hypotheses for the present study are advanced and tested empirically.

A total of 50 freshmen students participated in the present study. Data were collected using a series of tasks: the instructed writing task, the grammaticality task and the post-writing questionnaire. Data obtained were also coded in terms of markedness. The coded results were analyzed by comparing means with T-test in order to determine whether learners' English tense-aspect use is influenced by markedness.

The results indicate a close link between markedness in English tense-aspect and learners' systematic variation in tense-aspect use. The findings are generally consistent with the four hypotheses proposed by the author except for the first prediction of Hypothesis Two. The first prediction is only partially corroborated in that simple past did occur more frequently than compound past but the occurrence of regular past as unmarked tense proved to be less frequent than that of irregular past as marked tense.

Finally, the present study provides both theoretical and pedagogical implications, enhancing more teachers and researchers' attention to and thinking of this area.