

MASTER'S THESIS

A study on the use of tense in English writing of Hong Kong form-five students

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**A STUDY ON THE USE OF TENSE IN
ENGLISH WRITING OF HONG KONG
FORM-FIVE STUDENTS**

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Abstract

English is important in Hong Kong. In the process of learning English, the students usually commit errors, especially in the use of tense.

The writer used the mid-term papers of some Form Five students as the data and examined the errors in using English tenses.

The study adopts a combination of three theories, namely, Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Richards's Non-Contrastive Approach with the objective to find out the sources of tense-related errors: either the influence of mother tongue (first language) or the influence of the target language (second language). Selinker's (2008) procedure in conducting error analysis was chosen as the methodology. The theory of classification by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) was used as the main theory to analyze errors. The errors committed by the students were categorized into four types: omission, addition, mis-formation and mis-ordering. For each category of errors, the sources of errors were analyzed.

In the analysis, the writer found that the most frequent type of error the students committed was mis-formation while errors of mis-ordering had the least number of tokens. This means that the students still did not master different forms of tenses in writing. The writer concluded that errors in the use of tense may be ascribed to intralingual interference. The complexities of rules in the target language impede the students' good mastery of some linguistic forms of the second language. Thus, the writer recommends the teachers and students pay more attention to the grammatical rules of English during teaching or acquiring a second language.

The writer hopes the findings may provide some information in improving English teaching and learning.

摘要

在香港，英語十分重要。在學習英語的過程中，學生通常都會犯上錯誤，特別在動詞的時態形式方面，錯誤更多。

作者以中五學生的期中考試試卷作資料，觀察中學生在英語作文中英語時態方面的錯誤。

本論文採用對比分析、錯誤分析和 Richards 的非對比方法等三個有關錯誤的理論，目的是找出香港中五學生英語動詞時態錯誤產生的源頭：是受到母語或是第二語言的影響？本論文使用的方法選用 Selinker (2008 年) 分析錯誤的程序。Dulay, Burt 和 Krashen (1982 年) 的錯誤分類理論是本論文分析錯誤的主要理論框架。學生的動詞時態錯誤被歸類為四類：喪失、添加、錯誤形成、排序。每一類錯誤都加以分析，以期得知動詞時態錯誤產生的源頭。

在分析中，作者找出了學生最容易出錯的地方是錯誤形成這一類，而排序錯誤的頻率最低，這表示學生在寫作中仍然未能完全掌握運用不同的時態。最後，作者總結學生在運用英語時態時產生錯誤，主要出自英語本身規律的複雜性，這種情況不利學生很好地掌握第二語言的形式。所以，作者建議教師及學生在教授或學習第二語言時要多些留意英語的語法規則。

作者希望這論文研究的結果，可以為提升英語的學與教方面提供一些意見。

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