A Study of Verb Errors Committed in Written English by Chinese College Students in Taiwan

LIXUE ZHUANG

Graduate Institute of Linguistics, National Tsinghua University

No. 101, Sec. 2, Kuang-Fu Rd., Hsinchu, Taiwan 30013, R.O.C.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to expand EFL learner knowledge of languages and to improve writing proficiency. Verbs often convey the main idea of a sentence, and are the soul of all sentences. Thus, verbs were considered a major category in this research. Verb errors constitute the highest proportions of all grammatical errors found in previous studies. However, previous studies have few discussions on verb voice errors and verb usage errors. This article investigates and analyzes Chinese EFL beginning and intermediate college student verb voice errors and verb usage errors. This article proposes using bilingual parallel corpora as a pedagogical solution accordingly. Empirical results prove that the method proposed is indeed effective. The findings of this study have potential to spread to teaching materials and especially to textbooks for foreign language writing.

Key Words: EFL English writing, error analysis, contrastive analysis, corpus linguistics

科大生英語寫作動詞錯誤分析與探究

莊麗雪

國立清華大學語言學研究所

30013 新竹市光復路二段 101 號

摘　要

英語寫作在英語教學領域裡扮演著一席重要的角色。動詞是一個句子的靈魂。因此本文以英語動詞作為研究的主要詞類，調查約 180 位中台灣的科技大學與技術學院學生英語動詞的知識及英語寫作動詞使用的困難。本文首先分析學生造句的錯誤，探究他們使用英語動詞瓶頸之根源。本文提議以對比分析的方法，利用雙語平行語料庫語料來彌補學生英語環境與語言知識的不足，並於最後驗證所建議的教學法效果顯著。

關鍵詞：英語寫作，錯誤分析，對比分析，語料庫語言學

I. INTRODUCTION

English writing plays a significant part in English teaching. Making errors in English writing is inevitable for EFL (English as a foreign language) Chinese learners of English. Errors could be valuable for teachers to know if learners have acquired what they need to know or where they may have difficulties in learning a language. Analyzing these errors provides teachers with information to feed into their teaching methods (Yang, 2006).

Verbs often convey the main idea of a sentence (Schuler, 2005). Verbs are the primary vehicle for describing events and expressing relations between entities. (Chklovski & Pantel, 2004). The verb is the soul of all the sentences. Thus verbs are taken as a major category in this research.

The previous studies such as Chen (1979), Chiang (1981), Huang (2001), and Yang (2006) indicate that tense errors comprise the highest proportions in Chinese EFL learners' verb errors. Besides tense errors, the verb errors discussed contain auxiliary errors, S-V agreement errors, participle errors, infinitive errors, gerund errors, and mood errors. The previous studies have fewer discussions on verb voice errors and verb usage errors. According to Crystal (1997, p.413), "Verb voice refers to a category used in the grammatical description of sentence or clause structure, primarily with reference to verbs, to express the way sentences may alter the relationship between the subject and object of a verb, without changing the meaning of the sentence. The main distinction is between active and passive ".

Three examples of voice errors listed in Yang (2006, p.75) are * *...most of them can't be come true...*(cf. …can't come true), * *We three are known...* (cf. We three know…), and * *…will not be come true…* (cf. …will not come true). Yang analyzed that "the students, using active voice more frequently, may know that sentences with active voice are easier, more direct, and economical than sentences with passive voice. However, it is worth bearing in mind that students may also avoid using passive voice because of less confidence and competence. This can be detected by giving them some exercise with passive voice." The results of this study, however, does not agree with the above statement.

Only two voice examples involving voice errors are found in Huang (2001, p.52) are * *The opportunity to speak English is depended on your braveness to create.* (cf. The opportunity to speak English depends on your braveness to create.) and * *These four skills should develop in a balanced way.* (cf. These four skills should be developed in a balanced way) Huang points out that the cause of the error in the first sentence is that the passive rule is misused; that in the latter

example is that the plural of the subject is not perceived. Both Yang (2006) and Huang (2001) suggest that teachers make use of the hierarchy of difficulty of errors to detect students' difficulty in English writing and to help them decide what should be taught and learned with more effort. In their studies, verb voice plays a minor role and receives less attention.

Nevertheless, in scientific writing, the validity of using the passive voice has been firmly established. Use of the passive voice is often preferred and frequently necessary to accurately report scientific research results. (Fujii, 2008; Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990) Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, p.344) report that learning when to use the English passive presents the greatest long-term challenge to students who use English as a second language (ESL students).

Base is one of the English verbs frequently used in the passive voice (Hinkel, 2004, p.166) and is therefore taken as a representative to be surveyed in the posttest of this study. The results show that the distinctions of using verb voices between Chinese and English are due to different cultural conventions rather than avoiding strategy. Together with verb usage, results show that effects of applying the method proposed by this paper are positive.

As noted by Lee and Liu (2009, p.214), "Lexical misuse has been a tenacious problem for generations of L2 learners. Most L2 learners are unaware of the subtle semantic distinctions among near-synonyms." Their study only chooses *affect* and *influence* as representative near-synonyms without any example sentences.

Common Mistakes of Chinese Students in English Usage (Canning, 1986) is designed as a guide to English written especially for the Chinese. It has more systematic coverage and discussions on verb voices and usage. Wherein verb errors such as *belong, die, happen, look, seem, concern, suit, interest, fill, advise, choose, complain, contain, succeed*…etc can also be found in the *ABC of Common Grammatical Errors* (Turton, 1995), whose main purpose is to provide intermediate and advanced learners of English as a second or foreign language with easy access to the information they need in order to correct their grammatical errors. The Chinese learners' verb error patterns in Canning (1986) are adopted as a starting point for the pretest of this research. Based on pedagogical contrastive analysis (CA), this paper proposes using bilingual parallel corpora as a pedagogical solution and accordingly designs a posttest to prove that this method is a valid method.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section II reviews classical contrastive analysis (CA), pedagogical contrastive analysis (CA), creative construction (CC), contrastive rhetoric (CR), and error analysis (EA). Section III

describes the methods of the study. Section IV presents the results, discusses the error causes, and describes findings from the posttest. This paper will provide pedagogical implications and end with a summary of conclusions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Two main schools, contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA), focus on the research of learners' errors.

A great number of classical contrastive analysis research was conducted in the 1960s. Theoretically, classical CA has both psychological and linguistic aspects in terms of its goal and means (Chen, 2006, p.7). Based on behaviorist learning theories of SLA, classical CA proponents emphasize the idea of difficulty and claim that learning difficulty could be predicted by linguistic differences (Lado, 1957, p.2; Weinreich, 1953, p.10). Classical CA derives its linguistic aspect primarily from structural linguists, such as Bloomfield (1933), who subscribes to behaviorist accounts of linguistic competence as a series of habits.

However, classical CA gradually declined in the 1970s. Empirical research shows that (1) many errors predicted by classical CA do not actually occur (e.g. Dulay & Burt, 1974), that (2) many errors which do occur are not anticipated by classical CA (e.g. Hyltenstam, 1977), and that (3) many errors are not due to crosslinguistic influence (e.g. Dulay & Burt, 1972; Chau, 1975). As has been pointed out by L2 researchers (Ellis, 1985; Danei & Di Pietro, 1991), difference is a linguistic concept, whereas difficulty is a psychological concept. Hence, it has been argued that the level of difficulty experienced by learners could not be inferred directly from linguistic differences between the L1 and the L2. The linguistic grounds of classical CA are also challenged. Chomsky (1959) argues that language acquisition is viewed not as a product of habit formation, but as one of rule formation.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, L2 learners are seen as gradually creating the rules of the TL in a manner very similar to children acquiring their NL. This theoretical perspective is termed the minimalist-mentalist-universalist view of Creative Construction (CC), defined by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). In contrast to the behaviorist view of classical CA which emphasizes habit formation, Dulay, Burt and Krashen see SLA as a process which involves the creative construction of L2 learners' innate mental mechanisms, and as an autonomous system which does not include transfer (either positive or negative) from the L1 or comparison with the L1.

However, by minimizing the role of the environment, CC ignores the important relationship between the learners' internal mechanisms and the external input of their linguistic environment (Bruner, 1986; Piaget, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, it has been recognized that NL influence and the developmental sequence are not necessarily two conflicting processes (Gass, 1983). NL influence is still an important factor in SLA, although others factors may also be involved (i.e. developmental errors from IL) (Chen, 2006, p.40).

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) is first proposed by Kaplan (1966). CR has two theoretical perspectives with respect to language learning and language use, that is, the structuralist-behaviorist notion of learning psychology and the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic relativity (Chen, 2006, p.26). Similar to classical CA, CR views crosslinguistic influence as negative transfer or interference (Grabe & Kaplan, 1989, p.265-266). CR focuses on the structural analysis of the similarities or differences between L1-L2 texts. As remarked by Grabe and Kaplan (p.164), "Different languages have different rhetorical preferences in textual organization – preferences reflected in syntactic and other textual differences." However, the major theoretical flaw of linguistic relativity is to equate linguistic differences with non-linguistic factors such as cognitive orientation (Carroll, 1999; Hymes, 1972). Moreover, Kaplan's original research method lacks control for ESL proficiency (Hinds, 1983). It is inappropriate to use L2 writing to describe L1 rhetoric (Mohan & Lo, 1985, p.521).

Error Analysis, first proposed by Corder (1967), aims to analyze errors actually committed by learners in order to get a better understanding of the process of second language acquisition. Unlike classical CA, EA shows that not all systematic errors made by the learner can be attributed to the interference from learner's first language, but suggests that the learners' learning strategies are the main causes of errors, such as transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, avoidance, and overproduction. It is generally agreed that error analysis can help the teachers or students gain an understanding of the nature, distribution, and the frequency of error types (Chen, 1979; Chiang, 1981; Wu, 1978). By using EA, language teachers not only can understand the nature of learners' errors, but also can develop a syllabus of second language teaching. As Lightbown and Spada (1993, p.114) note, "the errors reveal the patterns of learners' developing interlanguage systems – showing where they have overgeneralized an L2 rule or where they have inappropriately transferred an L1 rule to the L2" .

Selinker (1972) proposed the theory of interlanguage, noting that in a given situation the utterances produced by the learner are different from those native speakers would produce had they attempted to convey the same meaning. This comparison reveals a separate linguistic system. This system can be observed when studying the utterances of the learners

who attempt to produce a target language norm. Those utterances can be observed to be variable across different contexts; that is, interlanguage becomes more or less target-like when produced in different social contexts (Selinker & Douglas, 1985; Tarone, 1979).

Contrastive analysis (CA) is a central and substantial component of applied linguistics and its aim is to provide insights and have implications for second language pedagogy (James, 1980). Danesi and Di Pietro (1991) propose a "staged" version of CA, which they claim is most useful during the early stages of SLA as a tool for programming teaching strategies. They suggest that CA can even be regarded as a pure methodology without adopting any language theory, since it can be readily integrated into any model of language structure and use. James notes that CA is always predictive if it is to be intended as a useful tool for second language pedagogy. CA has long been a part of second language pedagogy (Odlin, 1989). The contribution of CA in language pedagogy is to provide the optimal selection and graduation of the TL structures in a pedagogical grammar or developing textbooks (Marmaridou, 1991).

"Two approaches that go particularly well together are Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA)" Gilquin (2001, p.95). Gilquin shows how the approach of CA can be combined with that of CIA in what has been called the Integrated Contrastive Model (Granger, 1996). Through the illustration of English and French causative constructions, it is demonstrated that corpus contrastive data can help explain some of the characteristics of learners' interlanguage and thus throw new light on the key notion of transfer, which emerges as a more complex phenomenon than was traditionally assumed.

The standard practice of CA is to compare the formal features of translationally paired sentences (Stockwell & Bowen, 1965, p.182). James (1980) argues that for two sentences from different languages to be truly translationally equivalent, CA ought to equate L1 and L2 forms which are both semantically and pragmatically equivalent, no matter how far they differ superficially. As Fries (1945, p.9) notes, "The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner."

Traditional translation method in teaching writing would not be recommended (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; George, 1972) for it only strengthens the students' reliance on L1 structures. The data of bilingual parallel corpora are not only used for translation method, but also for contrastive analysis.

The use of corpora has been increasingly common in various fields of applied linguistics. The results of corpus linguistics have spread from dictionaries to the grammatical description of English (Mindt, 1996). This new trend has made a significant impact on the nature of SLA research and English language teaching. Corpus-based language teaching materials and resources have become increasingly popular (Tono, 2009). CA and EA should be viewed as complementary components (James, 1994; Tsao, 1993). EA does not predict but describes and classifies the actual errors made by learners. EA shows the development of language learning. CA gives explanation for some features of interlanguage (IL) by comparing L1 with L2 (James).

In this paper, both CA and EA approaches will be adopted to conduct the research. In the pretest, EA is used to investigate and analyze the error patterns committed by the subjects. In the posttest, the data of bilingual parallel corpora as a basis for a range of comparisons between English and Chinese are used for CA.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Participants involved in this study are four classes of EFL college students in middle Taiwan as shown in Table 1. Two classes, IM1 (sophomores) and IM2 (freshmen), are from the Department of Information Management (資管系) at National Taichung Institute of Technology. The other two classes, 98MB1 and 98MB2, are from the Department of Industrial Engineering & Management (工業工程與管理系)、Department of Business Administration (企管系)、Department of Information Management (資訊管理系)、Department of Distribution Management (流通管理系)、Department of Landscape Architecture (景觀系)、Department of Leisure Industry Management (休閒產業管理系)、Department of Cultural & Creative Industries (文化創意事業系) at National Chin-Yi University of Technology.

These college students took the researcher's English courses in fall of 2009 and in spring of 2010. All the subjects have at least 6-year experiences in English learning during their junior, senior high school studies. 52 out of 114 students of the two classes, 98MB1 and 98MB2, passed the Elementary Level General English Proficiency Tests (GEPT). Approximately one third of the total subjects of this study are intermediate learners, the others are beginning learners.

Table 1. Student numbers of the pretest and posttest

	IM1	IM2	MB1	MB2	Total
pretest	32	39	55	54	180
posttest	25	38	56	50	169

2. Survey Procedures

A. The Pretest

The purpose of the pretest survey is to observe students' intuition and knowledge about the English verb voices and usage on the basis of Canning (1986).

In part I, the subjects were invited to judge if the sentences in the survey form designed by the researcher herself (See Appendix A) are grammatical. If not, they could circle where they felt weird and correct them. In part II, they were invited to judge if the five English verbs such as *belong, happen, look, occur, seem,* can be used in the passive. If yes, have them try to intuitively make a sentence each with Chinese equivalent. The purpose of Chinese equivalent is to identify what they actually wrote and what they intended to express. In part III, they were invited to select one word from each pair to intuitively make a sentence each with Chinese equivalent as well. The survey took about fifty minutes during class time. After the data are collected, the procedures EA, i.e. identifying errors, describing errors, classifying errors, counting errors, and interpreting errors are conducted in turn.

B. The Posttest

In this paper, using bilingual parallel corpora is regarded as a pedagogical solution. Bilingual parallel corpora used are Sinorama and Hong Kong Laws. *Taiwan Panorama* magazine (台灣光華雜誌, formerly *Sinorama* magazine) is a national magazine published by the Government Information Office (http://sinorama.com.tw/). The magazine was founded in 1976 as a Chinese-English monthly. To ensure the accuracy of the magazine's content, they also hired an information editor whose sole responsibility is checking their facts. To provide their readers with the most full and accurate translations for their bilingual layout, each article is translated into English by native speakers as well-versed in Chinese as they are in English. Information about the entries of this article of Sinorama 1990-2000 is available at http://candle.fl.nthu.edu.tw/totalrecall/.

Hong Kong Laws Corpus (i.e., Record of HK Legislative Council, http://candle.fl.nthu.edu.tw/totalrecall/) FTP publication was obtained during January 1999 from the bilingual website of the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China. The retrieved files have been processed and sentence aligned. This corpus is organized into 19 parallel file pairs for a total of 38 files. There are 313,659 sentences in the corpus. Some of both Corpus data are selected as example sentences in the posttest survey form designed by the researcher herself (See Appendix C).

In part I, the subjects were invited to read the bilingual sentence pairs in the posttest survey form and choose a correct answer accordingly. In part II, after identifying verb/noun pairs such as advise/advice and choose/choice, they were invited to choose a correct form to fill in the blanks. In part III, they were invited to compare the bilingual sentence pairs and make a sentence with *base* accordingly. Finally, the effects of the posttest will be evaluated.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Pretest

A. Active/ Passive Voice

Table 2 shows that the percentage of the subjects who think that the intransitive verbs such as *exist, happen, die, look, belong, occur, seem*, can be made passive. It also shows that the percentage of the subjects who do not use the passive when the verbs such as *determine, concern, suit, fill, promote, interest* should be used. The verbs are ordered according to the frequency of their occurrence of errors.

Tables 2 presents that students make a great deal of errors in the active/passive voices. Around 60% of them made the intransitive verbs such as *exist, happen, die, look* passive. Nevertheless, around 70% - 80% of them do not use the passive when the verbs such as *suit, concern, determine, fill* should be used passive.

B. Preposition Collocations and Near-synonyms

Students put a preposition "*of* " together with a verb " *lack* " which does not take preposition in English. However, students miss a preposition "*for* " for the verb " *prepare* ". Table 3 shows the percentage of the subjects who misuse the prepositions and near-synonyms such as *raise, rise, realize, and agree*.

Table 3 indicates that 83 % of them miss a preposition *for* for verb *prepare*. Around 60% -70 % of them misuse the near-synonyms such as *rise/raise*, and *agree/realize*.

Table 2. Percentage of Verb Voice Errors

Passive Errors		Active Errors	
Verbs	Percentage (%)	Verbs	Percentage (%)
exist	67.78	determine	80.56
happen	60.56	concern	80.00
die	59.44	fill	72.78
look	58.33	suit	70.56
belong	34.44	promote	28.33
occur	26.67	interest	17.22
seem	13.33		

Table 3. Percentage of Preposition Errors and Near-synonym Errors

Verbs	prepare	rise	agree	realize	lack	raise
Percentage (%)	83.33	70.56	61.11	60.00	51.67	41.11

C. Commonly Confused Verb/Noun Pairs

A "*" in front of a number indicates that this word is used incorrectly. Table 4 shows the percentage of the subjects who confuse the verb/noun pairs. Table 5 shows the percentage of the subjects who treat words such as *respond* and *succeed* as adjectives.

Tables 4 and 5 show that 61% students tend to select verbs to make a sentence, 32 % of them select nouns. Furthermore, 14% of them treat nouns as verbs; 18.8% of them treat verbs as nouns. Around 20% of them treat *succeed* and *success* as adjectives.

D. Error Causes

First, consider the ungrammatical sentences listed in Appendix B.3 made by students. As to verb/noun alternatives, they simply confuse the verb form and the noun form such as *advise/advice*. If we switch the alternatives, the whole sentence is almost getting grammatical.

Next, consider the ungrammatical sentences listed in Appendix B .1 made by students. *Lack* has identical noun form and verb form. In (1), students confuse its noun usage and verb

Table 5. Words which students treat as adjectives

	7. respond	7. respond	8. succeed	8. succeed
Total	*5	*7	*34	*43
Percentage (%)	2.78	3.89	18.89	23.89

usage. In (2), students misuse the adjective *full*. In (3), students confuse *died* and *dead*. In (4), students misuse the near-synonyms such as *rise/raise*.

(1) *I have **lack** of time to do this work. (cf. I lack time to do this work.)

(2) *Life **full** of danger.
(cf. Life is full of danger. or Life is filled with danger.)

(3) *More than ten people were **died** in the fire.
(cf. More than ten people died in the fire. or More than ten people were dead in the fire.)

(4) *The sun **raises** in the sky. (cf. The sun rises in the sky.)

Ungrammatical examples in (5)-(7) show that students do not understand the English passive expressions. In (5), a problem *concerns* a person; a person *is concerned* about a problem. In (6), something *suits* someone; someone *is suited* for something. In (7), a boss *promotes* an employee; an employee *is promoted* by the boss.

(5) *I am not **concern** about that problem. (cf. I am not concerned about that problem.)

(6) *Susan is not **suit** for this job. (cf. Susan is not suited for this job.)

(7) *Jenny hopes to **promote** to manager next month. (cf.

Table 4. Words which students treat as verbs/nouns

Words	which students treat as verbs			which students treat as nouns		
	Total		Percentage %	Total		Percentage %
1. advise		40	22.22	*28		15.56
1. advice	*12		6.67		91	50.56
2. choose		83	46.11	*13		7.22
2. choice	*14		7.78		69	38.33
3. complain		155	86.11	*8		4.44
3. complaint	*10		5.56		8	4.44
4. contain		120	66.67	*3		1.67
4. content	*8		4.45		46	25.56
5. notify		19	10.56	*3		1.67
5. notice		135	75.00		22	12.22
6. prove		115	63.89	*11		6.11
6. proof	*15		8.33		39	21.67
7. respond		84	46.67	* 9		5.00
7. response	*39		21.67		34	18.89
8. succeed		25	13.89	*5		2.78
8. success	*44		24.44		29	16.11
9. suggest		76	42.22	*18		10.00
9. suggestion		0	0.00		86	47.78
	*142 / 994		14.28	*98 / 522		18.77

Jenny hopes to be promoted to manager next month.)

The ungrammatical examples in (8)-(9) from Appendix B.2 are results of the overgeneralization of the English passive rule.

(8) *The house was ***belonged*** to the farmer. '這個房子過去是屬於這個農夫。'

(cf. The house belonged to the farmer.)

(9) *The accident was ***happened*** by the drunk. '意外被一位喝醉者發生。'

(cf. The accident was caused by the drunk.)

As observed by Yang (2006, p.108-109), "In general, in Taiwan the participants tend to translate their notions directly from Chinese into English when composing writings….many erroneous Chinese-laden expressions could be made without considering the basic difference between two languages." The researcher interviewed the subjects about the process of sentence-making in the pretest and found out that they indeed think in the first language when composing writings and then translate the ideas into the foreign language.

To sum up, most of the above errors, such as confusing the verb/noun alternatives of *advise/advice,* confusing the usage of *lack*, *died* /*dead,* misusing *full, rise/raise,* unaware of the passive expressions of *concern, suit, promote* ,and applying overgeneralization of the English passive rule of *belong & happen*, can be attributed to students' insufficient knowledge of English.

2. The Posttest

A. Test Scores

Data of bilingual parallel corpora of Sinorama and Hong Kong Laws are displayed in the posttest survey form (See Appendix C). The test was taken in a self-learning context. Table 6 shows that the subjects got a satisfactory score on the verb voices and usage. Table 7 reveals that subjects have made great progress in the verb/noun pairs.

Table 6. Overall test score of verb voice & usage in part I of the posttest

Verbs	Total	Percentage %
Q1: suit	140	82.84
Q2: determine	157	92.90
Q3: fill	164	97.04
Q4: exist	153	90.53
Q5: happen	162	95.86
Q6: lack	166	98.22
Q7: prepare	161	95.27
Q8: die	146	86.39
Q9: realize	129	76.33

Table 7. Overall test score of verb/noun pairs in part II of the posttest

	Total	Percentage %
Q1: advise/advice	165	97.63
Q2: choose/choice	152	89.94

Results prove that authentic bilingual sentence pairs can make up for EFL learners' scant exposure to English and their incomplete linguistic knowledge of the verb voices, usage, and verb/noun pairs to help them choose the correct answers.

B. Evaluation of Learning Effects

The total scores of the pretest and posttest are listed in Table 8 for comparison. The paired t-test was run to see if there are any statistically significant differences between the pretest total scores and posttest total scores.

Table 9 shows that a significant difference between students' scores of the pretest and that of the posttest is revealed (p=.000<.05). It indicates that explicit verb voice and usage instruction via bilingual parallel corpora data has positive effects. After being instructed, students' overall verb voice and usage knowledge has increased to reach statistical significance.

C. Passive Voice: a Case Study of Verb BASE

As mentioned above, *base* is one of the words in English which frequently appear in passive voice and is regarded as a representative in this study. The bilingual paired sentence examples drawn from the bilingual parallel corpora in question show that verb *base/based* has several similar Chinese equivalent translations such as "*以..爲基礎,以..爲本,以..爲主,基於,本著,根據...etc*".

After comparing the bilingual sentence pairs listed in the part III of the posttest survey, over 94% of the subjects can detect the difference of active/passive voice between the Chinese and English sentence pairs as shown in Table 10.

In spite of the English passive construction, modern Chinese passive marker "*bei* (被)" is hardly found in its paired Chinese sentences. Corpora data present that Chinese language tends to express verb *base* with active voice that is different from English language.

In the ancient Chinese passive constructions, preposition "*yu* (於)" is an important marker. In the pattern "transitive verb + yu + agentive object", "*yu* (於)" takes an agentive object as shown in (10)(Zhang & Zhang, 2003, p.243).

(10) 陳、蔡亡於楚。(戰國策, 西周)

'Chen and Cai were destroyed by Chu. '

The objects of "*yu*" (於) of examples listed in the part III of the posttest survey form are not agents, so they are not such cases. In which "*ji* (基於)" is likely a compound word because it shows no difference in active-passive alternations. In

Table 8. The pretest scores and posttest scores

Active expressions (Intransitive verbs)			Passive expressions		
verbs	pretest score	posttest score	verbs	pretest score	posttest score
exist	36.6	90.53	suit	29.4	82.84
happen	39.4	95.86	determine	19.4	92.90
die	40.5	86.39	fill	27.2	97.04
Preposition and Near-synonym			Verb/noun pairs		
verbs	pretest score	posttest score	Verbs/Nouns	pretest score	posttest score
lack	48.3	98.22	advise	22.22	97.63
prepare	16.6	95.27	advice	50.56	97.63
realize	40.0	76.33	choose	46.11	89.94
			choice	38.33	89.94

Table 9. Results of the paired t-test for comparison of pretest scores and posttest scores

Active expressions (Intransitive verbs)						
	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Df	Sig.
pretest score	3	38.83	2.01	-16.348	2	.004
posttest score	3	90.92	4.75			*p<.05
Passive expressions						
	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Df	Sig.
pretest score	3	25.33	5.25	-10.635	2	.009
posttest score	3	90.93	7.30			*p<.05
Preposition and Near-synonym						
	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Df	Sig.
pretest score	3	34.97	16.44	-4.405	2	.048
Posttest score	3	89.94	11.88			*p<.05
Verb/Noun pairs						
	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Df	Sig.
pretest score	4	39.31	12.46	-7.612	3	.005
posttest score	4	93.79	4.44			*p<.05

Table 10. Percentage of detecting BASE difference between Chinese and English in part III of the posttest

	IM1	IM2	MB1	MB2	Total	Percentage
BASE Difference	24	36	52	48	160	94.67%

addition, "*gen ju* (根據)" occurs in active voice in Chinese.

Similarly, in spite of the English passive constructions of verb *suit, determine, fill*, modern Chinese passive marker "*bei* (被)" is also hardly found in their paired Chinese sentences. Chinese language tends to express these verbs with active voice as well.

The differences of expressing with active/passive voice between Chinese and English are presented in the numerous bilingual paired sentences. The evidence reveals that different cultural expressing conventions exist. In other words, the preference for the use of the active-passive voice between English and Chinese is different.

Reconsider the statement analyzed by Yang (2006, p.75) , "the students, using active voice more frequently, may know that sentences with active voice are easier, more direct, and economical than sentence with passive voice. However, it is worth bearing in mind that students may also avoid using passive voice because of less confidence and competence. This can be detected by giving them some exercise with passive voice." That Chinese learners use active voice more frequently than passive voice in their English compositions is not due to avoiding learning strategy, rather due to different Chinese and English cultural expressing conventions.

The researcher observed the process of the subjects' sentence pairs making in the part III of the posttest and found out that the subjects of this study are capable of consulting the

corpora data and immediately making an English sentence in passive voice. Then they think in a while and translate their sentence into Chinese in active voice. This implies that different cultural expressing conventions can be self-learned via bilingual parallel corpora data. In other words, the findings of this study have potential to spread to teaching materials and especially textbooks for foreign language writing.

D. Usefulness

The subjects' perception of the usefulness of the bilingual sentence pairs in the posttest survey form seems to be consistent with the test scores. Table 11 indicates that almost all the subjects perceived the corpora data as useful information in the distinctions of verb voice, usage, and verb/noun pairs.

V. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Knowing the meaning of a word is knowing how to use it within real contexts. The key achievement in word meaning is knowing where the word fits within its own meaning system and being able to use it (Corson, 1997). Large corpora can provide authentic examples for all aspects of language study (Sinclair, 1991). 'Usage cannot be thought up – it can only occur' (Sinclair, 1984, p.3).

Section IV.2.C finds out that the preference for the use of the active-passive voice between English and Chinese is different. Chinese language tends to express verbs such as *base, concern, suit, interest, fill* with active voice that is different from English language. This is one of major factors that cause Chinese EFL learners to commit errors in the verb voices of English.

The learners are not always aware of the principles that govern the choice of voice in Chinese-English translation. How can teachers help learners grasp this elusive concept?

Evidence shows that learners are capable of coming to understand the principles from looking at practical bilingual paired sentence examples. It is proposed that the learners make a number of observations on how verbs are used in the corpus first and then categorize these observations into groups of concepts or patterns. The framework is structured so that learners will be able to receive basic vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills, then move on to observing and analyzing such principles as voice asymmetry. It must be explained to learners

Table 11. Percentage of Usefulness

	Total	Percentage (%)
Verb Usage	169	100
Verb/Noun Pairs	168	99.41
BASE	166	98.22

that the notion of grammatical relations that plays a significant role in determining the choice of syntactic voice in Chinese-English translation. Other cases of intransitive verbs, collocations, near-synonyms listed in sections IV.1.A- IV.1.C can follow up the procedures.

Finally, have students make sentences with the target word to let teachers know for sure if students know the word and are able to use it. Step by step, help students' writing development from sentences, paragraphs, to an article. Such explicit vocabulary lessons for the EFL learners helps promoting efficient vocabulary and grammar learning and composition writing.

VI. CONCLUSION

The main finding of this study is that empirical results prove that using bilingual parallel corpora data proposed as a pedagogical solution is a valid method.

Error analysis conducted in this study indicates that most of the verb voice and usage errors made by subjects are due to EFL learners' insufficient knowledge of English. Results show that large bilingual parallel corpora can provide learners with complete bilingual authentic examples to help them to know how a word is used within real contexts so as to reduce the errors. The pedagogical implications suggested enable EFL learners to expand their knowledge of languages and improve their writing proficiency. In addition, as mentioned in section IV.2.C3, different cultural expressing conventions can be self-learned via bilingual parallel corpora data. Thus the findings of this study have potential to spread to teaching materials and especially textbooks for foreign language writing. Since the subjects of this study are beginning and intermediate EFL learners, the findings of this study can be generalized to low-intermediate Chinese college students of English in Taiwan.

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