非英语专业学生英文写作语篇错误分析

摘 要

写作是外语学习的四大基本语言技能之一。近几年来，英语写作越来越受到广大学者们的热切关注。人们通过各种途径，从不同的角度对我国大学 EFL 写作学习、教学的方法和效果进行大量的研究。不同的研究结果表明目前中国非英语专业大学生的英语写作能力还是处在较低的水平，他们在语篇层面上的写作能力尤其欠佳。这主要是我国以成果教学法为主的传统英语写作教学模式过多强调词法和句法层面的知识而忽略了对语篇层面的关注，从而导致学生语篇层面上的写作能力欠缺。学生的英语写作即使没有严重的语法错误，整篇文章却词不达意，语意不连贯，这主要是由语篇错误引起的。语篇分析理论为英语写作教学开辟了新的视野。作为一门新兴学科，语篇分析研究对象主要是句子层面之上的语言的使用和构建。将语篇分析中的理论如篇章结构、衔接和连贯等运用到英语写作教学中可以在很大程度上促进学生英语写作能力的提高。

许多英语教师以及科研人员对大学生英语写作中所出现的语篇错误和问题进行的研究大多局限于理论研究以及以定性研究为主的实证研究，以定量为主或以定量与定性研究相结合的研究比较缺乏。此外，在研究受试上，人们很少将写作能力优秀者与写作能力欠佳者进行区分性研究，从而不能很好的说明这两个不同写作水平群体在 EFL 写作语篇能力和语篇错误上的异同。针对这一现状，本研究主要围绕以下四个方面进行：

1）国内中等院校非英语专业大学生 EFL 写作语篇能力的状况如何？2）国内中等院校非英语专业大学生在 EFL 写作中的主要语篇错误有哪些？3）大学英语写作成绩优秀者与写作成绩欠佳者的语篇错误有何不同之处？4）导致大学英语写作语篇错误的主要原因有哪些？

研究以青岛理工大学和湖州师范学院非英语专业二年级四个班学生所撰写的八十篇作文为语料，从微观的语篇连贯与衔接和宏观的篇章结构方面进行语篇错误分析。分析结果表明我国大学生 EFL 作文的语篇错误数量还是比较多。英语

写作成绩优秀者与英语写作成绩欠佳者的作文在语篇分析的宏观方面和微观方面的错误都有显著的差异。导致学生写作语篇错误产生的主要原因除了汉、英民族不同的思维模式差异的影响以及学生缺乏必要的语法知识和语言能力外，还主要包括传统英语写作教学对学生语篇能力培养的忽视和缺失上。因此，大学英语写作教学必须着眼于语篇的整体教学，通过对优秀范文的阅读和分析，提高学生的对语篇分析的认知和意识；更多的关注学生的英语写作语篇错误；通过存在语篇错误篇章的重组练习提高学生的语篇分析能力；并通过进行英汉经典篇章互译，对比英汉语篇模式上的差距等各种有效的教学途径和方式来提高学生语篇分析能力，减少 EFL 写作中的语篇错误。

　　论文共分六个主要部分。首先是研究背景、研究的目的和意义的描述。第二章是对相关文献的回顾，主要探讨了语篇分析和错误分析的相关理论知识，并对已有的相关研究进行述评。第三章是研究的设计，介绍了研究的目的、受试、调查工具及数据收集等方面。第四章是对数据进行具体分析，并探究语篇错误产生的主要原因，是论文的中心部分。第五章提出了语篇错误分析的结果对大学英语写作教学的一些启示。最后一章是结论部分，回顾和总结了研究过程，指出了研究存在的不足并提出了促进相关研究的一些建议。

关键词：英文写作；非英语专业；语篇分析；错误分析；启示

An Analysis of Discourse Errors in Non-English Major Students' EFL Writings

Abstract

Writing is one of the four fundamental skills of foreign language learning. In recent years, English writing has been causing an increasingly concern by many researchers. Through all kinds of approaches, people have conducted a lot of studies on China's college students' EFL writing and teaching method as well as its effect from various aspects. Results of different researches indicate that many college students' English writing performance is still at a low level, especially, their discourse deficiency stands out. It is obvious that the traditional product-oriented EFL writing approach fails to solve such kinds of problems because it lays overemphasis on the aspects of lexicon and syntax, which leads to students' insufficient writing competence at discourse level. It is common that students' English writings, even those without serious grammatical errors or misspellings, impress on readers incoherence and illogicality, which mainly result from the errors at the discourse level. Discourse analysis theories bring new insights into the teaching of EFL writing. As a new branch of learning, the aims of the studies on discourse analysis is the structure and function of language in use, therefore, many theories such as discourse patterns, cohesion and coherence can be applied to EFL writing teaching so as to make great contribution to the enhancement of students' EFL writing competence.

Many English teachers and researchers have made a lot of studies on the problems or errors made by the college students in their EFL writings, but their studies are restricted in theoretical research or just based on qualitative empirical study, empirical studies that are based on quantitative research or combining quantitative and qualitative research are relatively rare. In addition, on the aspect of subjects, the previous researches seldom distinguish the successful writers form the poor ones, thus they can not account clearly for the differences of discourse

competence and errors in EFL writings of these two different writing level groups. In the light of this situation, the present study will be carried out mainly from the four aspects below:

1) What is the situation of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing proficiency at discourse level? 2) What are the main errors of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing at discourse level? 3) What are the major differences of errors at discourse level in EFL writing between successful and unsuccessful student writers? 4) What are the major causes for the errors?

The samples involved in the thesis are 80 pieces of EFL writings by 80 sophomores in four different classes of Qingdao Technological University and Huzhou Teacher College. The errors concerning discourse are identified at both micro-level and macro-level. The micro-level refers to the cohesion errors and the macro-level the text structure errors. The results of the analysis indicate that there are relatively abundant errors or problems in Chinese students' EFL writings. There are significant differences on discourse errors between successful writers' writings and unsuccessful writers' writings on both macro-level and micro-level. The major reasons that cause discourse errors in students' writings include different thought patterns of the nations of English and Chinese, students' insufficient of linguistic competence, and the lacking and neglect of culturing students' discourse competence in writing teaching.

So college English writing teaching must be aiming at the whole discourse of a composition. Teaching measures include strengthening students' cognition and awareness of discourse analysis by reading and analyzing of model texts; paying more attention to discourse problems in writing checking; practicing reorganization of a scrambled text or paragraph; doing Chinese-English translation and comparing the differences of the two languages' discourse patterns. All kinds of effective approaches should be applied to enhance students' competence of discourse analysis so as to decrease discourse errors in their EFL writings.

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One is a brief description of background, purpose and significance of the study. Chapter Two is literature review,

Three is the research methodology. It deals with the purpose, subjects, instruments and data collection. Chapter Four presents a detailed analysis of the discourse errors found in the samples and detects their possible sources. Chapter Five considers the implications for college English writing teaching. Then the conclusion part draws an outline of the whole study, points out deficiencies of the research and gives suggestions for future research.

Key words: English writing; non-English major; discourse analysis; error

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Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the basic abilities in foreign language teaching or learning. The emphasis on improving students' writing ability is helpful in mastering a foreign language. Writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that have been taught. And when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language by going beyond what they have just learned and to take risks. And the effort to express ideas and the constant use of hand and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning. Writing in English is also an important and useful communicative ability. Nowadays, people contact each other by modern technology, such as e-mail, sending message by mobile phone or meeting on the internet by writing on the computer screen, this will in no doubt enhance the use of writing ability in English, especially for those engaged in international communication.

In China, different writing abilities are required in the teaching syllabus for students at different learning stages. In colleges and universities, English is taught under the guidance of nationally sanctioned syllabus. According to the syllabus, college English teaching for non-English majors aims at "cultivating in students a relatively high ability in reading, and a moderate ability in listening, speaking, writing, and translation, so that they will be able to employ English as a means for exchanging information".

English writing was first included in the College English Test in 1987. Since then, it has aroused both teachers and educators' attention, but writing-teaching in China is still considered unsatisfactory and problematic (Jian Qingmin & Lu Jianping, 2000). A large-scale investigation, initiated by Higher Institution Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Guidance Committee, reveals that foreign language competence of college graduates couldn't meet the needs of the country and society for qualified personnel in the new era, and their spoken and written competence is far from satisfaction. Moreover, English writing is still a difficult task for most Chinese college

students.

In order to enhance students' writing competence, English teachers have been making great efforts in the English writing teaching. First of all, they have been carefully searching all over the bookstores for the teaching materials appropriate for English writing teaching. In addition, they have been spending lots of time devoting themselves to correcting students' writings, trying to find out the difficult areas in students' English compositions, and expecting students not to make the same mistake but to have more successful communication in their next composition. On the other hand, English teachers have referred to much research on the analysis and the explanation of the language errors either from the hypothesis of contrastive analysis or from the viewpoint of error analysis. However, it seems that things do not turn out as expected; a lot of English learners in China are still with poor performances in their English writings. This can be seen from the fact that non-English major college students' performances have been very poor in English writing of the College English Test Band-4 (CET-4) in recent years.

This undesirable fact has stimulated more and more researchers and teachers to study EFL writing in order to improve students' writing proficiency. Their studies involve various aspects relevant to English writing such as L1 thinking style and L2 writing process (Wen Qiufang, 1998; Wang Ping & Liu Wenjie, 2001); features of L2 texts (Wu Qian, 2003, Ma Guanghui, 2001, 2002), scoring criteria (Jian Qingmin & Lu Jianping, 2000; Cai Jigang, 2002), evaluation and feedback (Zuo Niannian, 2002), and EFL writing teaching methods (Pan Jun, 1999; Zhang Zaixin, 1995).

Inspired by some studies related to students' writing, some researcher came up with an idea that the teachers should look at the writing problems from another aspect, which involves the analysis that extends beyond the sentence level, that is, discourse. The object of study in discourse analysis, as it developed in the field of linguistics, is the structure and function of language in use (Brown and Yule, 1983). Therefore, discourse analysis has direct relationship with EFL writing and has the potential power to deal with almost all the writing problems at discourse level.

In 1999, Li Zhixue(1999) has conducted a survey on the errors of

English-majors' writings in his university. He finds that there are three major kinds of errors in the students' writings: 1) empty content; 2) incoherent paragraphs; 3) wrong choice of words and many Chinese expressions. Among the three kinds of errors, he finds that the second type of errors stands out of the other two. The study shows that these students are not good at making use of cohesive devices, which leads to incoherence in their paragraphs and essays. Another investigation conducted by Wang Danni (2004) in her thesis shows: in the 50 sampled dissertations (which are written by the postgraduates majoring in linguistics and applied linguistics in two universities), 138 errors are selected. Among them, 71 errors have been found at the discourse level, which take 51.4% of the whole. These two investigations reveal a common phenomenon: English-major students in China are rather deficient in English writing at the discourse level. By this, we firmly believe that discourse problems in English writing of non-English major undergraduate students are still worse. And as Ellen Barton (2002) writes: "I argue in support of an increased role for discourse analysis in the field of composition studies, based upon its methodological potential to contribute uniquely to our knowledge about the production, interpretation, and acquisition of written language". To respond to Ellen Barton's viewpoint, we claim that it is essential and necessary to apply the theories of discourse analysis to the EFL writing teaching and learning.

1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The study, by analyzing the discourse errors that students have made in their own writings, is mainly to examine what kinds of discourse problems or errors do the college students in China frequently make in their English compositions. And then by probing into the causes of the problems or errors, countermeasures of coping with the problems through writing teaching are proposed. Besides, it is to inspect whether these discourse errors have something to do with the students' English achievement level, that is, to know the differences of discourse errors between successful and unsuccessful writings. By doing this, we want to find out more information on

discourse level that distinguishes the successful writings from the unsuccessful ones as well as the weakness of all students' discourse ability in EFL writing and give significant reference to college English teachers so that teachers will have clear targets in instruction so as to promote effectively the poor student writers' writing ability and strengthen and enhance successful writers' existed discourse ability to a better level.

All language learners make errors, which must not be seen as a sign of failure, but an inevitable and necessary part of the learning process. "Only when we know why an error has been produced can we set about correcting it in a systematic way."(Corder, 1981: 48) Error analysis is very important for us to learn a foreign language. Currently, many studies show that even though students can make grammatically correct sentences, they are not necessarily making no errors at discourse level. It is essential to study the problem on this aspect both for English writing teaching and learning, but studies concern this are relatively few.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter 1 is a general introduction of the whole study. It deals with research background which covers a brief account of the importance and difficulties of EFL writing, the current situation of English writing ability of college non-English major students, the significance of discourse analysis in college English writing, purpose and significance of the study, and organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is a review of the related literature. It can be divided into two parts. The first part is about the definition and theory basis of discourse analysis, error analysis and contrastive rhetoric. The second part is a review of the previous studies that concern discourse analysis in foreign language writing. And the author also comments on the studies.

Chapter 3 is an empirical study in which detailed information about the research questions, subjects, instruments, which is mainly about the writing proficiency test, and the scoring of the writing test.

4

Chapter 4 reports the results of data analysis and then probes into the causes of errors or problems. Data analysis includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis is done from the micro-level of cohesion error and the macro-level of text error.

Chapter 5 is about implications of the findings for college English writing teaching. We hope that by changing the traditional writing teaching from various aspects and by enhancing students' awareness of discourse analysis, students' writing problems of discourse level will be lessened.

Chapter 6 makes a conclusion and summarizes the study. The author also points out the limitations of the study and proposes some suggestions for further studies.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1 Discourse Analysis

In 1952, Harris published *Discourse Analysis* in which the term "discourse analysis" was used firstly, and this article is seen as the beginning of modern discourse analysis. Connor (1996: 5) defines discourse analysis as an analysis that extends beyond the sentence level. The aim of discourse analysis is to learn the characteristics of language in use, including written texts of all kinds and spoken data from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk. From 1950s discourse analysis has widely combined research fruits of some disciplines, such as linguistics, semiotics, psychology, sociology and communication science.

Discourse analysis is indeed concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. Meaning also comes from context. This is the pragmatic view of language study. In pragmatics, context can be subdivided into communicative context and linguistic context. Communicative context involves language users: utterer and interpreter, aspects of the mental world, social world and the physical world. Linguistic context, which is more of our concern in this study, includes contextual cohesion, intertextuality and sequencing. The

discourse itself forms a dimension into which linguistic choices are contextually anchored, for instance by referring back to earlier discourse, by being self-referential, or by projection towards a future linguistic context.

Markers of cohesion in a brief text include: conjunctions, anaphora, self-reference, exemplification, comparison, contrasting highlighting, etc. The choice-making in language use and the interpretation of the interpreter are restrained by textual cohesion. The choice-making and the interpretation of the text are also influenced by inter-textual dimensions. There is no way of interpreting unless one is aware of three inter-textual dimensions. First, it is the initial paragraph of an instance that establishes the genre of a discourse. This provides a frame of interpretation. Second, the foreword as well as the discourse is situated in the context of a growing literature of critical analysis. The third is about discourse of a specific type. Linguistic utterances have the property of the linear ordering of their constituent parts. The sequencing of those parts is always a meaningful aspect of linguistic context. We can presuppose partial knowledge offered by the authors and expect that some substance will be added. Above those that have been mentioned, the generation of context is dynamic. In fact contexts are generated in language use, and thereby restricted in various ways. Contexts are created by the dynamics of interaction between utterers and interpreters in relation to what is "out there". Therefore, we have to pay our attention to utterers, interpreters, and their relations in our interpreting the text.

2.1.1 Discourse and Text

The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. Discourse analysis not only concerned with the description and analysis of spoken interaction. In addition to all our verbal encounters we daily consume hundreds of written and printed words: newspaper articles, letters, stories, recipes, instructions, notices, comics, billboards, leaflets pushed through the door, and so on. We usually expect them to be coherent, meaningful communications in which the words or sentences are linked to one another in a fashion that corresponds to conventional

formulae; therefore discourse analysts are equally interested in the organization of written interaction.

Text, we said, is the verbal record of a communicative event or any segment of organized information. Text could be a few sentences or an entire section of a chapter. Typically text refers to a few paragraphs. Early text linguists concentrated on the development of various paradigms for the study of how sentences interconnect. In recent years a number of authors have been concerned to provide a tighter, more formal account of how speakers of English come to identify a text as forming text. These authors are concerned with the principles of connectivity which bind a text together and force co-interpretation to create textuality, and have drawn attention to the various linguistic devices that can be used to ensure that a text "hang together" and promote the topic development across the sentences.

However, scholars from different perspectives may come to have different interpretations on a certain term. It is the same case with defining the terms discourse and text. Interchangeable as they are in the literature, the distinction between "text" and "discourse" is found in a great deal of influential literature. The actual use of the two terms "discourse" and "text" brings about some confusion, which is primarily due to the multiple definitions given by linguists.

Some linguists adopt "written" and "spoken" to separate "text" from "discourse". For Coulthard(1985), text refers to a sequence of written elements, while discourse is viewed as spoken passages. Van Dijk(1997) distinguishes discourse from text that discourse is a non-theoretical concept and an ordinary everyday term, while text is related to language competence. Brown (2001:41) defines discourse as conversation which is a universal human activity performed routinely in the course of daily living. Brown and Yule (1983:6) perceive "discourse" as process of communication, and "text", referring to the verbal record of a communicative act, as the representative of discourse.

Connor (1996) disagrees to the former definition of text as the structural qualities of discourse. Her claim is that today "text" is increasingly seen through the processes of text production and comprehension, bringing the term "text" closer to the

7

connotation of "discourse". Scollon (2000) comes to the broadest concept of discourse, which is the study of whole system of communication, including both conversational and written. The most often quoted definition of "text" is found in Halliday and Hasan. The word text is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 1).They hold the view that a text is "a unit of language in use".

Sometimes it is envisaged to be kind of super-sentences. As is pointed by them, if a speaker of English hears or reads a passage of the language which is more than one sentence in length, he can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences. Halliday and Hasan hold the view that texts are distinguishable form non-texts in terms of the property of "texture". A stretch of language that is coherent is said to have texture.

Discourse can't exist without context. The discourse analyst is investigating the use of language in context by a speaker or writer and is concerned with the potential relationship of one sentence to another. He treats his data as the record (text) of a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker or writer to express meanings and achieve intentions (discourse). Working from this data, the analyst seeks to describe regularities in the linguistic realizations used by people to communicate those meanings and intentions. It has been noted that the discourse analyst has to take account of the context in which a piece of discourse occurs. The discourse analyst has stressed the power of context in interpretation. Even in the absence of information about place and time of original utterance, even in the absence of information about the speaker or writer and his intended recipient, it is often possible to reconstruct at least some part of the physical context and to arrive at some interpretation of the text via clues provided by either explicit or implicit marking of semantic links between clauses and sentences. Text creates its own context. By exploring natural language use in authentic environments, learners gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the discourse patterns associated with a given genre or speech event as well as the sociolinguistic factors that contribute to linguistic variation across settings and contexts.

Hu Zhuanglin (1994:2) points out that it seemed that American linguists prefer "discourse" to "text" (discourse analysis), while European researchers use "text" instead of "discourse" (text linguistics). In fact, they are synonymous, referring to both written and spoken passages. In this thesis, we use the terms "discourse" and "text"; referring to both written and spoken passages, interchangeably without distinctive differences.

2.1.2 Discourse Analysis at Different Levels

McCarthy (1991)claims that the range of discourse analysis covers both high order features, such as paragraphing and realizing elements of textual patterns, and lower order features, such as pronoun and demonstrative reference. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 23) point out that the concept of cohesion can be usefully supplemented by that of register, since the two together effectively define a text. By register they mean the "macrostructure" of the text that establishes it as a text of a particular kind-conversation, narrative, lyric and so on (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 324).Thus discourse analysis can be carried out at macro-level and micro-level.

2.1.2.1 Discourse Analysis at Macro-level

Writing smoothly requires not only the effectiveness of the sentences but also the effectiveness of the whole text which refers to a sound textual structure. College English teaching stresses the importance of textual structure. For example, according to the standards of grading in CET-4 writing, a composition with 14 points should have such qualities as keeping to the point, clear expression, smooth writing coherence and few mistakes. The qualities indicate sound textual structure with paragraph unity, correct type of writing, good thesis statement, and fully developed information.

Neufeld (1992) defines the main qualities of a sound essay structure as unity, coherence and emphasis. Ding Wangdao (1994) emphasizes unity, coherence and

transition in the effective structure of paragraphs and texts. Summing up their viewpoints, sound textual structure should consist of the following qualities: (1) a paragraph has unity when the whole paragraph concentrates on a single idea, and all evidences, examples and reasons used to develop that idea must be relevant; (2) the thesis statement should be clear and precise, and thus the essay will be clear and precise; (3) fully developed information contributes to the completeness in the paragraph; (4) the concluding paragraph should be short, forceful, substantial, and thought-provoking, without introduction of any new ideas.

Though Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasize the function of cohesion in texture excessively, they admit that texture involves the "macrostructure" of the text which establishes it as a text of a particular kind-conversation, narrative, lyric and so on. Hu Zhuanglin (1994) accents the "macrostructure" of the text in addition to cohesion and coherence. He views that the study on the macrostructure should be carried out with the specific type of text such as narrative, argumentative, or poetic. Connor (1996) points out that with the increased interest in writing for various purposes, the specification of genre is important, and genre analysis is especially significant of the study on text organization. She expects that the increased interest in genre-based research will soon stimulate further research on superstructure of different kinds of texts (Connor, 1996:89).

Our processing of discourse information is a combination of two activities: bottom-up processing and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing operates with the rules presented in descriptions of sentential syntax and lexical semantics. Top-down processing suggests that discourse context, information structure, and textual patterns create expectations relating to discourse content. Present attempts at teaching L2 writing skills in language classroom are bottom-up oriented, with the focus on vocabulary study, although analysis have shown that the word is not the most important unit in writing. Under such focus on writing, students engage in word-by-word translation. Some researches done by others reflect that students' realization on how to improve their writing doesn't cover much on top-down writing strategies. It mainly centers on vocabulary acquisition. We admit that vocabulary

acquisition is important for success in writing, but vocabulary only comprises of one aspect of writing strategies. Writing is a complex process involving many elements. In a successful composition, factors such as the whole structure of the text, appropriate proportion, topic sentences, information construction, proper introduction and conclusion part etc. are significant. Discourse analysis at macro-level should take all these factors into consideration.

2.1.2.2 Discourse Analysis at Micro-level

Discourse analysis at micro-level mainly concern cohesion and coherence. Cohesion is one of the important terms in discourse analysis. In 1960, Jakobson studied the parallel construction in literature discourse, which is considered to be the earliest research on cohesion. Then Halliday further developed the theory of cohesion and divided cohesion into grammatical and lexical in 1964. In the mid 1970s, the publication of Halliday & Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976) marked the establishment of cohesive theory.

Most teachers consider coherence an essential element of good writing. Coherence is traditionally described as the relationships that link the ideas in a text to create meaning for the readers. It is often regarded as the underlying semantic relation in a text while cohesion is described as the formal link of a discourse. According to Halliday & Hasan (1976), cohesive devices can help writers achieve connectivity of the surface text and guide the reader to establish the coherent interpretation intended by the writer. Cohesion can be regarded as means that helps to produce coherence.

Coherence is the configuration of concepts and relation which underlines the surface text. If a text is coherent, different parts in it are mutually accessible and relevant. There are many ways to achieve coherence in writing. According to Bander (1978), one way to achieve coherence is to arrange a paragraph's details in a systematic way that is appropriate for the subject matter, such as the order of importance, chronological order, and spatial order. Another way is to add various

transitions. The third way is to follow the typically straight line of development of an English paragraph, which is the basis of the particular type of coherence. That is, to start with a topic sentence, followed by a series of subdivisions of its central idea. Richards et al. (1998) also point out that generally a paragraph has coherence if it is a series of sentences that develop a main idea supporting sentences which relate to it.

Baker holds that (1984: 180) cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text. These relations or ties organize and, to some extent, create a text, for instance by requiring the student to interpret words and expressions by reference to other words and expressions in the surrounding sentences and paragraphs. Cohesion is a surface relation; it connects together the actual words and expressions that we can see or hear. Hu Zhuanglin (1994) claims cohesion refers to the semantic relations of the language components in a text, or the relations between the components which they can interpret one another in a text. A text must be coherent, but not every text includes cohesion. Halliday & Hasan say: the concept of cohesion accounts for the essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as a text. There are, of course, other types of semantic relation associated with a text which are not embodied in this concept; but the one that it does embody is in some ways the most important, since it is common to text of every kind and is, in fact, what makes a text a text (1976:13).

In conclusion, a large proportion of coherent texts include cohesion devices, which can help to recognize the unit beyond a sentence and comprehend the text. In the next part, main cohesive devices in English: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction will be discussed.

(1) Reference

The term "reference" is traditionally used in semantics for the relationship which holds between a word and what it points to in the real world (Baker, 1984:181).The reference of chair would therefore be a particular chair that is being identified on a particular occasion. Reference items in English include third-person pronouns (e.g. he, she, it, him, they, etc), demonstratives (this, that, these, those), the article the, and

items like such a (McCarthy, 1991:35). The most common reference item in English are pronouns, which are frequently used to refer back (and occasionally forward) to an entity which has been introduced (or is about to be introduced) into the discourse. Halliday & Hasan (1976: 37) have made a thorough investigation of this as a cohesive device. A paradigm example of such a cohesive relationship is given (ibid: 2): *Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into fireproof dish.* Of this text they say: "It is clear that *them* in the second sentence refers back to (is anaphoric to) the *six cooking apples* in the first sentence. This anaphoric function of *them* gives cohesion to the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole; the two sentences together constitute a text" (ibid: 2). Reference, in the textual rather than the semantic sense, occurs when the student has to retrieve the identity of what is being talked about by referring to another expression in the immediate context. The resulting cohesion "lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse a second time" (ibid: 31). So, reference is a device which allows the hearer to trace participants, entities, events, etc. in a text. The following example shows different types of reference at work:

Hans Christian made friends with a few kind people. Among them was John Collin of the Royal Theater. This kind man collected funds from friends to send the young writer to school. Hans felt most at ease with children. He ate his dinner in turn at the homes of six friends. In each home the children begged him for stories.

For the text to be coherent we assume that *his, him* and *his* are all anaphoric reference of Hans, which can be confirmed by looking back in the text; *them* refers to *a few kind people. This* links back to *John Collin of the Royal Theater.*

(2) Ellipsis

Unlike reference, ellipsis display grammatical rather than semantic relationships. Ellipsis is the omission of elements or items normally required by the grammar which the speaker or writer assumes are obvious from the context and therefore need not be raised (McCarthy, 1991:43). In other words, in ellipsis, an item is replaced by nothing. This is a case of leaving something unsaid which is nevertheless understood. It is not to say that every utterance which is not fully explicit is elliptical; most messages

require more input from the context to make sense of them. It also does not include every instance, in which the hearer or student has to supply missing information, but only those cases where the grammatical structure itself points to an item or items that can fill the slot in question. Ellipsis is distinguished by the structure having some "missing" element. English has broadly three types of ellipsis: nominal, verbal and clausal. Here we take an example on the type of ellipsis where the "missing" element is retrievable verbatim from the surrounding text:

1) On your birthday, Mother is going to give you a watch, Father a book.

2) The Smiths have five kids. The Browns have three.

3) Joan brought some carnations and Catherine some sweet peas.

The words *is going to give you* in sentence 1) is supplied from the first clause to the second whereas the elliptic item in sentence 2) is *kids* after *three* in the second clause. There is only one possible interpretation of sentence 3): Catherine bought some sweet peas.

(3)Substitution

Substitution is different from reference in that another word takes the place of the thing that is being discussed. Where reference is a relation between meanings, substitution is a grammatical relationship. There are three general ways to substitute in a sentence: nominal, verbal, and clausal. In English, the items commonly used for substitutions are *one, ones, do, so, same*, etc. For example:

Let's go and see the bears. The polar ones are over on that rock.

In this sentence, *ones* is taking the place of *bears* in the previous sentence. Verbal and clausal substitution functions in the same way, replacing the verb and the clause respectively in the preceding sentence.

(4) Conjunction

Conjunction functions somewhat differently from reference, substitution and ellipsis, because it is not strictly semantic or anaphoric; rather, it is related to the entire environment of a text. The conjunctive elements "presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 226). Instead of giving cohesion to a text, it actually combines two sentences together. And there is the

simplest example:

"While you're refreshing yourself," said the Queen, "I'll just take the

measurements." And she took a ribbon out of her pocket, marked in inches.

In the example above, *and* is the conjunction. Although there is a distinct shift from

one sentence to the next, the sentences are still very much a part of a coherent text.

2.2 Error Analysis

Wang Lifei (2000) points out that the technique of error analysis had been used

by teachers in an informal and intuitive way long before the concept of error analysis

took place. However, as a new scientific technique based on psycholinguistics in the

field of applied linguistics, it was developed in the late 1960s.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the favored technique used in the study of errors made by

L2 learners was contrastive analysis (James, 1998). Contrastive analysis stressed the

interference of the L1 on L2 teaching and learning. According to contrastive analysis,

errors occurred primarily as a result of interference when the learner transferred native

language "habits" into the L2. Interference was believed to take place whenever the

"habits" of the native languages differed from those of the target language. By the late

1960s, however, some doubts about the reliability of contrastive analysis began to be

voiced. Contrastive analysis turned out either uninformative or inaccurate because

errors did show up where contrastive analysis had not predicted. First language

interference, which can only explain a small portion of the learner's errors, cannot be

regarded as the sole source of errors.

Error analysis, examining errors attributable to all possible sources, became an

alternative. According to Corder (1981), who made the first arguments for the

significance of learners' errors in 1967, error analysis is a type of bilingual

comparison between learners' inter-language and the target language. The novelty of

error analysis, distinguishing it from contrastive analysis, was that the mother tongue

was not supposed to enter the picture. The claim was made that errors could be fully

described in terms of the target language, without the need to refer to the first

language of learners (James, 1998: 5). Error Analysis has become a useful technique of investigating and describing learners' inter-language.

Error analysis aims to (1) find out how well the learner knows the second language; (2) find out how the learner learns the second language; (3) obtain information on common difficulties in second language learning; (4) serve as an aid in teaching or in the preparation and compilation of teaching materials. Corder (1981) put forward five stages which error analysis consists of: (1) collection of a sample of learner language; (2) identification of errors; (3) description of errors; (4) explanation of errors; (5) evaluation of errors.

In addition to Corder, the two most significant publications were H.V. George (1972) and M. Burt and C. Kiparsky (1972) (James, 1998: 12). George offers a detailed account of the major causes and types of errors, full of suggestions for ways to avoid or remedy error. According to him, the three principal causes of learners' FL errors are redundancy of the code, unsuitable presentation in class, and several sorts of interference. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) entitle their book *The Gooficon*, which they define as "a collection of goof and their explanations, from the point of view of English grammar". This stance, minimizing the effects of mother tongue transfers, claimed that the mother tongue does not have any significant effect.

2.2.1 Definition of Error

To get a clear picture of the definition of error, we present the different versions made by different researchers:

1) Errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance (Dulay et al., 1982:138).

2) Error refers generally to the learner's misuse or misunderstanding of the target language, may it be grammatical or pragmatic (Hu Zhuanglin et al., 1989:329).

3) Error is a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of production would, in all likelihood, not be produced

by the speakers' native speaker counterparts (Lennon Paul, 1991:182).

From the definitions given by different researchers, we can see different researchers view errors from different standpoints, each defining from different level of the language. However, they all agree on one error point, that is, errors are deviations from a "selected norm" of language performance (Dulay et al., 1982:139). According to James (1998), there are four levels of language errors: the level of substance, the level of lexicon, the level of grammar and the level of discourse. But no matter at what level the research is carried out, attention should be focused on recurrent, systematic errors either representative of the learning process of a particular learner or characteristic of a group of learners at certain stages.

2.2.2 The Significance of Error Analysis

With the publication of an article by Corder (1967), the significance of errors has been seen as evidence of the state of a learner's knowledge of the Second Language. Corder (1967) maintains that errors are significant in three aspects. Firstly, they can give information to the teacher as to how far the learner has progressed. The study of learners' errors can show what problems they are now having, how far towards the goal they have progressed and what remains for them to learn. And errors can provide feedback, which tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques. The analysis of errors can enable the teacher to decide whether he can move on to the next item in the syllabus or he must devote more time to the item he has been working. Secondly, they provide the researcher with evidence of how language is learned. The study of errors provides language researchers with a clear picture of the linguistic development of the learner and gives them evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies the learner employs in the learning of language. And thirdly, the learner learns by making mistakes. Learners' errors are indispensable to the learners themselves because the making of errors reflects a strategy used by the learners to test hypothesis about the target language, with the native language as the reference frame against which the

new system is tested. The significance of errors has qualified this research useful in practice.

2.3 Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive rhetoric was initiated almost forty years ago by the American applied linguist Robert Kaplan (1966). It maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. According to Connor, contrastive rhetoric is defined as an area of research in SLA that identifies problems in compositions encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them (Connor, 1996:5). Contrastive rhetoric is an interdisciplinary theoretical framework which is influenced by theories of applied linguistics, linguistic relativity, rhetoric, text linguistics, discourse types and genres and literacy. Kaplan's article, *Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education*, began the discipline of contrastive rhetoric in the field of applied linguistics (Connor, 1996). The article explains Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric hypothesis that the way teaching writing and writing for native speakers is not applied to non-native speakers.

Such difference is mainly caused by the cultural difference reflected through rhetoric. Kaplan found that linearity of paragraphing is basically in line with directness, while circularity is seen as relating to indirectness and digression. Some Germanic languages such as German, Dutch, and English tend to be linear, while some Oriental language such as Korean, Japanese and Chinese tend to be circular. Kaplan's finding made a major contribution to negative culture-specific influence in ESL writing.

Kaplan's traditional contrastive rhetoric has been criticized, for his hypothesis has been interpreted too simplistically and too literally, and the diagram is too simple a model for the representation of a theory of contrastive rhetoric. Later, Kaplan (1987, 1988) has modified his earlier position, suggesting that rhetorical differences may also reflect different writing conventions that are learned in a culture. Kaplan called for analyses of texts that extend beyond the sentence level, and in this he is ahead of his

time, in spite of some defects. The time has not yet come to dismiss contrastive rhetoric as a viable theory of second language writing. Two leading ESL composition experts, Ann Raimes and Llona Leki, write about the importance of contrastive rhetoric as a means of raising awareness among teachers of different L1 backgrounds and the effects of these backgrounds on L2 writing.

2.4 Previous Studies of Discourse Analysis in EFL Writings

Researches of error analysis at discourse level are relatively fewer than that at word or syntactical level. Yet much progress of discourse analysis has been made in China. For various reasons, researchers focused their attentions on different kinds of errors and tried to find the causes. Zhao Yongqing (1995) has investigated the discourse problems in college students' argumentative writings from a macro-perspective. He concludes that most students use a topic-delayed discourse strategy or some even do not state their viewpoint directly and just infer their thesis statement, which violates Western thought pattern. Dong Junhong (1999) analyzes cohesive and coherent errors in college students' English writings. As for cohesive devices, his findings are: 1) inconsistent personal references and inconsistency between pronouns and antecedents; 2) overuse or underuse of ellipsis; 3) improper substitution; 4) in terms of logical connectors, he finds students have the most difficulties in using logical connectors; most of the less advanced students either use a few simple ones such as *and, but, so*, because or use no connectors; 5) and the errors in using lexical cohesion manifest lack of variety of words, misuse of hyponymy and super-ordinate. Li Zhixue (2000) has done a study on coherence errors in some of the English-majors' writings in his university. He finds that there are three major kinds of errors in the students' writings: 1) empty content; 2) incoherent paragraphs which result from some odd sentences or even nonsense; 3) wrong choice of words and many Chinese English expressions. Among the three kinds of errors, he finds that the second type of errors stands out of the other two. The study shows that these students

are not good at making use of such cohesive ties as reference, substitution and ellipsis, logical conjunctions and lexical cohesion, which leads to incoherence in their paragraphs and essays.

These discourse errors in cohesion and coherence mostly appear in the elementary and intermediate learners' discourses and texts. For advanced learners, academic writing, discourse errors at micro-level have attracted many linguists' attention in China and researchers, such as Zhang Delu (1998), Huang Guowen (2001), Wang Chuming (1996) and Peng Xuanwei (2002) have made contributions to discourse analysis.

Another significant advance in discourse analysis is the inquiry of applying discourse theories to language teaching. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* by McCarthy (1991) and *Discourse and Language Education* by Hatch (1992) both investigate the application of discourse analysis theories to language teaching. With the rapid advances in theories and practice of discourse analysis in China, some researchers and teachers become interested in the application of discourse analysis theories to analyzing students' writings. By finding out students' errors at discourse level in writing, researchers try to propose some suggestions to improve the situation through class instruction. Most of the studies were done in college or university students' English writing. Especially in recent years, researches of this type are relatively many, such as Cheng Aiqun & Qin Chaojun(2001); Guo Hongjie & Di Yun(2001); Huang Bin(2002); Liu Ying(2006); Peng Hanke(2007); Chen Honglin(2008a, 2008b); Liang Yibin(2008); Peng Wenxia(2008); Xu Jiewen(2008); Zhao Ruquan(2008)et al. Some of the researches try to form a mode of EFL writing instruction and aim to enhance college students' awareness of discourse analysis in their writings. Results of empirical studies(Zhao Ruquan, 2008, et al.) indicate that the effect of the practice of putting discourse analysis theories into EFL writing teaching is obvious.

2.5 Comments on the Previous Studies

Analyzing the results of these studies over the past two decades, we can see that

error analysis in EFL writing at discourse level has been causing increasingly attention in the aspect of English writing learning and teaching. The importance of discourse analysis on English writing has become a common understanding among the researchers both home and abroad. Teachers or linguists study it theoretically or empirically, and the researches are relatively fruitful. In recent years, most of the studies on this aspect are mainly about college English writing. In the studies, errors of EFL writing are revealed and suggestions of EFL writing teaching or learning are given in order to improve current situation. But most of the empirical studies are qualitative researches, quantitative ones are relatively few. And there are few researches that distinguish the successful writers from the unsuccessful ones in error of EFL writing from the aspect of discourse analysis. In other words, what are the errors in writing at discourse level that can distinguish the good writings from the poor ones if there are some between the two? And what are the main causes of them? It is essential to probe into the differences of the two level group's discourse errors in writing from both quantitative and qualitative aspects so that special training will be made to different writing level groups of students or special attention will be paid to in EFL writing exercise for students with different writing ability. By doing this, the EFL writing teaching will be clearly targeted and more effective. This is also one of the purposes of the present study.

Chapter 3   Research Methodology

The present study is an empirical study on the errors making by college non-English students in EFL writing. The purposes of the study is first to find out the errors, then try to analyze the causes of them, and finally some suggestions of reducing the errors so as to enhance students' writing ability through writing teaching are proposed.   In previous chapters, the emphasis is put on the theoretical discussion and review of recent studies on EFL writing that concern discourse analysis. In this chapter, we are going to describe the design and process of an empirical study on college non-English major students' errors in EFL·writing at discourse level. It is

devised in the followings: research questions, subjects for the present study, instrument of the study and the scoring of the writing tests.

3.1 Research Questions

Built on the literature review of previous studies of Chapter 2, the present research attempts to answer the following four questions:

1. What is the situation of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing proficiency at discourse level?

2. What are the main errors of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing at discourse level?

3. What are the major differences of errors at discourse level in EFL writing between the successful and unsuccessful student writers?

4. What are the major causes of the errors?

3.2 Subjects

Subjects participating in this study are 152 sophomores from two different universities, namely, Qingdao Technological University and Huzhou Teacher College. These two universities are of intermediate level of college English teaching and learning, which is the most common type of school of undergraduate level in China. Students of non-English major in these schools are required to pass CET 4 before graduation. We selected randomly four non-English major classes of sophomore from these two universities as the subjects. At each university, we chose one class of the arts and one class of the science to be the subjects. And each class has nearly the same number of students. Among them, 72 students are from the arts classes and 80

students are from the science classes. Since the present study is to analyze college non-English students' EFL writing problems at discourse level, the subjects selected above justify the research. The specific proportion of the participants is shown in Table 3-1. After one year study in university, the students' English writing proficiency has greatly improved and their understanding on the importance of English writing competence is being further deepened. In the past two semesters they have practiced a lot of English writing which is mostly for passing the exam of CET 4. And they are familiar with the requirements of the writing test in CET 4 after so many practices and reading many model compositions.

Table 3-1 Subjects Information

Types	Student Number	Percentage	Majors
Art students	72 (male:17) (female:55)	47.37%	Advertising; History
Science students	80 (male:46) (female:34)	52.63%	Civil Engineering; Computer Science and Technology

In all the samples writings collected from 4 different classes, we only choose 80 of them to be the samples used in research. The reason for doing this is mainly due to the fact that 80 cases are enough for the present research since it is of small scale. And 80 samples of writings can be highly representative of the whole subject group which we are going to investigate. After all the test papers have been scored, we rank all the papers in each class in an ascending order according to scores of the papers and then select 20 samples from each of the four classes' test papers randomly at a relatively equal serial distance. Thus it can be assured that all papers that we have selected from each class have relatively equal number of successful and unsuccessful writers.

The reasons why we choose sophomore to be the subjects are as follow: First,

sophomores have developed their writing ability to a certain degree that is much better than that of their high school level, while freshmen may learn little in writing after such a short time of English writing teaching and practicing since they just enter the college for 2 or 3 months. So the test of their writing ability only represents the writing ability of high school students. Second, freshmen are still not quite familiar with the writing test requirements and model of CET 4 for various reasons while sophomores are mostly have taken part in the exam and familiar with the test, even some of them may have passed the exam. It is reliable to distinguish the successful writers from the unsuccessful ones from this group of students.

3.3 Instruments

The instruments used in this study are the English Writing Proficiency Test paper. There are two purposes of the test. One is to get the data of all subjects' writings in order to analyze their errors or problems in EFL writing at discourse level. Another one is, by the test's scores, to distinguish the successful writers from the unsuccessful ones. Thus differences of writing errors of these two groups can be identified.

The writing test (see Appendix A) is an argumentative writing task of about 150 words by a given topic and some hints as that of the writing part in CET 4. We choose the argumentative writing task for the testing just because it is the writing style that most frequently exists in CET 4 and students are very familiar with that kind of writings. Thus the test will be more reliable. But in order to made the students write more, so that we can get more information about their real ability of writing, the time restriction of it is 10 minutes more than that of a CET 4, namely, 40 minutes. In order to encourage the students to better complete the writing task, two writing tasks are offered in the writing test for students to choose in accordance with their interest and familiarity with the topic. And the full mark of it is 25 points. In order to make the test more reliable and understandable, clear instruction and direction in Chinese are provided. We had ever asked some experienced teachers to exam the paper carefully

and made some revision on their suggestion before the test papers were finally set. Finally, before the test paper was handed out to all the subjects, we made a pilot test of it. The students of a class which are not different from our subjects significantly took part in the test. Results of the test show that students' test scores are near normal distribution and most of them can finish it well in the required time.

The testing was carried out in English class of the four different classes with the help of their English teachers. Before the test, the author told all the four English teachers how to conduct the test so as to make the test reliable. In order to persuade the students to treat the test seriously, their English teachers did not tell them the real purpose of the test and just make a white lie that it is a test of their writing ability and the scores will be deem as a part of their achievement of English learning. For if the students were told that the tests are used for the study of a master thesis, some of them will not take it seriously or even refuse to finish it, thus the reliability of the test will be affected. All the subjects of the test have to hand in the papers in the due time and during the writing, they cannot refer to any books or material, they cannot ask anyone else for help. When the papers were handed in, the English teacher reminded the students to write down their names or class number if they forgot to do so. And all together, we collected 152 papers, but 7 of them have to be abandoned for there are only several words on the papers without a complete sentence, or some have no word at all. These papers may not be seen as reliable for they can not reflect the students' real writing ability, they may just be finished with great reluctance.

3.4 The Scoring and Error Marking of the Writing Test Paper

As a kind of subjective test, the scoring of the writing is of great importance and difficulty. In order to make the scoring more reliable, two of the researcher's colleagues were paid to rate all the writing papers. Both raters are English teachers and they have been teaching English for about 10 years and they have been CET 4 raters, so they were familiar with the scoring criteria adopted by the CET center. Before scoring, the author and the two teachers got together to discuss the criteria to

make it clear and to have common understanding of it. We also selected randomly 10 of the papers to be the sample papers and then try to score them and finally to reach an agreement on the given scores by analysis.

Each writing paper is scored by two raters separately, and the final score of the writing is the average score of the two. If discrepancy of the two given scores is more than 4 points, one of them has to score the paper again without being told the given scores. If the mutual discrepancy of the three scores is within 4 points, the final score of the writing is the average score of the three. If not, two scores, whose discrepancy is within 4 points, of them will be taken as the effective scores and the final score of the writing is the average score of the two effective ones. If discrepancy of any of the two scores of them is more than 4 points, a fourth scoring by the another rater will be needed, and then no matter what their mutual discrepancy is, average score of the four is the final score of the writing.

In this time, the rating approach is holistic scoring. In holistic scoring system, raters evaluate the students' composition as a whole. In this study on English writing, a single score is awarded to the writing based on the writing assessment standard for CET4, and we make a small necessary changes from the original one(see appendix B). The writing scoring was based on aspects of expression, coherent, content and grammatical mistakes etc. The full score is 25.

After all the papers have been graded, we find that among the 145 papers, 16 papers have a third scoring. Then we test the correlation of the first scorings of the two raters by SPSS13.0. The results of Pearson Correlation show that correlation coefficient of the first two scorings is 0.897, which is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Thus the reliability of the scoring is justified.

After the scoring, we select 80 samples to be the final subjects. In these test papers, we have to mark discourse errors of each of them. This work is much more elaborated and need to be more patient and careful. Before the work of errors searching, the author and the two teachers discussed the details of the marking system. Before the counting, the two raters and the author had an agreement on what are the errors and the kinds of errors that should be counted.   The work was divided into two

steps. In the first step, errors of micro-level were identified, such as reference, conjunction, substitution, ellipsis and lexicon cohesion. Each error was underlined by a red line and the kind of error was written beside it with the initial letter of the word signifying the error, for example, "R" stands for "reference". In the second step, errors of macro-level were identified, such as without conclusion part or beginning part, without topic sentence, one paragraph only, no proper division of the text, illogical information construction etc. All the errors were ticked out in the writings and were marked beside them with one word, for example, "topic" means "there is no topic sentence in the paragraph". All kinds of the errors were counted separately.

In the 80 papers we selected to be further analyzed, 51 of them chose the writing task of "Should Students Get More Exams?", 29 of them chose the writing task of "My Views of a Qualified Teacher". The fact that not all the students chose the same writing topic is good for the present study, for this will diversify the data and make the result of analysis to be more reliable.

Chapter 4   Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

In this part, statistics of different kinds of discourse errors identified in the subjects' writings will be given. The errors are counted in two different ways; one is errors counted in all subjects' writing papers, another one to sum up the errors made by the successful writers separately from that of unsuccessful ones.

4.1.1 Discourse Errors in the Sample Writings

In all the 80 sample writings, discourse errors at macro-level and micro-level are counted separately. Errors of micro-level that are counted mainly include cohesion errors, which contain errors or problems of reference, conjunction, substitution and

ellipsis. Rule of counting is like this, if there is one kind of these errors in a writing paper, we will score it 1 point, if there are more kinds of errors, more scores will be added. But for the same kind of error exist in several places of a same writing paper, it will only be scored as 1 point, that is, the same error will not be counted for two times. And the largest number a writing paper gets can only be 4 points on this kind of errors of micro-level. At last, we sum up all the points each kind of errors get in all the 80 sample writings, details of the results can be seen in the following table:

Table 4-1 Discourse Errors at Micro-level in all Sample Writings

errors statistics	reference	conjunction	substitution	ellipsis
points	18	39	25	19
percentages	22.50%	48.75%	31.255%	23.75%

In the table above, the figures of points means the numbers of writing papers in which the counter-errors exist. The figures of percentages means the proportions of the writing papers in which the counter-errors exists of all the sample writings. From the table, we can see that students make most of the errors on conjunction and substitution the second, they make the least errors on reference. Conjunction can be the most difficult point for students to master; this is mainly due to the differences between Chinese and English on thought pattern. They just take it for granted they have expressed what they want to say cohesively judging by what they usually do in Chinese writing. For reference, it is the easiest one for students and it seems that most of them have mastered the use of it. This is mainly due to the similarity or sameness of Chinese and English in this aspect. For the two languages usually require the same reference in the same writing, and this in Chinese will have a positive transfer on English learning.

Errors of macro-level that are counted mainly include text errors, which contain errors or problems of proportion of different parts, introduction part, conclusion part,

topic sentence and information construction. Rule of counting these kinds of errors is also the same as that of micro-level, that is, one error scores 1 point, if there are more kinds of errors, and more scores will be added, and the same error will not be counted for a second time. The largest number a writing paper gets can only be 5 points on this kind of errors of micro-level. At last, we sum up all the points each kind of errors get in all the 80 sample writings, details of it can be seen in the following table:

Table 4-2 Discourse Errors at Macro-level in all Sample Writings

errors statistics	proportion	introduction	conclusion	topic	construction
points	15	9	18	36	21
percentages	18.75%	11.25%	22.50%	45.00%	26.25%

In the table above, there are five kinds of text errors that are counted. Among them, "Proportion" stands for impropriate division of the whole composition. This is mainly due to the fact that some writings have a very long statement about the beginning part or conclusion part and state too much irrelevant information in the part while the important part only take up little proportion of the whole text. "Introduction" and "conclusion" refer to the compositions that have no an introduction or conclusion which is quite necessary in the context. Errors of this kind are not few; this is because some students just do not know how to make an introduction or conclusion or they do not have the awareness to do so. "Topic" represents there is no a clear topic sentence in the paragraph that should has one, because if there is no one, the paragraph will seem unnatural or not cohesive. As is showed in the table above, students make most of the errors on this kind. To write a topic sentence for one paragraph is a writing technique that some students still do not acquire. The last one "construction" refers to that the sentences given in one paragraph do not support the topic of the paragraph or we can say irrelevant information is abundant in the composition.

Form table 4-1 and table 4-2, we can see that, on general, students' discourse competence is still quite lacking. That is partly due to the lacking of writing teaching of the correlated knowledge on discourse. Some may be because of the lacking of writing practicing and students' insufficient of linguistic competence.

4.1.2 Discourse Errors between Successful and Unsuccessful Writings

To make it clear the differences of discourse errors between successful and unsuccessful writing is another purpose of the present study. For this purpose, we first have to distinguish the successful writings from the unsuccessful ones of all the sample writings. To do so, we are first making sort descending to all subjects' test scores, we defined that the top 25 percent of the subjects in the serial order to be the successful writers and the bottom 25 percent of the subjects in the order to be the unsuccessful writers. The rest of the subjects were marked as writers of intermediate level. Totally, there were 20 subjects that were selected as successful writers and 20 subjects were selected as unsuccessful ones. And then we counted all the errors at discourse level made in their writings separately. Statistic method is just as what we have done to the whole subjects, as is described in the previous section. The results can be seen in the tables below:

Table 4-3 Discourse Errors at Micro-level between

Successful and Unsuccessful Writings

errors types	reference	conjunction	substitution	ellipsis
successful	3	4	4	3
unsuccessful	11	18	11	10

In the table above, as we can see that differences between successful and unsuccessful writings are obvious. Successful writings are of much fewer errors than

that of unsuccessful writings in all kinds of errors. Successful writers still aren't free from the errors of conjunction, reference, ellipsis and substitutions.

Table 4-4 Discourse Errors at Macro-level between

Successful and Unsuccessful Writings

errors types	proportion	introduction	conclusion	topic	construction
successful	0	0	2	4	0
unsuccessful	6	5	7	17	12

In table 4-4 above, we can see that there are still many discourse errors at macro-level in unsuccessful writings while errors of successful writings only obvious on aspect of "topic". It can be sure that writing topic sentence is still a difficult skill of writing for some students. And macro-errors at discourse level are the major factors that distinguish the successful writings from the poor ones. To be short, discourse errors made by college non-English major students in their EFL writings can successfully distinguish the good writers from the poor ones.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

In this section, we will analyze the errors that occur in the sample essays. For a better look at where the discourse errors lie and why we consider them as errors, we first describe them. In order to better understand them, examples are copied as they originally appear, including some spelling and grammatical mistakes. We will analyze the data from both macro-level and micro-level.

4.2.1 Discourse Errors at Micro-level in the Sample Writings

Cohesion is the mainly aspect in which students made discourse errors or

problems of micro-level in their writings. Errors of this category include reference, conjunction, substitution and ellipsis.

4.2.1.1 Reference

Reference is a commonly used cohesive device in both Chinese and English. It is probably because of this that the students made more errors of reference than we had expected. Their errors mainly concern two kinds, namely, demonstrative reference and personal reference.

(1) demonstrative reference

The most commonly use demonstrative reference are *this, that, those, these* etc. Some demonstrative pronouns are used wrongly due to reference ambiguity and disagreement. This kind of errors is the most prominent one among the two kinds of reference devices. For example:

Example 1:

> Some people think a good teacher should not scold students; some people think
>
> a good teacher should be kind; some people even think should be friend with
>
> students. In my opinion, I highly agree with *that*.

The reference *that* is very ambiguous in this sentence. In this sentence, the word *that* can refer to three opinions: a good teacher should not scold students; a good teacher should be kind; a good teacher should be friend with students. Readers will be wondering that what *that* refers to exactly in the context. Therefore, the writer should present his viewpoint clearly in the argumentative writing to make the readers understand what his standpoint is.

The demonstrative word *this* is often misused in students' writings. In the *Example 2* bellow, *this* refers to a specific thing mentioned previously, which is heavily constrained by Chinese writing. However, *that* as such a reference is used in English instead of *this*.

Example 2:

> Examination was approaching. Students spent a lot of time learning and reading

books, especially the poor one. Many classrooms or the library was full of students before the exams. *This* was a common phenomenon in university.

This is misused in *Example 2* to refer to a specific thing mentioned previously, which is heavily constrained by Chinese writing. However, *that* as such a reference is used in English instead of *this*. *This* should be changed into *that* in the sentence above.

(2) Personal Reference

In these compositions, the objects frequently shifted personal reference, such as from the third person to the second person or from the singular form to the plural form. Consequently, the reference system is made rather inconsistent or even confusing to the readers. Followings are four examples of such use from the samples. For example:

Example 3:

(1) And *we* must study hard all the time, or *you* will fail in the exam.

(2) Our lives have changed a lot since *we* entered college. To compare with senior middle school, there are fewer classes much time is controlled by *himself*.

(3) Exam is essential to our students. Following the development of society, the knowledge in our minds is becoming more and more. But how to make *it* in control of us, *it* plays an important role in the matter.

In (1) *you* is not in accordance with *we*, neither is in (2), which *himself* is not in accordance with *we*. And *it* in (3) is very ambiguous.

Another problem is that students have a tendency of applying an unnecessary pronoun to achieve the effect of reference. Under this circumstance, the pronoun should be removed, whereas the cohesion in the context and the semantic meaning will not be affected. For example:

Example 4:

(1)In China most people believe the student who can get high score, *he* is capable.

(2) As there are some students who don't have a goal, the examination will let them study hard. *Those* they will not like the examination.

In *example 4*, the word *he* in (1) and *those* in (2) can be left out from the sentence.

4.2.1.2 Conjunction

As can be seen from the statistic results, among the four forms of grammatical cohesion, conjunction is most easily mistaken. If a text lacks conjunctive elements, or contains many misuses of conjunction, it is likely to loose its cohesion. There are mainly two kinds of problems existed in students' compositions, on one hand, the students are liable to neglect the use of conjunction in the occasion where it is necessary; on the other hand, some conjunctive words and phrases used by the students cause confusion in the sentence structure, that is, they misuse the conjunctions .

Example 5:

(1)The second requirement is patience. In many schools, good students are treated well, they do not need to clean the classroom and do physical exercises. The only thing they need to do is to study well. All the extra labor work is done by the students who get low mark or fail in the exam. These students are not foolish, they just absorb knowledge much more slowly than these good students......

(2)People often said teachers are leaders, they lead the students walk to in the correct way; teachers are gardeners they decide the flowers how to grow.

The above two excerpts in *Example 5* are from the sample writings. There are no connections between some clauses, which is an abnormal phenomenon in English writings. It seems that the sentences are only fragments and they do not have a sense of coherence. If we add some cohesive devices, the sentences are more logically connected in the context.

There are some examples revealing the errors of misusing conjunctions in students' compositions.

Example 6:

(1)*Although* you must study everyday and work hard, *but* the result is very good.

(2)If he get a high score in the exam, *so* he is a good student.

In *example 6*, sentences (1) and (2) are typical error of misusing of conjunctions, while in (1), the superfluous use of the word *but* is the result of negative transfer of Chinese. The last sentence contains a conjunctive word that may cause confusion of the meaning conveyed.

Sometimes, students' misuses of conjunctive words are caused by incorrectly memorizing of the word or phrase. For example:

Example 7:

> There are different reasons of getting more exams now. *A hand* someone think it is very necessary, *the other hand* someone think it is not necessary. But I think getting more exams is very important. *There are too much people who don't want to get it. And then* "is very difficult to pass it". *The first*, having more exams can help you study better. *The second*, it can improve your knowledge. *The third*, you must study hard to pass the exams.

In *Example 7*, the errors of the conjunctive phrases *A hand* and *the other hand* are caused by incorrectly memorizing the two phrases, while the conjunctive elements *the first*, *the second*, and *the third* reveal that the author doesn't know how to use ordinal words to list what he or she wants to discuss. Meanwhile, the lack of the conjunctive word *though* between the fourth sentence *"There are too much people who don't wanting to get it"* and its former sentence *"But I think getting more exams is very important"* also causes an incoherence. Moreover, the conjunctive words *And then* fails to show the correct relationship between its former sentence and the latter. These conjunctive errors are certainly impact the textual coherence of the writing.

4.2.1.3 Substitution

In all of the compositions of the writing task, the uses of substitution are mainly confined to nominal substitutions, the uses of verbal and clausal substitutions, however, are rare. This phenomenon relates more to the negative transfer of the native language. The frequency of the application of substitution in Chinese is lower than that in English, for Chinese favors repetition while English prefers variety. In Chinese

the repetition of the same word is preferred to construct cohesion in a text. But in English writing practice, some students had no sense of using substitution, nor can they use the cohesive device properly. Look at the following errors made by some of the students:

Example 8:

(1) If he get a high score in the exam, so he is a good student. If not, he is a bad *student*.

(2) A young writer says, there is no *one* of all abilities, but it is possible to be a *one* of an ability. So exams can change an outstanding *one* into a usual *one*.

In sentence (1), the second *student* can be substituted by *one*. In sentence (2), the word *one* is used as an imposed substitution for *a man*, which may take the place of the first *one* in this sentence.

4.2.1.4 Ellipsis

Ellipsis is also regarded as a special kind of substitution. It is a rhetorical technique that avoids simple repetition and therefore makes the expression succinct, compact and clear. Since the explanation of the omitted elements must be inferred from the context, ellipsis has the cohesive function in a text. It serves as a tie between sentences.

The students' errors in ellipsis suggest their lack of grammatical competence. Not being able to apply grammatical rules properly and skillfully, they frequently omit the indispensable elements of the text. Additionally, they make use of ellipsis in the inappropriate context, thus interfere with cohesion in the text.

Example 9: ("O" in *Example 9* indicates the omitted parts）

(1) That's to say, some want to have more control over their own education. But some "O" not "O" to.

(2) But whether it is a good way or not, there are many experts explored the problem for many years, but "O" no result.

(3)It's important to do more exams, though it is not easy, but having more exams have many advantages for your study. For example, if have, you may study hard, must get more scores and make your future study easier.

In (1) the omission should be realized as *"But some don't."* In (2) the case is different from the former sentence for that the writer produces this sentence influence by negative transfer of the native language, omitting *"with"* which is necessary in forming a correct English sentence. In (3) we can find the author omits the subject *"you"* and the object *"them"* referring to *"exams"* mentioned in the former sentence in the conditional clause, however, the omission isn't allowed so that it results in incoherence. In addition, the word *"must get more scores"* in the chief clause conveys the author's idea that he or she is intended to adopt the strategy of ellipsis---omitting the subject *"you"* in front of *"must get more scores"* to constitute a coherence, but actually he or she fails in that it is not enough to leave out *"you"* but *"must"* should be elided as well.

4.2.2 Discourse Errors at Macro-level in the Sample Writings

Discourse errors at macro-level are mainly the errors of whole text. In this section, we will analyze these problems from the aspects of proportion of different parts, introduction and conclusion part, topic sentences and information construction.

4.2.2.1 Proportion of Different Parts

A good writing should have a balanced proportion of different parts. The introduction often introduces or gives the reader a notion of what the paper is about, it is usually brief. As Gorrell et al. (1988:116) say, "The introduction should reveal clearly its relation to the main ideas of the paper and should be in proportion, not half as long as the body of the paper." The body is the main discussion of the subject. Therefore, it should be the longest of the whole composition. And the concluding

paragraph gives the reader a sense of completeness and impresses the teacher by restating the main points mentioned above. Thus, the whole composition should be in proper proportion, which is also mentioned in Wang Chongyi's book "Like a good paragraph, a well-organized writing should be properly-proportioned. The longest portion should be devoted to the middle part, the body; for the discussion of the subject is the most informative and important part. The introduction and conclusion sections in an essay are brief (1995:238)."

Among the 80 samples, 7 out of them have a long introduction, which makes the whole essay in improper proportion. Let's look at one of the samples.

Example 10:

In a newspaper report, a student jumped down from a high building and died, "the teacher scolded me in the class, my classmates must look down upon me, I cannot stand it anymore" he wrote before committing suicide.

Some day in a school, a student was suddenly becoming crazy. When he was sent to the hospital to be examined, we known that it was because of the heavy pressure and excessively tired "Our teachers often leave a lot of homework after class and we have too many exams ... ..."

What is the cause of these sad things? Of course, some people may say it is because of the irrational education system. However, think it more carefully, and you will find that their teachers should take mostly responsibilities.

People often said teachers are leaders. They lead the students go in the correct way; teachers are gardeners, they help the flowers how to grow. The society asks for high qualified teachers but what is the standard of the qualified teacher?

First, I think the teachers should take care of their students as his or her child. Not only ask for them to get the high mark but also care of their correct way to grow up. Second, a qualified teacher shouldn't give his students so much pressure; they should make the correct way as every student individual character to let them improve their study level. Third, a qualified teacher should improve himself knowledge every time.

"A good garden can grow a good flower." Teacher should know it and always

remember the requirements how to be a qualified teacher.

Not considering the weakness in supporting the thesis, we just have a look at the whole structure. This essay is composed of six paragraphs, among which four paragraphs are the introduction, and the rest two are the body and conclusion. In the introduction part, the author uses two tragic accidents located in two paragraphs to elicit that the teachers should be responsible for the tragedy. Then, he deduces that the society needs qualified teachers and thesis statement is finally presented in paragraph four. In words used in introduction part is twice more than that of the body. Therefore, the body part even does not elaborate the topic sentence with details or examples, which is not suitable for the English topical paragraph.

4.2.2.2 Introduction and Conclusion Part

Writings of CET 4 or other similar types usually contain three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. This can also be seen in Wang Chongyi's book (1995:239) "Every composition must have a central purpose or objective. No matter what purpose or objective of a particular composition has, all compositions have in common three major parts: an introduction, a middle part or body, and an ending, or conclusion." Though not every composition needs a separate concluding paragraph, it does need an end. As Ding Wangdao et al. (1994:157) say, "The end of an essay is important because it is often the part that gives the reader the deepest impression. Not every essay needs a separate concluding paragraph. For a short composition, the last paragraph of the body, even the last sentence of that paragraph, may serve as the end, so long as it can give the reader a feeling of completeness." Writing with an introduction part or conclusion part is significant to overall quality of the whole text, but students often neglect either an introduction or a conclusion part in their writings. Let's have a look at the last paragraph of one sample.

Example 11:

Besides, the qualified teacher should be responsible just as everyone should be. And as a modern teacher, he should have the ability to master all kinds of

39

modern technology to teach.

This essay has no separate concluding paragraph, nor can the last sentence serve as the end, for it does not give the reader a sense of completeness. What's more, the last sentence needs supporting sentences. So, this passage has no end.

An effective concluding paragraph can make a positive contribution by bringing the whole essay to a climax, by summing up the discussion in a few sentences that leave the readers with the feeling of completeness.

4.2.2.3 Topic Sentence

According to the position, purpose, and content, paragraphs in a piece of writing can be classified into four types: the topical paragraph, the introductory paragraph, the transitional paragraph, and the concluding paragraph. If a paragraph has a central idea, and all the sentences are developed closely around the idea, the paragraph is called a topical paragraph (Wang Chongyi, 1995:177). Thus the topical paragraph has some special features that are different from any other type. McCrimmon (1984:193) describes the requirements of an effective topical paragraph. He says, an effective topical paragraph must meet four requirements. First, it must discuss one topic only; that is, it must have unity of subject matter. Second, it must say all that the reader needs to know about the topic; that is, it must be complete enough to do what it is intended to do. Third, the sentences within the paragraph must follow some reasonable order that the reader can recognize and follow. Fourth, the sentences within a paragraph must have coherence; that is, they must be so tied together that the reader can read the paragraph as a unit, not as a collection of separate sentences. In other words, a topical paragraph must be unified, complete, orderly and coherent. To meet the four requirements, a paragraph must deal with one topic only, follow a suitable order, exemplify the controlling ideas and use proper cohesive devices, etc. What's more, the sentences in a topical paragraph are related, which function respectively as the topic sentence, the supporting sentences and the concluding sentence and together conveys a central idea. The errors of topical paragraph

organization found in the sample essays include those in the topic sentence, specification of the topic sentence and cohesive devices.

There are mainly two kinds of problems in about topic sentence in students' writings. The first one is that a paragraph goes without a topic sentence where it is required. English writing often emphasizes the topic; nearly every book on paragraph writing advocates the importance of it. As a rule, an introductory paragraph, a transitional paragraph or a concluding paragraph does not necessarily have a topic sentence, but the topical paragraph in expository or argumentative writings usually has a topic sentence (Wang Chongyi, 1995). Let's find the problem in the sample below:

Example 12:

> A qualified teacher like a bee, who works hard, unselfish then help to produce the sweetest honey. Teachers should teach what they've learned and experienced to others, so they have to be unselfish and their happiest moment is when they see their students learn a lot from them and master more knowledge than them.

The author of the writing may want to express a qualified teacher should be unselfish but does not state explicitly by the use of a simile to imply it. They may just lack a topic sentence.

The second problem is that a topic sentence contains two main ideas. Unity is an important feature cherished in English paragraph writing. Bander (1978) points out the fact that "an English paragraph constitutes a separate unit of thought is its most important quality. In composing a paragraph, a writer discusses only one topic or one aspect of a topic. This characteristic of a paragraph is known as unity or singleness of purpose". So the topic sentence containing two ideas is not appropriate. For example:

Example 13:

> To begin with, a teacher should be confident but also modest. Being confident doesn't mean you should be proud, but means making your students believe that you are authority, what you said to them and teach them are definitely right and you should avoid saying like "Maybe it is" or "It is possible that" before your

student. So they can trust you and respect you. Modest, that is to say, you should listen to your students' different opinions and discuss with them. If your opinion is proved wrong, you'd best admit it before class and praise the student who found your mistake.

It is common to talk about more than one idea in a paragraph of a Chinese writing, but it is rarely so in English. This paragraph is a violation of English paragraph unity. The best way to explain them clearly is to divide them into two paragraphs, each with a topic sentence of its own.

4.2.2.4 Information Construction

The problem of information construction is mainly that the information given in the paragraph doesn't support the main ideas of the topic sentence. Unity in a paragraph requires consistent development of the idea that the paragraph intends to explain. To achieve unity, each succeeding sentence must show a clear connection with the topic idea. But details of no relevance to the controlling ideas abound in the sample writings. For instance:

Example 14:

The most important requirement for a qualified teacher is patient enough. Some one thought a teacher must be full of knowledge and can answer all the questions the students asked, that's necessary but not the most important one. You are a, good scholar but, may be not a qualified teacher. Besides, the students you are facing are children or teenagers, they cannot control themselves. So you must have enough patience to treat them as if they are you own children.

The controlling idea of this paragraph is in the first sentence. And we find the sentences follow serves no good to support the controlling ideas. As we know, a good scholar may be a patient-and qualified teacher. The following sentences have no direct relation to the topic sentence.

Another example:

42

Example 15:

> Fourth, a qualified teacher should be equal to every student. In our college, some teachers pay too much attention to students who are good at study but overlook those who are poor at study but have other excellent abilities. Since we are not good at both study and other activities we always think that we have no relations with the teachers when we are out of classroom.

In reading the first sentence, readers may predict why the writer thinks so. The writer, however, just provides a phenomenon and does not state the harmfulness of being unequal. What's more, the controlling idea in the topic sentence is vague in that whether the author means the equality between the teacher and students or the equality between students in the teacher's eyes. So it seems that the following part has no relation to the main idea.

4.3 Discussion: Major Causes for the Errors

In this chapter, we have revealed college non-English major students' discourse errors through both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Yet this is not the final purpose of the present study, we still have to find out the causes of the errors, so that measures to decrease the errors to a minimum can be proposed directly. But the causes of the errors are manifold; we cannot point them out completely with details, and here bellow is just some of them which are considered to be the major ones according to the types of errors students make in their EFL writings.

4.3.1 Different Thought Patterns between Chinese and English

According to Zhang Sijie & Zhang Bairan (2001), the underlying causes for the basic difference between the Chinese and the English languages can be traced to the fact that each language is culturally commensurable with its own philosophical traditions and pattern of thinking. The Chinese people tend to view things in their entirety, thinking that man and nature are integrated. The mental habit of the Chinese

is characterized by the synthetic pattern of thinking and the fuzzy logic. The unique thinking pattern of the Chinese is reflected in language as being paratactic. By contrast, westerners tend to view things separately and they put much emphasis on the formal appearance. The formal-logical pattern of their mode of thinking can account for the hypotactic feature of their language.

On the whole, the different patterns of thinking lead to the most important difference between English and Chinese, with English as hypotactic and Chinese as paratactic. To be more specific, English is a subject-prominent language with distinct cohesive ties and it usually adopts a static and passive way of expression by using large numbers of prepositions and nominal groups. However, Chinese is a topic-prominent language with less frequent use of cohesive ties; the intention of a writer or a speaker is usually realized by the stream of notions. With such a difference of two languages' thinking pattern, it is quite natural that people of these two different languages tend to have a different expression mode in their writings; hence the wirings have too many different tendencies at discourse level.

4.3.2 Neglect of Discourse Analysis in Teaching

In foreign language teaching, too much attention is paid to grammar. The concept of coherence has been applied to foreign language writing teaching very little. As a result, in their compositions, students are too sensitive to grammatical structures and spelling, but ignore the cohesion of the sentences and the structure of the whole text. Most researches of the problems of Chinese students' English compositions have dealt with errors at word or sentence level. These may help students to overcome difficulties in these aspects. But native speakers still have difficulty in comprehending Chinese students' English compositions, because of the errors at discourse level.

The neglect of discourse analysis in writing teaching is partly due to some language teachers' low theoretical levels on discourse analysis or failure to the awareness of the importance of the text structure as well as cohesive devices for composing a coherent text. This not only directly limits their abilities of instructing.

students the ways of writing a coherent text, but also leads to their omission or skipping of doing so in writing teaching. Students' knowledge of discourse analysis is mainly obtaining from the teachers, if they have been instructed in the writing class. They have no other sources of input. The students do not even know what discourse analysis is, let alone to have awareness of learning it by themselves.

4.3.3 Insufficiency of Students' Linguistic Competence

Compared with reading, listening and speaking, less time is devoted to the skill of writing in many English language classrooms around China. Time is limited in the classroom and teachers want to make full use of such a short amount of time to explain the language points. Students too may feel that spending valuable classroom time writing in silence is a waste of time. As a result, many Chinese students who have studied English may be able to read and understand the language successfully, but they do not always know how to speak, fail to write correct simple sentences to make their own ideas understood clearly. As a result, among the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) writing is the weakest point of students in China.

Besides, writing is a complicated process which requires not only the writing itself, but also other linguistic competence, such as vocabulary, the making of correct sentence, logical analysis etc. Due to the lack of the sufficient linguistic competence, students don't know how to utilize both cohesive devices to correctly unite the separated sentences into a unified whole in form, the thematic structure to produce a coherent text in content, and how to keep in consistency with the given topic and relevant requirements in the respect of the situational context. As a result, their English compositions full of the coherent errors and can't be accepted by linguistic teachers and native speakers.

45

Chapter 5   Implications for Writing Teaching

To improve Chinese college students' writing proficiency in terms of discourse competence, some suggestions are offered here based on the major findings and discussion in previous chapter. As justified in Chapter 4, there exists a great deal of errors in college non-English major students' EFL writing at discourse level. Combined this with the practical teaching and learning, we can see that the EFL writing of Chinese college students was inevitably influenced by their native language Chinese, because both English and Chinese writing possess some unique features. And furthermore, students' cognition about discourse analysis is also one important factor that affects students' writing ability at discourse level. This is most probably due to the insufficiency of writing teaching about the knowledge at discourse level. While, the purpose of the study is not only to reveal this result, but also to provide some pedagogical implications and suggestions for EFL teachers in China in helping students overcome these problems in English writing at discourse level.

And as can be seen in Chapter 4, there are significant differences between successful writings and unsuccessful writings' discourse errors. And in all the discourse errors found in the sample writings, unsuccessful students take up most proportion. Yet the successful student writers are not free from the errors, they make some of the errors occasionally, especially the errors at micro-level. So writing teaching should strengthen the awareness of discourse analysis of all the students, thus discourse errors in EFL writing of unsuccessful writers will be decreased and awareness or ability of discourse analysis in EFL writing of successful writers will be greatly enhanced.

5.1 Strengthening Students' Cognition and Awareness of Discourse Analysis by Reading and Analyzing Model Texts

Ann Raimes (1983) point out that reading serves as good sources of writing in that reading enable students to engage actively in new language and culture. The more

students read, the more familiar they will become with the vocabulary, sentence patterns, idioms organizational flow and cultural assumptions of native speakers. Through extensive reading of different types of articles and paragraphs, students will obtain the knowledge of the organization of different types of writings, such as those of description, narration, exposition, argumentation and so on. ·Therefore, reading extensively is conductive to acquire knowledge of formal schemata, which is the prerequisite of good EFL writing. Only when students are aware of the discourse pattern of a native English composition can they follow the pattern while in writing. And it is advisable that students read with a critical thinking and contrastive consciousness, because on the one hand, reading is the foundation of writing (Krashen, 1984) and on the other hand, reading in this way can be helpful for raising the students' awareness of the similarities and dissimilarities of the two languages (James, 1980).

The adequate language input to ESL writers should be the combination of guided in-class reading and after-class reading. Therefore, apart from guiding students to read in class effectively, an intensive reading teaching should encourage and guide students to read after class. About the material selected for this kind of reading, three points should be paid special attention to: The first one is that the teaching material must be interest-arousing; the second is that the input should be moderate in quantity; and the last is that the input should be moderate in difficulty (Krashen, 1984).

Analyzing excellent writings of native writers of English is a good way to help students acquaint with the discourse pattern and the writing style of English. In China, teachers who are in charge of students, especially for those non-English major students', English class seldom spend enough time for the analysis of the whole structure of the text. Thus, the students rarely pay attention to the elicitation and development of topic, devices of cohesion and coherence and ways of ending. In the perspective of writing, those neglected is what they need to pay attention to because those aspects display the writer's thought pattern and writing style, which should be emphasized in foreign language writing. Therefore, in reading texts of typical English writing, the teacher need to lay emphasis on discourse, guiding the students to analyze

the structure of the text, pointing out the use of formal devices in connecting sentences or paragraphs and explaining the relation between writing style and thought pattern so that they can familiarize with the writer's style and thought pattern. The teacher can ask the students to make an outline for the text or offer them an incomplete outline to complete, laying the emphasis on topic sentence, supporting points, coherent words or phrases. After learning the text, the teacher can assign the students to write a composition on the similar topic in the same way as the text, which is also called imitation writing.

Then, the teacher makes comments on the students' compositions and asks them to contrast theirs with the text and improve them. If necessary, the teacher can assign the students another similar topic to write to enhance the effect. From text analysis to producing similar writing, the combination of discourse analysis with writing helps the students get acquainted with the style and discourse pattern of target language and step by step, reduce and overcome the negative influence from Chinese thinking pattern when in writing.

This is a kind of explicit method, which means to increase on the one hand the Chinese EFL learners' awareness about the differences of discourse features between English and Chinese, and on the other hand, the EFL teachers' consciousness of the necessity of giving a formal instruction on this point and of the significance of more training. According to Sharwood Smith (1988), conscious explicit knowledge has a facilitative role in the development of language competence. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, abilities to analyze, generalize and comprehend are most important for adult learners, so learning without understanding is impossible, as far as adults learning a second language are concerned. College students are adult learners; therefore a deliberate, conscious attention to certain features of the foreign language is facilitative in the development of language competence (Hedge, 2000). Regarding writing instruction, there is reason to believe that consciousness-raising is not just beneficial but necessary. Teachers must be able to help learners realize clearly similarity and dissimilarity between English and Chinese discourse in order to avoid the negative transfer of the native language into the target language.

5.2 Paying More Attention to Discourse Problems in Writing Checking

To cultivate students' sensitivity and insights towards the differences, methods of error analysis can be adopted which is helpful for increasing the salience of the discourse features in English (Fisiak, 1981). Another reason for adopting error analysis method is that in reality, it is difficult to cultivate learners' awareness due to lack of language environment since it is impossible for non-English majors to spend as much time as English majors in learning English. Error analysis can be adopted to compensate for such a loss because error analysis is a shortcut and an effective methodological tool to find out weakness of students discourse ability and then demonstrate the differences between two languages for them.

In order to arouse students' attention on discourse errors in their writings, teachers have to change their traditional pattern of students' writing checking. In the traditional way, teachers pay more or most of their attention to students' grammar mistakes in writing, errors at discourse level are rarely mentioned or referred to. Affected by teachers' checking or comments, students will only pay more attention to their grammars in their writing, they will not consider discourse errors as important or have no awareness of them. Writing checking has the function of attracting students' learning focus on the counterpart in writing practicing.

After the checking, teacher should also point out the errors that most students made in their writings again on the writing class so as to heighten their importance in students' minds. At the same time, teachers should also analyze the errors for students and correct them for the students. Teachers should make it a clear statement that there are great differences between English and Chinese and those rhetorical norms are culture-specific. Teachers could make some comparison and contrast between Chinese and English in students' teaching material with a focus at discourse level. This kind of comparison and contrast is of great necessity. If teachers do not compare and contrast the two languages in the teaching material, students would do it in their own way,

which is probably wrong. Then teachers may work out some special exercises, based on the errors students made in their writings, aiming at discourse levels. With this kind of intensive practice, students may have deeper and deeper impression of the differences with each passing day, and would try to consciously avoid making Chinese-like writing in English.

5.3 Practicing Reorganization of a Scrambled Text or Paragraph

Reorganization practice is to ask students to rearrange the scrambled text or paragraph. It is beneficial for the students to get acquainted with English writing style and discourse pattern (Brookes & Grundy, 1990). This method is especially suitable for the freshman who has little knowledge about English discourse features. In this kind of exercise, the teacher can train students' discourse analysis ability at macro-level and micro-level ability separately. In the training at macro-level, the teacher can supply a scrambled English text or paragraph with paragraphs or sentences numbered and ask students to rearrange the paragraphs or sentences in a logical order to make sense or to make them better in understanding and logical. In this part, students do not need to consider detail information of the sentence and they don't need to do any changes of the words. In doing this, the students go through the process of logical thinking (Brookes & Grundy, 1990). In the training at micro-level, teacher provides students a paragraph or some sentences which have no good cohesion or coherence. Students have to rewrite the paragraph or sentences by analyzing of them. They have to add some conjunction words, change some of the words, etc. so as to make the paragraph or sentences cohesive or in good logic. And after that, teacher should provide them the original text which is an excellent native writing. Comparing their results with the original paragraph, they can observe the similarities and differences in thinking between the writer's and theirs so as to raise their sensitivity to differences. In doing this exercise, the teacher not only presents the original writings to the students, but also needs to explain and justify the writing, which helps the students learn about the roots of writing differences in thinking. By

doing such exercise, the students can enhance mindfulness of different thought pattern.

5.4 Doing Chinese-English Translation and Comparing the Differences of the Two Language Discourse Patterns

According to behaviorist theories of L2 learning, the degree of difficulty, defined as the amount of effort required to teach an L2 pattern, depends primarily in the extent to which the target language pattern is similar to or different from a native language pattern. Hence, where the two are different, learning difficulty arises and errors resulting from negative transfer are likely to occur. Such errors are considered damaging to successful language learning because they prevent the formation of the correct target-language habits. As explained in the previous chapter of this study, negative transfer of the native language, Chinese, influences students in their writing very much. Mao Ronggui (1998) points out the major differences between Chinese and English is that English favors hypotaxis while Chinese parataxis. As a result, English relies more on connective words or phrases to keep the passage coherent, whereas Chinese applies more accumulative clauses or independent sentences. In view of this, teachers should introduce English text mode to the students and make contrastive analysis with Chinese text mode, making the students aware of the differences between the two languages, and this will be helpful for the students to overcome negative transfer.

As have been discussed in the early part of this chapter, it is necessary to raise students' awareness of the unique features in English writing by employing the means of comparison and contrast. Yet, this is not quite enough to make students acquire the differences of these two languages only by telling them the differences. In order to deepen their understanding of the differences, it is better ask them to do some translation exercises. During the process of translation and the comparison after that, by heighten the discourse analysis, students will aware and understand more of the

differences. In the exercises, teachers should provide typical texts or paragraphs that will represent great differences of the two language discourse patterns for students. And after the translation, teachers should give them a reference model, and then by analyzing the differences of the texts of different languages at discourse level, to enhance students' awareness of different discourse patterns.

The time in the class in rather limited, so after class, teacher should ask the students to read more original writings with critical thinking about them at discourse level and try to consider and compare their counter writings in Chinese. If possible, teachers should give students some assignment of translating an original English text into Chinese and then marking out the differences of the two at discourse level. Through more translation and critical thinking, appropriate ideas about the discourse features of each language can be constructed in students' minds. As a result, one can reduce the hampering influence of his or her native language while producing the target language.

Chapter 6   Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This thesis is an analysis of discourse errors in Chinese intermediate college students' English writing. The previous chapters include five parts of the study which is consistent to the purposes of the study.

Firstly, the rationale for making this study was clear. As is well acknowledged, writing is of great importance either in English teaching and learning, while the present situation of Chinese EFL learners' writing proficiency does not seem to be satisfactory although much effort has been made by both teachers and learners. Many of the students' compositions are regarded as incoherent and unorganized in a native English speaker's eyes. To a large extent, this is because the students lack the ability of discourse analysis in their compositions, although they have learned English for

several years, namely, their discourse competence is poor. This phenomenon is partly, on the one hand, due to some problems existing in the teaching methods of college English, and on the other hand, partly due to the distinct discourse features of English writing. Many of the Chinese EFL students tend to translate, or attempt to translate, first language words, phrases, and organizations into English when they write. They pay their attention, most of time, only to correctness of grammars, completion of the content in English writing. Discourse errors are very common in their writing. So what, in specific, is the situation of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing proficiency at discourse level? What are the main errors of intermediate college non-English major students' EFL writing at discourse level? What are the major differences of errors at discourse level in EFL writing between successful and unsuccessful student writers? What are the major causes of the errors and how to overcome them through writing teaching effectively? These are things that have been taken into consideration in this study.

Secondly, a literature review about discourse analysis theory and error analysis was made to construct a theoretical foundation for this thesis, of which error analysis at the discourse level is the focus. With the development of the L2 learning theories in recent years, the importance of discourse analysis in EFL writing has been widely acknowledged and accepted. In the past two decades, studies on error analysis of writing were mostly done at word, sentence or grammar level, namely, studies of EFL writing at discourse level are relatively rare. It was not until recently that more attention was paid to this field. In recent years, empirical studies of errors of EFL writings st discourse level were mostly carried out by qualitative analysis, quantitative studies are relatively few.

Thirdly, an empirical study about the errors of college non-English students' EFL writings at discourse level was designed and carried out. And then by analyzing the first hand writings of the students, students discourse errors made in their writings were counted. And then the author also analyzed in details the errors from the aspects of macro-level and micro-level. Results of the data statistic and analysis show that successful writers still aren't free from the errors of conjunction, reference, ellipsis

and substitutions. And macro-errors at discourse level are the major factors that distinguish the successful writings from the poor ones. And discourse errors made by college non-English major students in their EFL writings can successfully distinguish the good writers from the poor ones. About the discourse errors found in students' writings, the results of our analysis also support·that of other researches, such as Li Zhixue (2000), Dong Junhong (1999) et al. Later, the major causes of the errors were discussed by three ways of the thought pattern, writing teaching and the writers themselves. According to Kaplan (1966), direct or linear discourse patterns are preferable to Anglo-Americans, while, in a contrast, indirect or spiral discourse patterns are preferable to oriental people. Different thought patterns may account for this difference. Chinese writing values meaning more than form, as a result, the way a discourse is organized is determined by the semantic relationship or context, and conjunctions are not vital. This displays Chinese holistic thinking which emphasizes the maintenance of semantic harmony (Hu Shuzhong, 1993). The traditional English writing teaching stresses the correctness of grammars is also another important reason in this part. And we can't deny that students' insufficient in English overall proficiency play an important role in their writing errors in discourse for writing is an overall productive skill.

Fourthly, in order to decrease students' EFL writing discourse errors to a minimum, students need to raise their awareness about the discourse analysis in English writing. It is not only necessary but also significant for them to build some knowledge about this in minds so as to improve their ability of discourse analysis in English writing. Teachers need to raise their consciousness about giving a formal instruction and special training on this in order to help students overcome the negative influence of Chinese in expression. From a teacher's point of view, how to help students 'raise their awareness in order to improve their writing skill? Some pedagogical suggestions were made by the writer, they are: strengthening students' cognition and awareness of discourse analysis by reading and analyzing of model texts; paying more attention to discourse problems in writing checking; practicing reorganization of a scrambled text or paragraph; doing Chinese-English translation

and comparing the differences of the two languages' expression pattern. We hope that these suggestions will bring some help to the improving of current situation of students' writing.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

The present study is only a tentative one. Owning to the limitation of the author's time, man power, academic knowledge, condition and experience, there are some limitations in terms of sampling, classification of discourse errors, assessment of discourse errors and overgeneralization, etc.

First, the sampling size and area limitation in this study mean that the results of it will not possibly be generalized to represent the writings of all university students in a province or throughout China. The author's lacking of experience or ability of empirical study may affect the results of the empirical study in some parts.

Second, the assessment of errors in the samples is made by Chinese teachers, so subjectivity is unavoidable though the raters have tried their best to objectively assess the data. It would be ideal to have a native speaker of English to assess the errors, but it is hard to find one because it takes too much time.

Third, students' overall English proficiency level affects their English writing achievements greatly; our study does not pay enough attention to this aspect. It is better that students' overall English proficiency level be controlled in this study, thus we will know more clearly that to what extent do writers' English proficiency affects their writing proficiency at discourse level and what discourse errors in writing have nothing to go with other writing abilities.

As was proposed by MacGowan-Gilhooly (1991), Devin et al. (1993) and Kasper (1997), factors that affect EFL writing proficiency probably include writing level of native language and evaluation system of writing test besides the whole English level of the writer, but a great pity is that, there are few researches probe into these areas until now. Level of writers' native language and their first language discourse analysis ability in writing may play a significant role on the development of their English

writing ability at discourse level, and it should be one of the important aspects of future studies.

Writing teaching and learning is a complicated process, in which both internal and external factors will count. So to say which kind of teaching method or what kind of teaching pattern can effectively enhances students' writing ability at discourse level cannot be too summarily. Therefore, empirical studies of the effect of applying all kinds of writing teaching method or pattern should be valued in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A   Test Paper of English Writing

大学英语写作能力测试题

班级：_____   姓名：_____得分:_____

考试时间：40 分钟   满分 25 分

要求：

1、下面两个题目中，请任选其中一题来完成。

2、文章长度不少于 150 个单词。

3、文章应该包括提示所包含的所有内容。

作文题一：My Views of a Qualified Teacher

1. 一个称职的老师才能受到学生的欢迎。

2. 我认为一个称职的老师应该是……

3. 我的理由是……

作文题二：Should Students Get More Exams?

1. 考试是衡量学生成绩的一种重要手段。

2. 现在有的老师认为，应该给学生多进行一些测试；有的老师则认为应该减少一些测试……

3. 我的观点是……

Appendix B   Standards of Rating of the Writing Test Papers

1.作文题采用总体评分(Global Scoring)方法。阅卷员就总的印象给出奖励分(Reward Scores)，而不是按语言点的错误数目扣分。

2.从内容和语言两个方面对作文进行综合评判。内容和语言是一个统一体。作文应表达题目所规定的内容，而内容要通过语言来表达。要考虑作文是否切题，是否充分表达思想，也要考虑是否用英语清楚而合适的表达思想，也就是要考虑语言上的错误是否造成理解上的障碍。

3.评分说明

1)本题满分为 25 分。

2)阅卷标准共分五等: 1-5 分、6-10 分、11-15 分、16-20 分及 21-25 分。

3)阅卷人员根据阅卷标准，若认为与某分数(如 15 分)相似，即定为该分数(即 15 分)；若认为稍优或稍劣于该分数，则可加一分(即 16 分)或减一分(即 14 分)，但不得加或减半分。

4.评分标准:

1) 第一档(差)：(1-5 分)条理不清，思路紊乱语言支离破碎。

2) 第二档(较差)：(6-10 分)基本切题。表达思想不清楚，连贯性差。大部分句子有错误，且多数为严重错误。

3) 第三档(适当)：(11-15 分)基本切题。有些地方表达思想不够清楚，文字勉强连贯；语言错误相当多，其中有一些是严重错误。

4) 第四档(好)：(16-20 分)切题。表达思想清楚，文字连贯，但有少量语言错误。

5）第五档(很好)：(21-25 分)切题。表达思想清楚，文字通顺，连贯性较好。基本上无语言错误，仅有个别小错。

注：

1)白卷，作文与题目毫不相关，或只有几个孤立的词而无法表达思想，则给 0 分。

2)字数不足应酌情扣分。

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