

## **A Corpus-Based Study of Tense Errors in Chinese College English Majors' Writing**

Zhao Xiaodong; Liu Yang  
Dalian Maritime University

This study, based on the data collected and processed with six suites of FoxPro Programs, aims to describe, classify and analyze the tense errors in Chinese college English-major students' writing. A total of 989 tense errors are identified and retrieved from the two subcorpora of CLEC (Chinese Learner English Corpus): St5 and St6. These errors are first categorized according to sixteen English tenses with an aim to investigate the characteristics of their distribution in the two subcorpora. Based on the results obtained, simple past, simple present and present perfect are identified as the most problematic tenses and simple past is taken for further analysis. The errors in the simple past, which include tense choice and tense form errors, as well as the error distribution patterns are described. After a further analysis, the two intralingual factors, verb salience and temporal adverbials, are found to significantly affect Chinese English majors' use of simple past.

**Key words:** tense error, verb salience, temporal adverbial, corpus