

An Analysis of the Grammatical Problems in Chinese EFL Students' Expository Writing: A Systemic Functional Perspective

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This article will investigate the problems Chinese EFL students have in constructing what Martin (1985) calls *factual writing* — discussion, explanation, and exposition. The study will focus on the analysis of their use of *grammatical metaphor* as characteristic of expository genres. The data are drawn from 200 compositions sampled from Chinese EFL university undergraduates of science and engineering majors in eight universities. The methods of analysis will be based on the taxonomy of the types of elemental metaphor proposed by Halliday (1998). The results of the analysis show that Chinese EFL students' expository writing displays a general tendency of the metaphorical move from the logical construal towards the experiential reconstrual (i.e. a semantic reconstrual of the domain of sequences in the domain of figures of being & having) in order to meet the requirement of expository genres. However, the students have the problem of selecting appropriate linguistic resources as a realization of these semantic features. The disjunction between the semantic reconstrual and the lexicogrammatical realization can be attributed partly to mother tongue interference. The research suggests that in teaching academic writing in a Chinese EFL classroom, attention should be paid to the significance of the nominalization of process and quality as the controlling metaphor of the lower rank syndrome.

■ Purpose of the Research

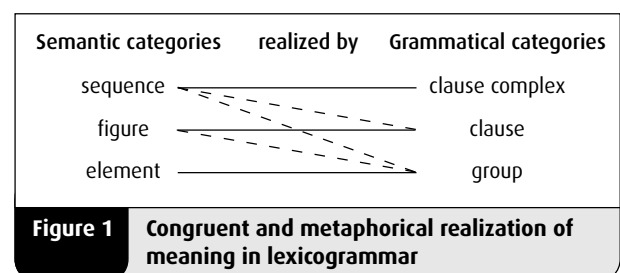
Expository texts are the linguistic manifestations of the genres valued in English speaking cultures for challenging or defending the existing order of social reality (Martin, 1985). One of the features that contributes to the effectiveness of expository writing is *buried reasoning*¹ (Martin, 1985), which can be achieved mainly through the deployment of the linguistic resource of *grammatical metaphor*. Thus, an effective teaching of expository writing to EFL or ESL students should involve explicit instruction regarding the use of this linguistic resource.

Previous research on the use of grammatical metaphors by Chinese EFL students in their construction of expository texts (Chen, 2001) suggests that one of the most problematic aspects of their expository writing is an inappropriate employment of lexicogrammatical resources. The present paper will focus on the exploration of this aspect of language use in EFL students' expository writing and adopt a systemic functional approach to investigate how meaning is realized in lexicogrammar so as to provide a different perspective on looking at the grammatical problems that may be present in EFL students' factual writing.

■ Theoretical Rationale

The motivation for this study is derived from the theory of systemic functional linguistics that views grammar as a theory of human experience (Halliday, 1985/1994; Halliday, 1995, 1998; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

According to this view, grammar plays an essential role in construing human experience into meaning, and its categories (clause complex, clause, and group) stand in a natural relationship with those of meaning (sequence, figure, and element) that are construed through grammar. The significance of the existence of grammar as a purely abstract coding system of the human language, according to Halliday (1998), is the potential for remapping between grammatical and semantic categories. The contexts for the remapping can be characterized as the result of language change that happens across the three time-frames of phylogenesis (language evolution through human history), ontogenesis (language development in individuals), and logogenesis (unfolding of meaning in text) in the semohistory of language (Halliday & Martin, 1993; Martin, 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999). The result of the three kinds of language change is the creation of two kinds of realization relationships between lexicogrammar and semantics, known as congruent and metaphorical, which can be represented in Figure 1



(where solid lines represent congruent realization and broken lines represent metaphorical realization).

Congruent realization is a kind of realizational relationship between lexicogrammar and semantics. This kind of relationship, or mode of meaning, represents a natural realization relation in that it occurs earlier in the evolution of language; it is learnt by children at an early age and it occurs at the beginning stage of an unfolding text (see Halliday & Mathiessen, 1999). In the congruent mode of meaning, any phenomenon, or event that happens around us or inside us, once perceived, can be construed through language into a semantic category called figure and this semantic category of figure is realized in lexicogrammar in the form of a clause. Halliday's (1998) example of 'the rapid downhill driving of the bus caused the brake failure' can serve as an illustration. When we see a bus running, we may say 'a bus is running very fast down the hill' or 'the driver is driving the bus very fast down the hill'. Each of the statements represents a semantic configuration of figure with elements of participants (bus, driver), processes (run, drive) and circumstances (fast, down the hill) realized by lexicogrammar as a ranking clause. Sometimes, another event may occur simultaneously and has been observed. If the relationship between the occurrence of two events is perceived as a causal one then we can say 'The driver was driving the bus very fast down the hill, so the brake failed'. On this occasion, a sequence of events is construed through language as a sequence at semantic level which is realized in lexicogrammar as a clause complex.

Contrary to the congruent mode of meaning which is typical of the language in children and the language of spoken mode, is the metaphorical mode of meaning involving a remapping between semantics and lexicogrammar (as shown in Figure 1 by broken lines). For the same phenomenon of experience or the same sequence of events that can be construed congruently by grammar as clause (e.g. 'the driver was driving the bus very fast down the hill') or a clause complex (e.g. 'the driver was driving the bus very fast down the hill, so the brake failed'), it is possible to reword them or to reconstrue them metaphorically through grammar into a nominal group (e.g. 'the driver's fast downhill driving of the bus') or a ranking clause (e.g. 'the driver's fast downhill driving of the bus caused a brake failure'). To reconstrue a semantic category of sequence in the form of a clause in lexicogrammar is an important linguistic resource by which buried reasoning in expository texts is achieved.

■ Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that some of the major grammatical problems associated with the use of written language by Chinese EFL students in their expository texts can be attributed to the interfering effect of the mother tongue on the way meaning is construed in the grammatical systems of English. The effect of interference is perceptible in the context where EFL students attempt to use a metaphorical mode of meaning which involves

the semantic shift from Quality and Process to Thing, and the rank shift from clause to group. Such interference may result in the inappropriate choice of a grammatical unit for realizing the participant roles in the structural configuration of figures of being. This thereby inhibits the EFL students from successfully burying reasoning in their writing.

■ Research Methodology and Data

A total of two hundred texts were sampled for the study. Since the study also involves exploring the effect of the context of culture (i.e. types of genre) on the use of grammatical metaphor, four different topics were chosen. Each topic was addressed by 50 Chinese EFL tertiary level students, majoring in Science and Engineering. The topics were designed to elicit four types of factual writing — Report, Explanation, Exposition and Discussion. The last three text types can be characterized as expository writing. The characterization of the generic structures of these four text types is based on Foley's classification of the genres commonly used in school settings (1994: 268). The generic structures of the four text types are given below:

<i>Report</i> ²	General Classification ^ Description (parts and their functions * quality * habits/behaviour/uses)
<i>Explanation</i>	General Statement ^ ↯Sequenced Explanations ^ Final state of being or thing produced
<i>Exposition</i>	Thesis (Position/Preview) ^ Argument (Point/Elaboration) ^ Reiteration of Thesis
<i>Discussion</i>	Issue ^ ↯Argument (for/against) ^ Recommendation

(Symbols used: X^Y: stage X precedes stage Y; *Y: stage Y is an unordered stage; ↯X: stage X is a recursive stage)

The writing topics chosen to illicit the four types of factual writing were:

Report:	<i>Decline of Smallpox</i>
Explanation:	<i>Why do Some Couples Prefer Having Boys to Girls?</i>
Exposition:	<i>Is 'One Couple One Child' Policy Necessary in China?</i>
Discussion:	<i>Do 'Lucky Numbers' Really Bring Good Luck?</i>

The four sample texts included in Appendix A are representative of the texts produced by the students sampled for this study based on the above requirements.

The first three of the above topics were designed by the researcher and written by the sampled students in their English class as a form of writing practice. The last topic was taken from the Writing Section of China's *National College English Test* (band 4), which was administered in June, 1998. Regardless of the different situations of text production, the time allocated and the length of the composition expected were similar. The students involved were required to write a 120-word

Table 1 Sampling of texts across genre and university

Institution	Genre			
	Report	Explanation	Exposition	Discussion
Shanghai Jiatong University	10	10	10	
Zhejiang University				20
Shangdong University of Technology				20
Zhengzhou University of Technology	10	10	10	
Zhengzhou Institute of Light Industry	10	10	10	
Jiangsu Institute of Petrochemical Technology	10	10	10	
Xi'an Institute of Telecommunications	10	10	10	
Bengbu Tank Warfare Academy				10

composition with three distinct paragraphs in 30 minutes based on an outline or topical sentences provided in the writing instructions. The number of the texts sampled across genres and universities is summarized in Table 1.

The study found that the dominant lexicogrammatical resources used in the four types of genres are those of relational processes and the realization of logical meaning within clauses. The employment of these two resources, both of which depend on grammatical metaphors for relating grammar to its context, are essential to expository texts that foreground what Martin (1997) identifies as the contextual features of thesis appraisal (interpersonal meaning), process/activity focus (textual meaning), and internal unfolding (logical meaning). Therefore, these four types of genres are considered by the present study as providing an appropriate context for investigating the grammatical problems that are associated with the metaphorical use of language in Chinese EFL students' expository writing.

Method of Analysis

The method of analysis is based on the taxonomy of types of elemental metaphor proposed by Halliday (1998), developed and elaborated by Halliday and Matthiessen (1999), and the model of general semantic shift of elemental metaphor toward Thing (see Halliday, 1998: 211; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999). The aim of the analysis was to compare realizational patterns of the EFL learners' attempts at metaphorical structures with those of standard realizational patterns for these structures. The analysis involved three steps. The first step of the analysis involved classifying all the instances of elemental metaphors found in the data in terms of Halliday's taxonomy³. The second step was concerned with identifying the instances of nominalizing metaphor that occur in two kinds of syntagmatic relations⁴ labelled by Halliday (1998) as "lower rank syndromes" and "higher rank syndromes". The structural configuration of lower rank syndromes can be expressed as $1/2 + [6]/[13]$. This can be interpreted as the configuration of type 1 metaphor (from Quality to Thing), and type 2 metaphor (from Process to Thing) as controlling metaphors, with

type 6 metaphor (from Circumstance to Quality) and type 13 metaphor (from Thing to Quality) as secondary metaphors (see Halliday, 1998). The structural configuration of higher rank syndromes can be expressed as $1st \{1/2 + [6]/[13]\} + 9 + 2nd \{1/2 + [6]/[13]\}$, which can be interpreted as two lower rank syndromes joined by type 9 metaphor (from Relator to Process). The final step involved sorting out the instances of "nominalizing metaphor" that were intended by EFL students to be the metaphorical realization in lower rank syndromes and higher rank syndromes. Through these three steps of analysis, an attempt was made to explore whether the actual realization patterns employed in EFL learners' expository texts deviate from the typical realization patterns of $1/2 + [6]/[13]$ for lower rank syndromes and $1st \{1/2 + [6]/[13]\} + 9 + 2nd \{1/2 + [6]/[13]\}$ for higher rank syndromes. The instances with the deviating realization patterns were then analyzed in functional terms with reference to the EFL learners' mother tongue, the Chinese language.

Results of Analysis

In the most general terms, there are two types of grammatical problems with the use of metaphorical language in Chinese EFL students' expository texts. The first type is purely grammatical in nature, because it occurs only at the grammatical stratum of content plane. The occurrence of the problem of this kind is simply the result of mistaking one grammatical class for another, usually adjectives for nouns or verbs for nouns. The following examples are representative of the EFL students' grammatical problems associated with transcategorization.

Example 1: Nominalized Quality and Process that should have been realized in lexicogrammar through suffixation: *In China the equal of a man and a woman is not popular* (equal: equality).

Example 2: Nominalized Quality and Process that should have been realized in lexicogrammar through both prefixation and

suffixation: *No equal between men and women make some couples prefer having boys to having girls (no equal:inequality).*

However, the grammatical problem that will be the focus of this study involves a situation that cannot be accounted for simply in grammatical terms. It has to be approached by adopting the “from above”⁵ perspective of considering how meaning is construed by grammar (for detailed discussion, see Halliday, 1994: 342), or specifically, consideration is given to how a semantic category of figure is reconstrued metaphorically by the grammatical category of nominal group as an element of Thing that may fill the participant roles of Token, Value, or Carrier in relational processes. We will only focus on those instances which the EFL students have realized as simple things when they should have been construed as macro-things or nominalizations of Quality and Process. These instances can be classified into the following three groups with reference to Halliday & Matthiessen’s (1999: 67) taxonomy of things, as shown in Figure 2.

- (1) conscious things for macro-things
- (2) figures for macro-things
- (3) qualities for things

Among these three categories, the most salient problem is the failure in the reconstrual of figures as macro-phenomena. Macro-phenomena refer to “figures downranked to function as ordinary elements” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999:102), and they can be realized either in the form of a pronoun for anaphoric reference or in the form of an extended nominal group through the nominalization of processes or qualities. The two realization patterns can be illustrated by Halliday & Matthiessen’s example (1999: 102).

They broke a Chinese vase.

- (i) **That** was careless. (pronoun for anaphoric reference)
- (ii) **The breaking of a Chinese vase** was careless. (extended nominal group)

The Choice of Conscious Things for Macro-things

The problem in this category involves the construal of meaning as conscious things instead of the reconstrual of meaning as macro-things. The underlined clause in the following stretch of text is typical of this problem.

First, with the development of society, people have been aware that boys and girls are same important. Second, for the reason of economy, to the family that isn’t rich enough, girls means to save much money in the future.

Obviously, the figure construed by the underlined clause is intended to be a figure of being, where one participant functions as Token and the other as Value⁶ which elaborates Token. To understand what the writer intended to say and what should be the appropriate realization of that meaning, it is necessary to understand the relevant cultural background behind this meaning. In China, there is a long-established tradition that the parents of a girl who is to marry should receive a dowry from the family of their would-be son-in-law. Thus, the parents who have a daughter do not have to worry about the considerable expenses needed for their daughter’s future marriage. In this sense, bringing up a daughter is more economical for parents. Under this circumstance, we can infer that what the writer actually wanted to say might be something like “as far as parents are concerned, if their baby is a daughter, it would mean that they would be saved (relieved) from the burden of paying a lot of money for their daughter’s marriage”. Or it can be reworded metaphorically as “as far as parents are concerned, having daughters means the saving of a lot of money in the future”. We can compare (see Figure 3) a suggested metaphorical wording (in parentheses) with the original one in terms of types of things that have been construed and grammatical functions in the structural configuration of transitivity.

This is demonstrative of what Halliday (1998) calls “higher rank syndrome” structure in which two participants that function as Token and Value are each supposed to be a nominalized process or quality joined by a verbalized process. The typical structural configuration of this kind, which can be expressed in terms of the types of metaphor that co-occur simultaneously in the form of $\{1/2 + [6]/[13]\} + 9 + \{1/2 + [6]/[13]\}$, can be unpacked into a clause complex of hypotactic relation of cause. Theoretically speaking, any metaphorical wording with the higher rank syndrome structure is subject to further unpacking into a less metaphorical wording of a clause complex because the

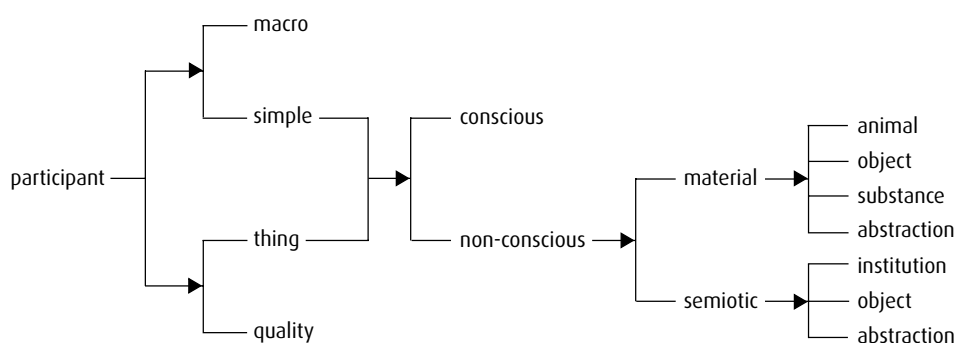
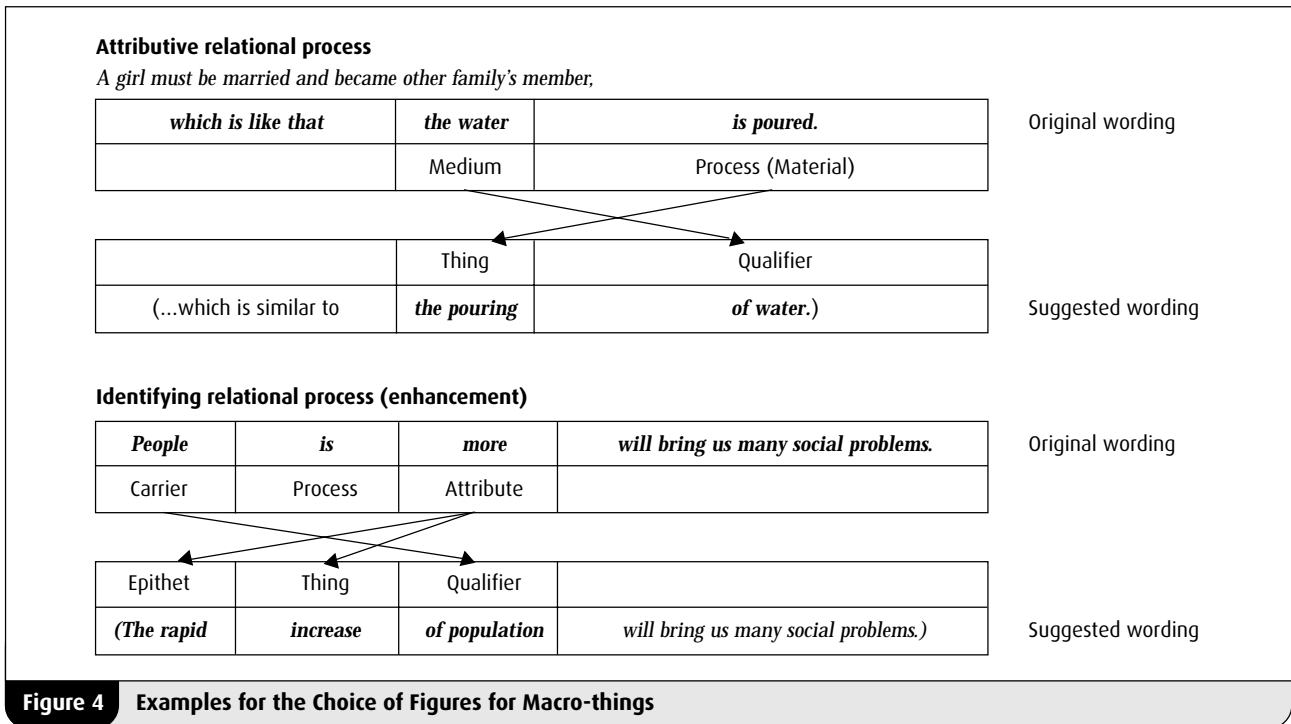
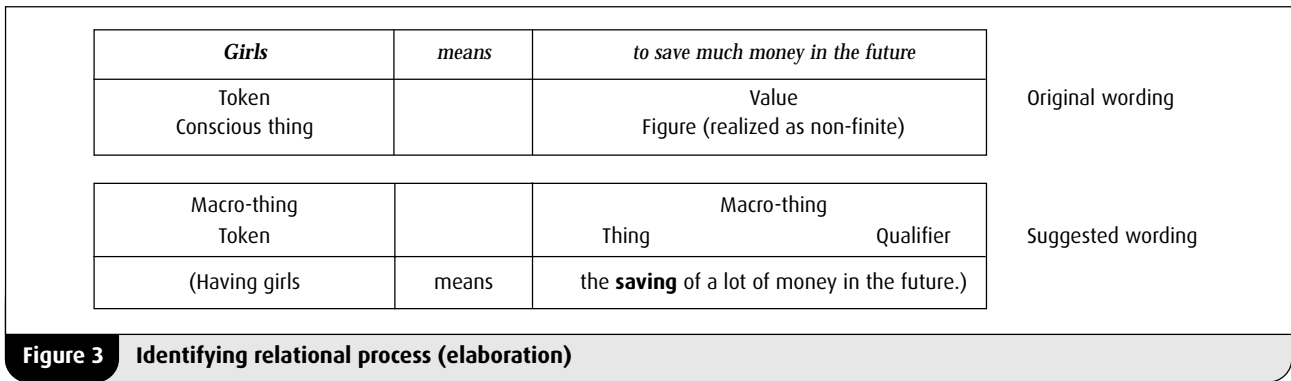


Figure 2 Taxonomy of the types of things



two participants involved in the higher rank syndrome structure already include the semantic features of either process or quality that can be realized nominally. However, the way the above example (i.e. *Girls means to save much money in the future*) is worded suggests that any further unpacking into a clause complex seems impossible because neither of the two participants involves the nominalization of the semantic features of process or quality.

Here are more examples found in the data in which participants are realized as human conscious beings instead of macro-things.

Some others think that boys is safety.
 (Some others think that *having boys* means the *safety* of the future for the parents.)

Too much people lead to the lack of food, water and source (resource).
 (Overpopulation leads to the lack of food, water and resources.)

More than people will hold back our development.
 (Overpopulation will hold back our development.)

The Choice of Figures for Macro-things

The problem in this category is similar to that in the previous category except that what has been realized as participant is the grammatical unit of clause with its semantic status as a figure. The two examples in Figure 4 illustrate the problem.

The Choice of Qualities for Things

The students' problem in this category differs from those in the previous two categories in that no downrank movement (i.e. from clause to group) is involved between what has been construed and what should have been construed. The problem occurs within the nominal group and lies in the confusion of whether an element in the group should be construed as a thing or as the quality of a thing. Figure 5 shows some examples.

Impact of the Mother Tongue Interference

From the above analysis, we can see that Chinese EFL students' writing seems to be characterized by the congruent (clausal) mode of meaning rather than the

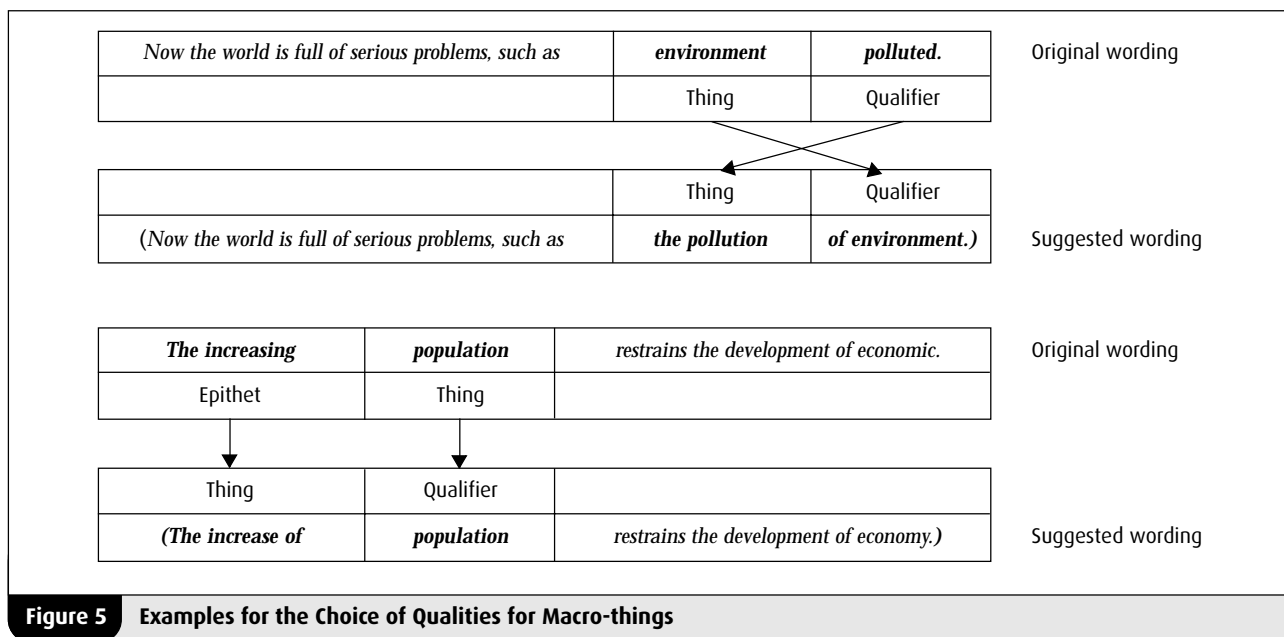


Figure 5 Examples for the Choice of Qualities for Macro-things

metaphorical (nominal) mode of meaning. The occurrence of the grammatical problems of this kind may result from the interfering effect of the Chinese language which has the following two grammatical features:

- The congruent grammatical realization of a figure in the form of clause and its metaphorical realization in the form of nominal group may have the identical ordering of elements in grammatical structure. The reason for this is that the structural configuration of nominal groups is characterized by the realization as pre-modifiers of the construal and reconstrual of the meaning as quality.
- There is no morphological signal (i.e. inflection) for indicating the change of grammatical class of a lexical item.

For these two features, the distinction between the grammatical realization patterns of figures and those of elements in the Chinese language can be perceived by students as ambiguous. The ambiguity may create a conflict in EFL students' use of English between the choice of types of figures from the ideational potential of semantic system (i.e. a figure of being) and choice of grammatical units for realizing the participant roles of the figure of being that has been selected. Semantically, the types of genres concerned impose certain semantic constraints for realizing figures as if elements of a figure, and for realizing logical relations as if processes. Grammatically speaking, this semantic feature should be realized as two nominal groups joined by a verb (i.e. "higher rank syndrome" structure). But the grammatical realization of these semantic constraints seems to have been affected by interference from the grammatical system of the Chinese language.

The impact of the mother tongue interference can be explored through the comparison of the possible versions of the word-for-word translation in Chinese as follows.

Too many people will cause our living environment bad.

Guo duo de renkou jiang dao zhi wo men sheng cun huan jing e hua.

过多的人口将导致我们(的)生存环境恶化。

So some couples prefer having boys to girls have two factors.

Suo yi you xie fu qi pian ai nan hai you liang ge yuan yin.

所以有些夫妻偏爱男孩有两个原因。
所以有些夫妻对男孩偏爱有两个原因。

People is more will bring us many social problems.

Renkou guo duo jiang dai gei wo men xu duo she hui wun ti.

人口过多将带给我们许多社会问题。

All of that cause the couples prefer having boys to having girls.

Suoyou zhexie dao zhi fu qi pian ai nan hai.

所有这些(原因)导致夫妻偏爱男孩。
所有这些(原因)导致夫妻对男孩偏爱。

Now the world is full of serious problems, such as environment polluted.

Muqian shi jie chong man le yan zhong wun ti. Li ru huan jing wu ran.

目前世界充满了严重问题, 比如环境污染。

Although the English versions are seriously impaired and grammatically crippled, their Chinese equivalents can be judged as being free from any serious grammatical problems and can be accepted as correct Chinese. The reason for this is that, in the Chinese language, the congruent grammatical realization of a figure in the form of a clause and its metaphorical realization in the form of a nominal group may have an identical ordering of elements in grammatical structure. To distinguish whether a piece of wording is the construal of a figure or the reconstrual of a figure as an element, one has to resort to the linguistic context for interpretation because there is no morphological change of words in the Chinese language (i.e. inflection) for signalling the function of the grammatical units. The ambiguity of grammatical

functions of the elements in Chinese can be exemplified as follows:

	我们 (的) 生存环境	恶化
	<i>wo men (de) sheng cun huan jing</i>	<i>e hua</i>
Figure	<i>Our living environment</i> Deictic Classifier Thing	<i>deteriorated.</i> Event Attribute
Element	<i>our living environment</i> Qualifier	<i>deterioration</i> Thing

	人口	过多
	<i>ren kou</i>	<i>guo duo</i>
Figure	<i>Population</i> Carrier	<i>is too large</i> Attribute
Element	<i>overpopulation</i> Qualifier Thing	

	环境	污染
	<i>huan jing</i>	<i>wu ran</i>
Figure	<i>The environment</i> Medium	<i>was polluted</i> Process (Material)
Element	<i>the environmental</i> Qualifier	<i>pollution</i> Thing

Although it seems that the Chinese translation of "couples prefer having boy" only allows for its interpretation as the construal of a figure of sensing, an alternative wording in Chinese '夫妻对男孩偏爱' (literally means 'couples to boys prefer'), which is an equally acceptable way of expressing the same meaning, is subject to the construal as a figure and reconstrual as an element.

	夫妻	偏爱	男孩
	<i>fu qi</i>	<i>pian ai</i>	<i>nan hai</i>
Figure	<i>Couples</i> Senser	<i>prefer</i> Phenomenon	<i>sons.</i> Process: Affection

	夫妻	对男孩	偏爱
	<i>fu qi</i>	<i>dui nan hai</i>	<i>pian ai</i>
Figure	<i>Couples</i> Senser	<i>(for sons)</i> Phenomenon	<i>have preference.</i> Process: Affection
Element	<i>the couples'</i> Qualifier	<i>(for sons)</i> Qualifier	<i>preference</i> Thing

The types of grammatical problems we have explored above tend to occur in relation to figures of being, particularly the identifying type, in which one participant enhances another along the circumstantial dimension of causal relation. Since the typical lexicogrammatical realization pattern of this domain of the ideational potential is "favorite clause type" construction in the form of higher rank syndrome pattern (Halliday, 1998), it is useful to explore the distribution of this lexicogrammatical resource across the four types of genre under study, as well as the extent to which the deployment of this resource is negatively affected by the mother tongue. The study found that Chinese EFL students tend to have more grammatical problems with the "favorite clause type" construction in writing exposition texts. The number of the problematic instances that occur across the four genres is summarized in Table 2.

Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The comparative analysis with the Chinese language has shown that Chinese EFL students' problem with construing participant roles arises from the interfering effect of the grammatical system of their mother tongue on the way meaning is construed in the grammatical system of English. At the same time, the study also shows that grammatical metaphor, which is the outcome of the interplay between semantics and lexicogrammar in the content plane, can be exploited by Chinese EFL learners as an important resource in constructing expository texts. The semantic evidence for this claim is the general tendency of the metaphorical move from the logical towards the experiential through which the domain of sequences is reconstrued as the domain of figures of being and having. By adopting the "from above" perspective of considering how meaning is construed by grammar, we can see that in Chinese EFL students' use of language in expository texts, there exists a conflict between the choice of figures of being as the metaphorical reconstrual of sequences from the ideational potential of the semantic system and the choice of the grammatical units for realizing participant roles. The outcome of the conflict is manifested in the inappropriate construal of the participants either as figure or as things other than macro-things, with the realization pattern in lexicogrammar deviating from the typical pattern of higher rank syndrome structure.

If the claim that the problem with the Chinese EFL students' expository writing lies in the metaphorical use of language can be accepted, it follows that in China's EFL context, more attention should be given to the

Table 2 Grammatical problems with 'favorite clause type' construction across genre

	Explanation	Exposition	Discussion	Report
No. of type 9 metaphor	8	47	19	17
No. of problematic instances	2	17	5	1
Percentage of problematic instances	25%	36%	26%	6%

Clausal Mode of Meaning	Nominal Mode of Meaning
<i>The environment has been polluted</i>	<i>the pollution of environment</i>
<i>The environment has been polluted by industries</i>	<i>the industries' pollution of the environment</i>
<i>The environment has been seriously polluted by industries</i>	<i>the industries' serious pollution of environment</i>
<i>The environment has been seriously polluted over the past decade</i>	<i>the industries' serious pollution of environment over the past decade</i>

Figure 6 Effect of metaphor on clausal and nominal modes of meaning

teaching of grammar when teaching expository writing. However, the teaching of grammar seems to be more effective when situated within a systemic functional perspective rather than in the traditional perspective. In other words, attention should be given to the effect of the interaction between meaning and form rather than merely to language form. If we adopt the systemic functional perspective, we may find that the traditional approach to the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of grammar through translation will be more meaningful.

Practice in the transcategorization of one grammatical class to another should not be aimed simply at increasing students' vocabulary. Rather, students' attention should be directed to their grammatical functions in the context of a lower rank syndrome and higher rank syndrome structures. For example, some modifications can be made in the existing word formation exercises that can be found in almost all the English textbooks used in China to incorporate the rewording practice that involves the rankshift from clause to group and from clause complex to clause. Practice can be designed in a way that may provide a step-by-step understanding of the change of grammatical functions when a downrank movement occurs. The step-by-step practice may take the form of a pyramid (Figure 6). (This illustration of a change in mode is typical of the situation in which students are required to explain a social phenomenon or event.)

This type of exercise can be more meaningful than an exercise that only requires students to provide the noun form of the verb 'pollute'. By doing this kind of practice, students will hardly fail to notice the impact of changing from a verb form to a noun form and the effect of the change of the grammatical functions of the other elements of the clause. Once students become familiar with the structure of extended nominal groups, the practice can proceed to the construction of "favorite clause type" structure which involves, in addition to realizing figure as element, the realization of relator as process in the form of a verb.

The translation approach to the teaching of English, so commonly used in China, should not be employed simply for understanding and learning the vocabulary and grammar of the target language, but rather to sensitize students to the different linguistic features of the clausal and nominal modes of meaning in Chinese and English. This can be achieved through comparing the syntactic features of clauses as the lexicogrammatical

realization of figures with those of nominal groups as the meta-phonical realization of figures as if they were elements.

■ Conclusion

The mother tongue interference is inevitable in the learning of a foreign language. Although the problem of mother tongue interference may vary with the kind of foreign languages that is being learned and the mother tongue of a language learner, the basic and underlying cause that leads to the occurrence of the problem may be similar. The ways the semantic stratum and the lexicogrammatical stratum interact in different language are different.

The results of this study on the grammatical problems in EFL students' written English may only be applicable to the educational context of China's universities, as the problems can be largely attributed to the interference of the first language of the students. However, the general principle underlying this study, that is, the possibility of the way meaning is construed in the mother tongue impacting on the way the meaning is construed in foreign languages, may be applicable to the investigation of the grammatical problems of other EFL learners with different cultural and language backgrounds.

Notes

¹ Buried reasoning is a mode of realization where the logico-semantic meaning of cause and effect is realized in lexicogrammar inside one-clause rather than across clauses. It is frequently used in written language, especially in expository texts where causal relations are often realized as verbs or nouns. For example:

1. The decline of smallpox can be attributed to the development of modern science. (The causal relation between two events 'the decline of...' and 'the development of...' is realized as verb 'attributed to'.)
 2. There are some reasons for the decline of smallpox. (The causal relation is realized as noun 'reasons'.)
- In spoken language, however, causal relations are typically realized by conjunctions or prepositions. So the same two sentences may appear as 3 and 4.
3. Because modern science has developed very fast, the disease of smallpox becomes curable. (Hypotactic relation with the conjunction 'because' linking two clauses.)
 4. Thanks to the development of modern science, the disease, which ever was impossible to cure, had become curable. (The causal relation is realized as prepositional phrase 'because of' within one clause.)

The reason for the deployment of this resource in expository texts, according to Martin (1985: 26), is that by using buried reasoning, 'an argument is presented not as supposition but as an unassailable fact. In our culture burying the reasoning in this way has the effect of strengthening one's case'.

² As shown in Table 2, the number of problematic instances with the higher rank syndrome structure varies with the types of genre under study. As only one problematic instance is found in the Report genre, this genre is not given much discussion in this paper.

³ Halliday (1998) categorized grammatical metaphors into a taxonomy of 13 types which can be characterized according to the type of semantic shift involved in the metaphorical realization of a meaning. The occurrence of any instance of grammatical metaphor follows a general principle of 'shift to entity' at the semantic stratum where semantic categories of relator, circumstance, process and quality can be metaphorically realized as 'thing'. Whenever there is a semantic shift, there would be a shift in grammatical categories as a result of the realization in lexicogrammar. Of the 13 types of metaphors, 11 types have been focused on in the present research, as exemplified in the following.

Type 1 metaphor	
Semantic shift:	from quality to entity
Grammatical shift:	from adjective to noun
<i>The society is stable.</i>	<i>The stability of society</i>
Type 2 metaphor	
Semantic shift:	from process to entity
Grammatical shift:	from verb to noun
<i>The driver drove the bus.</i>	<i>The driving of the bus</i>
Type 3 metaphor	
Semantic shift:	from circumstance to entity
Grammatical shift:	from adverb/prepositional phrase to noun
<i>The driver drove the bus very fast</i>	<i>The speed at which the driver drove the bus</i>
Type 4 metaphor	
Semantic shift:	from relator to entity
Grammatical shift:	from conjunction to noun
<i>The drive drove the bus very fast, and so the brake failed.</i>	<i>The result of fast driving is that the brake failed.</i>

These four types of metaphors are generally referred to as nominalizations or nominalizing metaphors, the presence of which is a typical feature of written language. In addition to the types of metaphors that shift toward entity, there are seven other types of metaphor that also involve a shift both at the semantic stratum and lexicogrammatical stratum. Type 5 metaphor involves a shift from process to quality (from 'imagine' to 'imaginative'); type 6 from circumstance to quality (from 'the driver drove the bus down the hill' to 'the downhill driving of the bus'); type 7 from relator to quality (from 'so' to 'resultant'); type 8 from circumstance to process (from 'instead of' to 'replace'); type 9 from relator to process (from 'so' to 'cause'); type 10 from relator to circumstance (from 'so' to 'as a result of'); type 13 from entity to quality (from 'government decided' to 'government's decision').

⁴ Grammatical metaphor, according to Halliday (1998), can be characterized by the features of shift in function and downrank movement (see Note 3). Another feature is that instances of grammatical metaphor seldom occur as an isolated phenomenon. Rather, they often occur in syndromes. Syntagmatically, grammatical metaphors often finds themselves in either lower rank syndrome structures or higher rank syndrome structures (Halliday, 1998). Lower rank syndrome is defined as a structure consisting of nominalizing metaphors as controlling metaphor, with type 6 or/and type 13 metaphors as secondary metaphors. Grammatically speaking, a lower rank syndrome can be realized in the form of a nominal group as in

the driver's rapid downhill driving of the bus
 13 6 6 2 13

where the instance of 'driving' is type 2 metaphor, 'driver's' and 'of the bus' are type 13 metaphors and 'rapid' and 'downhill' are type 6 metaphors.

Higher rank syndrome is defined as a structure consisting of two lower rank syndromes joined by a verbalized relator. It is typically realized in grammar as a clause of relational type.

The driver's rapid downhill driving of the bus caused the brake failure.
 13 6 6 2 13 9 13 2

Lower rank syndrome and higher rank syndrome structures can be formulated as $1 / 2 + [6] / [13]$ for lower rank syndrome and as $1st \{1 / 2 + [6] / [13]\} + 9 + 2nd \{1 / 2 + [6] / [13]\}$ for higher rank syndrome. Lower rank syndrome and higher rank syndrome structures have different functions in discourse. "the lower rank syndrome is directly associated with taxonomic categorizing of the activities in a particular field and the higher rank syndrome is directly associated with realizing logical reasoning with the ranking clause" (Halliday, 1998:218). Higher rank syndrome structure is an important linguistic resource whereby the buried reasoning can be achieved. Since this mode of meaning is typical of written language, higher rank syndrome is also called 'favorite clause type' by Halliday (1998).

⁵ The 'from above' perspective is an approach adopted by systemic functional model of language in dealing with the relationship between meaning and form. This approach is concerned with how a given meaning selected from the semantic system of language gets realized in lexicogrammar. This approach forms a contrast to the 'from below' perspective on language which is concerned with what a given expression mean.

⁶ Token and value are functional labels in systemic functional grammar for the elements that are involved in identifying relational clauses. Halliday (1994: 124) explains the two terms and their differences as follows:

'In any identifying clause, the two halves refer to the same thing; but the clause is not a tautology, so there must be some difference between them. This difference is one of form and function; or in terms of their generalized labels in the grammar, of TOKEN and VALUE – and either can be used to identify the other. If we say *Tom is the treasurer*, we are identifying 'Tom' by assigning him to a value; if we say *Tom is the tall one*, we are identifying 'Tom' by assigning a token to him. Every identifying clause faces either one way or the other.'

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Appendix A: Sample texts

Why do Some Couples Prefer Having Boys to Girls? (Explanation)

The status of man was different from that of women in old days, which affects us the point of having boys or having girls. Most people, especially in country, think boys are more important than girls, because they think only boys can proceed their family.

Then, why do some couples prefer having boys to having girls. First, with the development of society, people have been aware that boys and girls are same important. Second, for the reason of economy, to the family that isn't rich enough, girls means to save much money in the future. Of course, each has his reason. Nowadays, many facts have indicated that women are also important. For example, some women do better than man in some work. So we shouldn't have different point in having boys and having girls.

Is 'One Couple One Child' Policy Necessary in China? (Exposition)

I agree with the point.

Now, there are more than 1.3 billion people in China. Though our country is very wide, too many people will cause our living environment bad. If one couple have not only one child, they will feel very busy and tired especially in cities. People often say, many people are easy to do sth. But I think it too many to do sth well. Another side, we are rich in total resource. But we are still very poor in average. Great population is the main reason.

If we can control the increase of population and try to develop the economy, we will have a high level of living condition. In order to realize that point, we think 'one couple one child policy' is very necessary in China.

Do 'Lucky Numbers' Really Bring Good Luck? (Discussion)

Some of us may believe that some 'lucky numbers' can bring good luck. For example, they may think that the number 'eight' is connected with luck. Therefore, in everyday lives, they deliberately pursue these numbers, such as doing business on 'lucky' dates, installing telephone with 'lucky' code.

However, there are also many of us who think that luck has nothing to do with 'lucky numbers'. In their opinion, the 'lucky numbers' don't exist at all. So, one should have common-sense to these numbers.

As for me, I agree with the latter. Because I stick to the point that success is the result of diligence and believing the **existence** of 'lucky numbers' is only one kind of superstitious opinions. Hence, please allow me to persuade those who believe the **existence** of 'lucky numbers' to give up credulous ideas and make effort to success.

Decline of Smallpox (Report)

Smallpox, an *infectious* disease, ever resulted in great disaster in history even today someone felt terrible when mentioning it. Thanks to the development of modern science, the disease, which ever was impossible to cure, had become curable and been controled by mankind along with the decline of numbers who had it. The left graph show this situation.

From the graph, we can see from 1964 to 1977 the number of countries reporting cases of smallpox decreased from 30 to 2. Until to 1980, there is no one country. The speed of the decline was inspiring. From it, I think the factors which contributed to that decline, beside the promotion of medical, also should include the stability of the world. It means there is no war, full of peace and most countries' dedicating to development of society. So the governor placed an important on the health of civilization.

In spite of any causes, we should congratulate on the accomplishment. I also hope the allover development of mankind, among other things, including the health of people.