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(Citation)

Learner Corpus Studies in Asia and the World, 4:67-93

(Issue Date)

2020-03-17

(Resource Type)

departmental bulletin paper

(Version)

Version of Record

(JaLCD0I)

<https://doi.org/10.24546/81011994>

(URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/81011994>



L1 Influence on Use of Tense/Aspect by Chinese and Japanese Learners of English

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Abstract

This paper analyzes tense and aspect errors extracted from a small-scale parallel corpus of translations by advanced English learners. L1 Chinese and L1 Japanese learners are shown to produce a number of distinctive error trends that can plausibly be linked to L1 characteristics, thus suggesting transfer effects. Chinese learners of English display characteristic misuse of the modal verbs *would* and *will* to express habituality, reflecting overgeneralization of the Chinese modal verb *hui*. Japanese learners of English omit *will* in future contexts, reflecting the non-obligatory nature of comparable marking in Japanese. Errors involving *will* are thus in complementary distribution. In addition, while learners share a tendency to omit past tense morphology, Japanese learners in particular show L1-like tense marking in relative clauses, reflecting differing tense systems in Japanese and English.

In contrast, common errors reflect more universal factors. For both groups of learners, omissions of past tense morphology largely occur with verbs expressing non-prototypical (stative, habitual, and/or backgrounded) events, providing support for Andersen's (2002) hypothesis linking the accuracy of tense/aspect marking and event prototypicality.

This paper's findings suggest that L1 influence interacts with more general phenomena to constitute "error profiles" characteristic to learners of a certain L1 background, and that it is therefore desirable to give greater consideration to learners' L1 when considering language pedagogy.

Keywords

Acquisition of Tense/Aspect/Modality, L1 Transfer, Learner Corpus, Lexical Aspect

1. Introduction

In this paper, we examine tense and aspect errors by university level L2 learners of English, contrasting L1 Chinese learners (Chinese Learners of English; CLE) and L1 Japanese learners (Japanese Learners of English; JLE). We identify a number of error trends that are entirely or predominantly observed in one group of learners and that can plausibly be explained by considering certain characteristics of learners' L1. At the same time, some error trends are shared by both groups of learners; we argue that these can be explained by, and thus give support to, Anderson's (2002) hypothesis concerning the relation between event prototypicality and the accuracy of L2 tense/aspect marking.

In Section 2 we examine relevant literature and its relation to the current study. In Section 3 we give details of the data used in the study. In Section 4, we examine a number of converging and diverging error trends observed in translations by the two groups of learners. In Section 5 we offer conclusions, limitations, and avenues for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Temporality in Chinese

Chinese is known to lack grammatical tense, with temporality expressed by lexical and pragmatic means. Lin (2006) states that "unlike the temporal interpretation in English, which can be determined by morphological tenses, temporal interpretation is not determined by tense markers" (p. 2). Leaving aside contextual information, temporal interpretation in simple Chinese sentences relies largely on a. temporal adverbials, b. default viewpoint aspect, c. aspectual markers and d. modal verbs. Default viewpoint aspect refers to the phenomenon whereby, in the absence of aspectual markers or temporal adverbs, "a sentence with imperfective viewpoint aspect has a present interpretation, whereas a sentence with perfective viewpoint aspect has a past interpretation." This is a function of the fact that "the default viewpoint of telic predicates is perfective viewpoint, whereas the default viewpoint aspect of atelic predicates is imperfective viewpoint" (Lin, 2006, p. 4).

2.2 L2 Acquisition of Tense/Aspect by Chinese L1 Learners

The characteristics mentioned above have implications for the L2 acquisition of English tense/aspect forms by CLE and JLE. In this section we provide an overview of relevant acquisition studies.

Bardovi-Harlig (1999) states that "[t]he expression of temporality exhibits a sequence from pragmatic to lexical to grammatical devices" (pp. 347-348). Regarding this

generalization, Yang and Huang (2004) suggest that the lack of grammatical devices for marking temporality in Chinese reinforces the general tendency among CLE to resort to lexical and pragmatic means (p. 63). The learners in their study “quite often ignore the necessity to mark tense-aspect because, to them, contextual clues and lexical expressions have provided enough temporal information” (Yang and Huang, 2004, p. 65). However, as proficiency increases, temporal adverbs “seem to be gradually sharing...responsibility as tense substitutes and assuming a different function: reminders for the use of verbal morphology”. We find, however, that even advanced CLE are more prone than JLE to omit verbal morphology where temporal adverbs are present.

Zhao and MacWhinney (2010) analyzed CLE corpus data and concluded that accuracy of morphological past tense marking is the highest for achievement verbs, and, more generally, higher for telic verbs than for atelic verbs (p. 508). Furthermore, lexical aspect proved to be a stronger predictor of performance than “morphological inflection”, i.e. the (ir)regularity of verbal forms, or phonological salience. These results are compatible with the Aspect Hypothesis (see Li and Shirai, 2000).

2.3 Cross-Linguistic Studies

Other studies have examined the issue of L1 influence and tense/aspect acquisition using data from learners with different L1s. Hawkins and Liszka (2003) found in their study that L1 Chinese learners omitted past tense morphology more frequently than L1 Japanese and L1 German speakers in spontaneous discourse. They associate this with the fact that both languages, like English, possess “morphosyntactic exponents of ‘past tense’”, a feature absent in Chinese. Hawkins and Liszka (2003) speculate that Chinese learners “monitor the ambient discourse for ‘pastness’ and insert V-ed forms when they are able to detect it” (pp. 39–40).

Gabrielle and Maekawa (2008) address the wider implications of Hawkins and Liszka’s (2003) findings by comparing how Chinese, Japanese and Korean learners of English interpreted sentences using the English present and past progressive. They found that intermediate and advanced Japanese and Korean learners, and advanced Chinese learners, exhibited target-like performance. L1 was thus shown to be a factor only up to the intermediate level, with advanced learners performing similarly regardless of L1. Gabrielle and Maekawa (2008) therefore conclude that while “the production of tense morphology is problematic”, it “can in fact be acquired regardless of the properties of the native language” (p. 100, p. 102). Note that Gabrielle and Maekawa (2008) deliberately omitted adverbials from their test items. We return to the issue of adverbials in section

4.2.4.

Gabrielle (2009) conducted a bidirectional study of the use of progressive markers by Japanese learners of English and English learners of Japanese. The relevance to the present study is methodological: she distinguished between acquisition/addition (learning L2 meanings absent from the L1 form) and preemption (excluding from L2 meanings present in the L1 form). Preemption was found to be more problematic than acquisition, even for advanced learners. For example, Japanese learners of English in her study had difficulty preempting the perfective reading of the L1 continuative *-te iru* with achievement verbs, whereas they acquired the progressive reading of the L2 progressive *be -ing* with achievement verbs with relative ease. In section 4.2.1, we show how CLE have difficulty preempting habitual use of the modal verb *will*.

Kesselly (2008) analyzes spontaneous oral production data from advanced Chinese and Japanese learners of English. Like the present study, she aims to uncover possible effects of L1 on L2 tense marking. Both groups of learners show a “failure to use past tense in contexts where past tense was either obligatory or preferable” (p. 238). Within this general trend, a. CLE failed to use past tense with past habitual statives, and b. both groups of learners failed to use past tense with states. Kesselly (2008) claims that this is related to the fact that in Chinese, “verbs expressing habitual behavior are usually unmarked regardless of temporal location” (p. 238). We reconsider this assumption in section 4.2.1. Regardless, the small scale of Kesselly’s study (4 learners from each L1) may leave her results susceptible to individual variation. Indeed, one Japanese learner of English in the study displayed characteristics closer to those of the Chinese group, thus skewing her data (Kesselly, 2008, p.245). The present study, while still relatively small-scale, offers greater generalizability than Kesselly’s study.

In summary, while numerous studies examine L1 influence on tense/aspect acquisition, there is relatively little research examining Chinese L1 and Japanese L1 learners, especially regarding the use of tense morphology. This study provides an opportunity to reconsider previous findings, and to highlight some cases of L1 transfer that have not, to the best of our knowledge, been explicitly raised in previous studies.

3. The Study

3.1 Data

The data used in this study consists of translations (see Section 3.2) by CLE and JLE. Both groups were undergraduate students majoring in English at universities in China (Shanghai International Studies University; SISU) and Japan (Tokyo University of

Foreign Studies; TUFs) respectively at the time of data collection. Initially, 41 JLE translations and 60 CLE translations were collected. One JLE translation was excluded from analysis due to numerous NS-like characteristics, including a lack of any tense/aspect errors. A sample of 40 CLE essays was then randomly selected for comparison using Microsoft Excel. A summary is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Data Summary

Learner Group	Files	Total Words	Average Words per Translation
CLE	40	14,715	368
JLE	40	12,884	322
Total	80	27,599	345

The English proficiency of learners was judged by comparing their CET4/CET6 (in the case of CLE) and TOEIC scores (in the case of JLE). Not all learners provided proficiency scores, but based on those scores obtained, we assume the two groups to be at roughly comparable levels of proficiency.

Table 2 Learner Proficiency

	CLE	JLE
Average years of study:	12	8.5
Average scores on	CET4: 580 points (15/40 learners)	TOEIC: 745 points
English proficiency tests:	CET6: 598 points (30/40 learners)	

3.2 Task

This study examines a parallel corpus consisting of learner production in a translation task. Such corpora have been referred to as “peripheral”, in the sense that they do not include open-ended elicited data, the form of data more commonly collected (Nesselhauf, 2004, p. 128; Granger, 2012, p. 8). Our reasons for adopting a translation task in this study are as follows. First, by controlling not only the topic but also the specific content of the task, we can partially address the issue of learners simply avoiding problematic TL forms. The translation text is largely set in the past, obliging learners to (attempt to) use forms they may otherwise have avoided. Second, the translation task is a single, coherent narrative, as opposed to the sets of discrete, unrelated sentences often used in SLA studies (Gabrielle and Maekawa, 2008; Gabrielle, 2009). As such, while the current task may be less comprehensive than experimental studies testing, say, every possible

combination of tense and aspect marking, it allows us to observe the extent to which learners maintain text cohesion through tense/aspect marking over the course of a narrative.

The translation task, titled “Traditions of Hospitality in China, Britain and Taiwan”, was composed in Japanese by the second author. The text was then translated into Chinese and English by members of the research group proficient in all three languages (see Appendix for details). CLEs received the Chinese text and translated it into English; likewise, JLEs received the Japanese text and translated it into English. By controlling the task and learner proficiency (with the caveats mentioned above), the aim was to isolate any potential L1 influence on L2 use of tense/aspect forms.

3.3 Data Processing

The first author corrected the translations, consulting the set of original texts for clarification where necessary, and manually extracted relevant errors for analysis (note that intrarater reliability was not conducted in this study). Results are reported in the following sections.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Table 3 displays the major error categories observed in each group of learners. Note that “present→past” refers to instances where learners incorrectly used a present tense form where a past tense form would have been appropriate.

As shown in the bottom row of Table 3, considerably more errors appear in the CLE data (204) than the JLE data (115). This is despite CLE’s longer mean length of English study. While we cannot offer a categorical explanation for this quantitative difference, it may ultimately reflect the lack of grammatical tense in Chinese. For JLE, L1 and L2 alike possess both grammatical tense and grammatical aspect, so the L2 tense-aspect system as a whole is presumably more familiar to them, comparatively speaking. The majority of errors by both groups of learners did indeed occur with tense morphology; errors in aspectual marking generally appeared only in the present and past perfect forms and it is difficult to discern any clear trends among the relatively small h. “other” category. Alternatively, as pointed out by a reviewer, the quantitative difference may reflect JLE’s better grammatical control in general, rather than being a tense-specific phenomenon. We would like to explore both possibilities in further studies.

Table 3 Major error categories

Error Type	CLE	CLE (%)	JLE	JLE (%)
a. past/past habitual→present	67	33	15	13
b. present→past	48	24	57	50
c. present→future	0	0	9	8
d. future→present	11	5	0	0
e. future→past	7	3	0	0
f. present perfect→past	28	14	15	13
g. past perfect→past	14	7	3	3
h. other	29	14	16	14
Total	204		115	

The following prominent trends appear in the errors recorded in the two data sets, visualized in Figures 1 and 2:

- The most prevalent error type among JLE is the b. present→past type, accounting for almost half of all errors. Errors of this kind are less numerous in the CLE data, representing less than one quarter of the total number of errors.
- The most prevalent error type among CLE is the a. past/past habitual→present type. This error type is less prominent in the JLE data.
- Errors involving the future tense marker *will* (error types c-e) are in complementary distribution. CLE exclusively overuse *will*, while JLE exclusively underuse it.

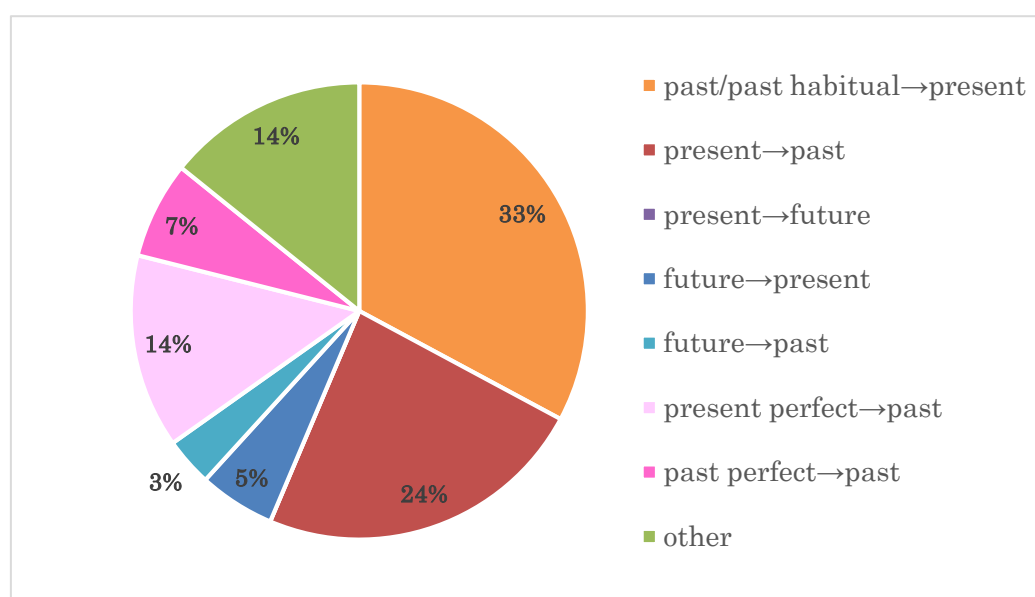


Fig. 1 CLE error breakdown

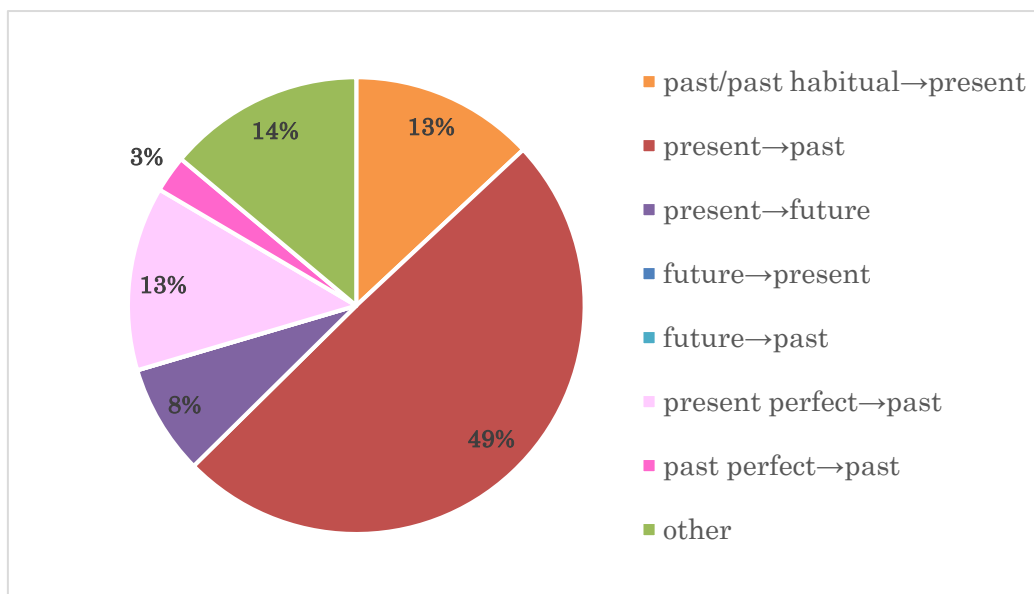


Fig. 2 JLE error breakdown

In order to explore these error trends more generally, we distinguish “overmarking” and “undermarking”. We include in “overmarking” any provision of a form more morphologically complex than the appropriate form, and vice versa for “undermarking”. We therefore regard error types a, d, f and g as “overmarking” and error types b and c as “undermarking”. We consider error type e. future→past as neither “overmarking” nor “undermarking”, including it in the “other” category. Used in this sense, “overmarking” and “undermarking” are, to the best of our knowledge, novel concepts. Following this characterization, CLEs tend to “overmark” verbs with tense/aspect forms: 60% of errors by CLE are classified as “overmarking” and 25% as undermarking. The opposite trend is apparent among JLEs: approximately 60% of errors are classified as undermarking and 30% as overmarking (Fig. 3). Such a trend may be a reflection of the differing degrees to which TAM marking is obligatory in Chinese and Japanese. Consideration of different and larger data sets is required in future to ascertain whether such a trend is indeed observable and statistically significant.

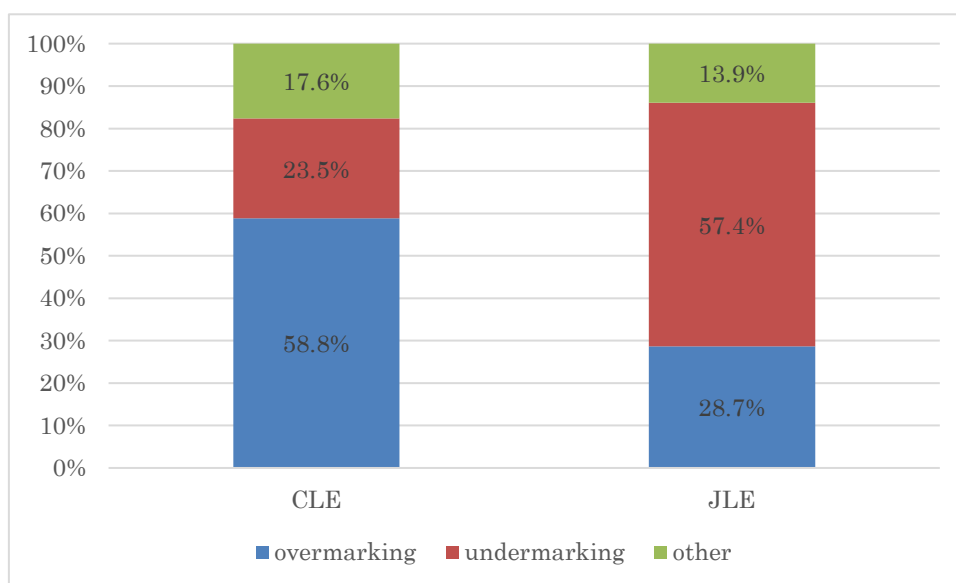


Fig. 3 Proportion of over- and under-marking by each group of learners

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

Next, we will examine a number of prominent error trends in turn. Analysis revealed that CLE overused the modal verbs *would* and *will*, whereas JLE omitted *will* in obligatory contexts (4.2.1). In contrast, both groups of learners exhibited deficient tense marking, particularly past tense marking, but this accounted for a higher proportion of total errors for JLE, who exhibited L1-like tense marking (so-called “relative tense” marking) in relative clauses (4.2.2).

4.2.1 Errors involving the modal verbs *would* and *will*

We consider the overuse of *would* and *will* (and their conflation) by CLE to reflect overgeneralization of L1 forms, specifically the modal verb *hui*. This form can express future meaning like *will*, and the two forms may therefore become associated in the minds of learners. However, *hui* is not restricted to future meaning.

According to Lin (2006) the “future modal verb *hui* ‘will/would’ has a relative future meaning rather than a deictic one” (p. 18). In other words, *hui* can be translated as both *will* and *would* (1a-b), in the same way that the progressive marker *zài* (*is/was*) preceding a bare verbal form can equate to both present and past progressive (cf. Gabrielle and Maekawa, 2008).

- (1) a. Wo hui hen mang
‘I will be busy.’

b. Zhansan shuo ta hui hen mang

‘Zhansan said that he would be busy.’

(Lin, 2006, p. 18)

As such, CLE may confuse *will* and *would*. As *will* is presumably a more salient, entrenched form than *would* in learners’ interlanguage (reflecting relative order of instruction and acquisition), we would expect *will* to appear erroneously in situations where *would* is appropriate. In other words, learners should fail to “back-shift” tense morphology in their L2 production. However, this explanation is over simplistic. As shown below, *hui* not only expresses future meaning, but also habitual or generic meaning. We describe modals of the kind shown in (3) as habituais; following Carlson (2012), we regard habituality – our term for Tsai’s (2015) “dispositional” modals and the relevant sentences in our translation task – as having an aspectual dimension. The key point for our purposes is that such uses are distinguished from the future uses exemplified in (2). Note that Tsai (2015) posits a range of other uses of *hui* including ability, but we omit discussion of these as they are not of direct relevance here.

(2) Waijiaoguan hui changchang lai zheli. [future modal]

Diplomat will often come here

‘Diplomats will come here often.’

(3) Waijiaoguan changchang hui lai zheli. [dispositional modal]

diplomat often tend.to come here

‘Diplomats often tend to come here.’

(4) Shui hui wang dichu liu. [generic modal]

water HUI towards low.land flow

‘Water flows to lower places.’

(Tsai, 2015, p. 278)

Kesselly (2008) claims that in Chinese, “verbs expressing habitual behavior are usually unmarked regardless of temporal location” (p. 238). We dispute this assertion; while it is true that the perfective marker *-le* may not occur in such contexts, *hui* does occur and is indeed obligatory. While *will* does on occasion express generic meaning, it is a non-obligatory, marked form. It is also subject to restrictions on the predicate types it occurs with (Binnick, 2005). Furthermore, it is debatable whether L2 learners are familiar with the generic use of *will* (an analogous example is the use of the English

definite article *the* with generics which, while attested, is highly genre-restricted and unlikely to be familiar to the majority of learners). A more likely explanation is that CLE overgeneralize *hui*'s habitual meaning to *will* in their interlanguage.

Error analysis appears to confirm this hypothesis. Erroneous use of *will* occurs precisely in contexts where habitual meaning is intended in the original text. Note that in many examples habituality is explicitly expressed by adverbial expressions like “always” (5) or “every time” (6). It is possible that such adverbials act as a trigger for CLE's L1-like use of the modal verb.

Here and throughout the rest of the paper, error examples are to be interpreted as follows. Original, erroneous forms are shown in brackets and correct forms are underlined. Φ represents the absence of an overt linguistic form. The examples demonstrate that temporal reference and habituality are separate issues. In (5), *will* is erroneously used to express an ongoing habit. In (6), *would* is erroneously used to express an ongoing habit. In (7), *will* is erroneously used to express a habit confined to the past. We argue that such errors occur because the range of use of *hui* is wider than that of *will* and *would* combined, leading to overgeneralization.

- (5) Now whenever I think back that study life, I (will) Φ always recall the scene of visiting my teacher. (SISU_57_2013)
- (6) The scenarios of paying visit to my teachers (would) Φ prop up every time when I recall my study life in those cities. (SISU_03_2013)
- (7) Even though, my professor and his families (will) would warmly welcome me into the house. (SISU_40_2013)

Here we make reference to a related phenomenon observed in the “Learners’ Error Corpus of Chinese” created at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Zhang (2016) and Ishida (2019) report that Japanese learners of Chinese omit *hui* in obligatory contexts in L2 writing, whereas English learners of Chinese exhibit slight overuse of *hui*. This suggests an analogous process to the one described above, whereby English native speakers successfully transfer, or even overgeneralize, L1 forms, using *hui* in situations where *will* (or *would*) would be appropriate in English. Japanese, however, lacks a comparable, obligatory form, so Japanese learners of Chinese do not provide it where necessary.

Returning to the present study, lack of morphological marking in L1 is also the probable reason why, in contrast to CLE errors, JLE errors concerning *will* are exclusively errors of omission.

(8) I (ϕ) will never forget the tender, mild, blissful sweetness of fresh-steamed Babaofan. (TUFS_07_2013)

(9) First, I (ϕ) will tell the memory during my study in Shanghai. (TUFS_43_2013)

The CLE data exhibit no comparable present→future errors. As such, we can say that errors involving future tense marking are in complementary distribution, and that this is plausibly due to differences in the degree to which TAM marking is obligatory in L1. In other words, it appears that the greater the morphological salience of a form expressing a given category in L1, the greater ease learners have in supplying equivalent L2 morphology. Lack of salience in L1 is thus linked to omission in L2. This is despite the more general commonality between English and Japanese of possessing a system of grammatical tense. The issues facing CLE and JLE are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Issues of addition and suppletion involving *will*

	JLE	CLE
Addition	future	n/a
(potential omission)	meaning	
Suppletion	n/a	habitual
(potential overuse)		meaning

In this section, we observed errors that can plausibly be explained with reference to characteristics of Chinese. In the next section, we will observe how the same is true for some errors made by JLE.

4.2.2 Errors involving tense marking in relative clauses

Japanese exhibits “relative tense marking”, whereby tense markers in main and relative clauses do not match. This allows the ambiguity of an English sentence like in (10) to be avoided. If the verb in the relative clause is marked with the past marker *-ta* (*tonda* in the example), it is understood that the speaker met their friend at London’s Heathrow airport. If, however, the non-past marker *-ru* (*tobu* in the example) is used,

the meeting is interpreted as having occurred at Tokyo's Haneda airport. See Kaufmann and Miyachi (2011) for detailed discussion on the interpretation of temporal clauses in Japanese.

(10) When I **flew** from Tokyo to London, I met my friend at the airport
(*airport* = a. Haneda, b. Heathrow)

(11) Tokyo kara London he {a. **tobu**/ b. **tonda**} toki ni, kuko de tomodachi ni a-tta.

In English, verb tenses in non-conditional clauses must match, so L1-like tense marking, e.g. *fly in (10), may lead to errors. Examples from the translation task are shown below.

(12) As I (sit) sat on the bed, Prof. Hu served me a mug of Longjing Green Tea.
(TUFS_01_2013)

(13) When I (receive) received his advice about my thesis, we sat on his bed.
(TUFS_30_2013)

(14) Though the professors did not have a telephone, and I often suddenly visited their house, even if I (call) called on them, they always opened the door. (TUFS_25_2013)

These examples all show clear parallels with Japanese structures. (12) and (13), expressing sequential and simultaneous temporal relations respectively, are typically expressed in Japanese by a non-past forms combined with *-to* or *-toki*. (14) is a concessive typically expressed by a non-finite *-temo* clause. The past marker *-ta* is not typically used in any of these contexts – nor indeed does it appear in the relevant sentences in the original text. Note that present→past errors in relative clauses appear only sporadically in the CLE data, despite an overall trend for past tense omissions (in main clauses). Table 5 shows the distribution of past tense omissions in main and relative clauses. There appears to be a tendency for larger numbers of errors to occur in relative clauses for JLE.

Table 5 Comparison of present→past errors in main and relative clauses

	CH	CH%	JP	JP%
main	30	63	31	54
subordinate/relative	18	38	26	46
Total	48		57	

Crucially, the reverse trend, i.e. past→present errors in relative clauses, appears exclusively among JLE. For example, in (15) past tense marking appears in the relative clause despite the correct use of non-past forms in the main clause. The verb equivalent to *found* in the relative clause can be expressed using a *-ta* form in Japanese, expressing relative tense i.e. a precedence relation.

(15) After that, whenever I (found) find Babaofan on a menu at Chinese restaurant, I order it and remember Prof. Hu's reception. (TUFS_18_2013)

The bidirectional nature of tense errors in relative clauses by JLE means they cannot merely be treated as instantiations of a general trend to omit past tense morphology common to both groups of learners; rather, they reflect specific instances of L1 transfer.

4.2.3 Inflexibility of tense marking

In contrast to the trend described above, both groups of learners exhibit inflexibility in tense marking in some contexts. The translation task interspersed recollections about the past with ongoing habits, requiring shifts in temporal marking, but learners appeared to have difficulty appropriately adjusting tense morphology to reflect these temporal shifts. The examples below describe in a single sentence both a past situation (where the past tense is appropriate) and the current mental state of the writer (where the present tense is appropriate). However, learners express an ongoing or recurring situation as if it were confined to the past, despite explicit encoding by nouns like “memory” (16) and verbs like “forget” (17) or “remember” (18). Such errors account for 6/14 past→present errors by JLE, and 17/40 past→present errors by CLE. First, we show examples of errors by JLE.

(16) They were really poor, but omotenashi of the Hus (was) is a great memory like a treasure. (TUFS_04_2013)

(17) I (could not) cannot forget ‘tender, soft, happy sweetness’ of Babaofan which was fresh from the steamer. (TUFS_32_2013)

(18) It was at simple age but I (remembered) remember hospitality of the Prof. Hu vividly as a memory like treasure. (TUFS_39_2013)

The errors by CLE are also puzzling. A large proportion of the past→present and past habitual→present errors by CLE resulted from their misinterpretation of ongoing habits as being confined to the past. In (20) and (21), learners apply unnecessary tense marking despite explicit references to speech time by the adverbials “since then” and “now”.

(19) Since then, every time when I (saw) see steamed sweet glutinous rice in Chinese restaurants, I (would order) order some and taste it merely for the purpose of reliving the warm treatment of Professor Hu and his family again. (SISU_11_2013)

(20) Now, whenever I (recalled) recall those times, the picture of visiting my tutor (would always occurred) always occurs to me. (SISU_29_2013)

We can speculate that appropriately selecting present tense morphology within a wider past tense narrative may present a heavier cognitive burden than tense marking in a text with fixed temporal reference; learners may therefore “stick with one tense”, so to speak. Definite answers await the results of future research, but the frequency of these errors suggests that there is some common factor behind them, rather than simply being mistakes.

4.2.4 Interaction with temporal adverbials

Finally, we consider the effect of the presence or absence of temporal adverbials on the accuracy of tense marking. Given that Chinese lacks grammatical tense marking, CLE are expected to be more sensitive to the presence or absence of temporal adverbials in the source text. This could potentially lead to one of the two following trends. Adverbials providing an explicit time reference might *remind* CLE to use appropriate verbal morphology; alternatively, CLE might consider tense to be sufficiently marked by adverbials and thus *neglect* to provide the necessary verbal morphology. Yang and Huang (2004) claimed that among advanced learners the former trend is prominent. However, in our data, the latter prediction appears to hold, despite learners’ high proficiency.

Table 6 Presence/absence of other past marking in present→past error contexts

	CLE	CLE (%)	JLE	JLE (%)
grammatical past markers only	25	52.1	34	59.6
adverbial past markers only	6	12.5	0	0.0
grammatical & adverbial past markers	4	8.3	8	14.0
no past markers	13	27.1	15	26.3
Total	48		57	

Table 6 shows the presence or absence of grammatical and/or adverbial markers in the sentences in which errors occurred (“grammatical markers” are instances of past tense morphology on other verbs appearing in the same sentence). For both groups of learners, the majority of errors appear in sentences including some other form of past tense marking. This suggests that even these advanced learners have not fully grasped the obligatory nature of tense marking in English. On the other hand, only CLE exhibit errors in contexts where temporal reference is marked exclusively by adverbials. Examples include “at that time” in (21-22) and “from 1986 to 1988” in (23). In other words, in at least some cases the presence of temporal adverbials appears to hinder appropriate tense marking by CLE. Furthermore, given the nature of the translation task, learners are obliged to include temporal adverbials where they appear in the original. As a result, these may become more salient; this may come at the expense of verbal morphology.

(21) At that time, there (is) was no research office for professors in Fudan University.

(SISU_03_2013)

(22) At that time, My instructor (is) was Professor Hu Yushu, a well-known Chinese linguist.

(SISU_42_2013)

(23) From 1986 to 1988, after finishing the master degree course of Tokyo Foreign Language University, I (study) studied in Shanghai Fudan University for two years as a student studying abroad at public expense of Chinese government.

(SISU_04_2013)

The duplication, or double-marking, of past tense forms can be seen as the opposite phenomenon. This typically involves use of the modal verb *would* with past forms of

lexical verbs. As mentioned previously, (over)use of *would* is a characteristic of CLE production, and so most examples of double marking appear in CLE production (there are only two examples in the JLE data, and both occur in the same learner's translation). This phenomenon provides indirect evidence for our assumption that some CLE primarily treat *would* and *will* as markers of habituality, overlooking their temporal meaning. In the minds of learners, this would in turn necessitate the use of past tense morphology on the lexical verb.

(24) Every time I had my lesson, Mr. Hu would always (rolled) roll the quilt into a long strip, just like the western-style cake and told me to sit on it. (SISU_07_2013)

(25) Then he would (took) take out a red box, which may contained wedding candies once, smilingly asking me to eat a candy. (SISU_34_2013)

In section 4.2 we have discussed a number of error trends that can to a greater or lesser extent be explained plausibly by considering characteristics of learners' L1. Needless to say, we do not claim that *all* errors can be explained in this way. In the following section, we demonstrate how cross-linguistic factors can influence error trends.

4.3 Past tense marking and event prototypicality

In this section, we explore how cross-linguistic factors can affect learners' choices at a more abstract level than the (mis)matching of particular L1 and L2 forms.

Andersen (2002) proposed a hierarchy of event prototypicality, characterizing as most prototypical "real realized unitary bounded" events. The implication for our study is that omission of tense morphology is predicted to occur more frequently in the expression of less prototypical events. Andersen (2002) offers six perspectives from which event prototypicality can be considered, reproduced in Table 7 on the following page.

In the following sections, we consider the three factors proposed by Andersen most applicable to the current study: a. Verb Semantics i.e. the lexical aspect of verb (phrases); b. Event Type; and c. Grounding. If our data adheres to Andersen's hypothesis, learners should be more prone to omitting past tense morphology with: a. Stative verbs; b. Habitual events; and c. Background (descriptive) information in the narrative of the text. We consider each factor in turn below.

Table 7 Andersen's (2002: 93) Hierarchy of Tense Marking

1. VERB SEMANTICS	achievement → accomplishment → activity → state
2. EVENT TYPE	unitary events → habitual or iterative events
3. REALIS-IRREALIS	real factual realized → hypothetical or counterfactual events or situations events or situations
4. PRAGMATIC ROLE	direct assertion → indirect pragmatic softening
5. GROUNDING	Foreground → background
6. DISCOURSE STRUCTURE	(position and function within discourse segment)

4.3.1 Lexical aspect

Omissions of past tense morphology were grouped according to the lexical aspect of verbs. As shown in Fig. 4, the majority of omissions occurred with stative verbs for both groups of learners. The trend was particularly striking for the CLE data, where such errors accounted for 77% of the total, compared to 60% for JLE. This difference is likely in part due to the phenomenon of present tense marking in relative clauses by JLE described in 4.2.2. Crucially, the predominance of errors with stative verbs is not merely a reflection of the breakdown of lexical aspectual types of verbs in the original text, as demonstrated by the right-hand bar of Figure 4.

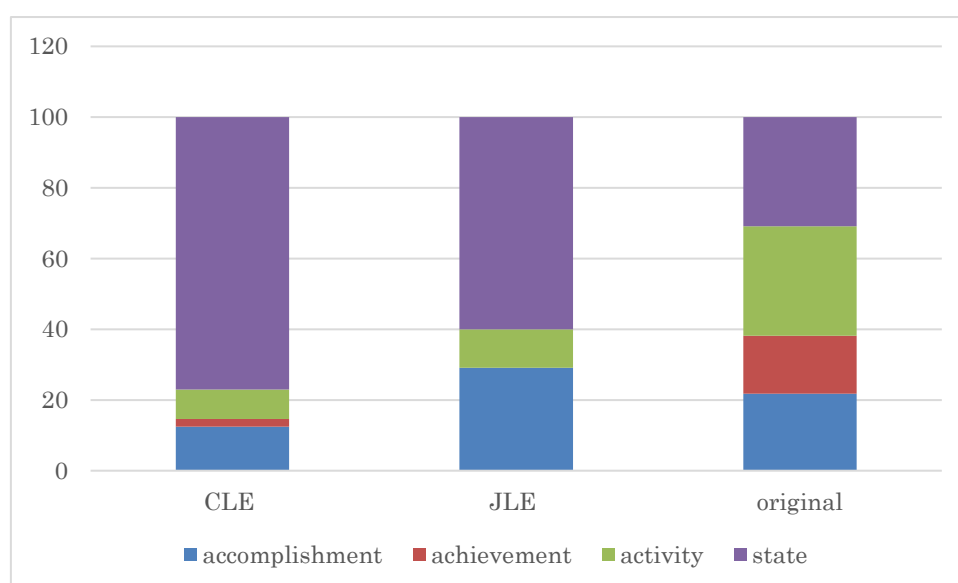


Fig. 4 Breakdown of present→past errors by lexical aspect

This result supports Anderson's hypothesis, in that stative verbs are considered to be

the least prototypically “eventive” of the four Vendlerian categories. Examples are given below; see Section 4.3.3. for further examples.

(26) The futon (is) was rolled up like a kind of cake. (TUFS_40_2013)

(27) There (is) was no telephone at teacher's housing, so we often (visit) visited them without appointments. (TUFS_39_2013)

(28) The futon was folded up like cake roll so I (can) could use the bed as if it were bench. (TUFS_37_2013)

(29) My guidance teacher (is) was the famous linguist Professor Hu yushu. (SISU_04_2013)

(30) The steamed glutinous rice (is) was “soft, hot and sweet”. (SISU_11_2013)

(31) Every time we (have) had the lesson, Mr. Hu would roll the quilt into a long strip like a jellyroll and make the bed like a bench. (SISU_33_2013)

4.3.2 Event type

To examine whether event type was a significant factor in the omission of past tense morphology, we examined non-stative verbs to establish whether these expressed unitary or habitual events. In both data sets, close to two thirds of present→past errors with non-stative verbs expressed unitary events, so we cannot conclude that habituality or iterativity at the verbal level was a significant factor (although as we have already seen, habituality appears to play a role in other errors; see section 4.2.1). Below we provide representative examples of unitary (32) and habitual (33) events.

(32) I got master’s degree at TUFS, and I (go) went to Fudan University to study between as a Chinese government-financed foreign student in between 1986 and 1988. (TUFS_08_2013)

(33) Since there was no telephone in the teachers’ dormitory, I often (come) came there without a notice before. (SISU_04_2013)

4.3.3 Foregrounding and backgrounding

Finally, we consider the issue of foregrounding and backgrounding in narratives. Foregrounded events are generally relayed in chronological order and comprise the core of a narrative, whereas backgrounded events typically provide supplementary description. Many of the stative verbs lacking past tense morphology thus serve as background descriptions. The secondary, descriptive function of the verbs is in many cases reflected by their presence in subordinate clauses (36-37). Once again, in many cases past tense morphology is absent despite the presence of adverbials that explicitly position the narrative in the past: “at that time” in (34) and “in those days” in (35).

(34) At that time, there (is) was no research office for professors in Fudan University.
(SISU_03_2013)

(35) In those days, there was no professor’s office and the professors lived in a lodging that (is) was next to the University.
(TUFS_25_2013)

(36) After that he would take out a red candy box, which (seems) seemed to hold wedding candies, open it and tell me to have some candies with a gentle smile.
(SISU_14_2013)

(37) After that he brought a red candy box which (looks) looked like a present given to guests at wedding party, and he offered me candies with his face smiling.
(TUFS_22_2013)

In terms of lexical aspect and foregrounding/backgrounding, learners generally followed the predictions of Anderson’s hypothesis, while for event type, the results were inconclusive. We suggest that a combination of stativity, backgrounding and other non-prototypical event features contributes to an increased likelihood of tense marking being omitted.

5. Conclusion

This paper presented the results of an analysis of translations by Chinese and Japanese learners of English. Attempts were made to control other variables so as to isolate any effects of L1 on the L2 expression of tense and aspect. Analysis revealed that a number of characteristic error trends can plausibly be explained if consideration is

made of the presence or absence of, and salience of, forms in L1 encoding meaning functionally equivalent to those in L2. Distinction was made between addition and suppletion, and evidence was found to support the notion that the latter is more problematic for learners than the former. In the case of *hui* and *will*, a salient form in L1 and an assumed functional equivalence with the L2 form resulted in CLE failing to supplete *hui*'s habitual meaning. For JLE, absence of a salient functional equivalent expressed itself as omission of *will*.

In addition to characteristic error trends, however, similarities were observed in the tendency among both groups of learners to omit past tense morphology from non-prototypical events: those expressed by stative verbs, verbs describing habitual events, or verbs providing descriptive detail as a background to the main narrative.

The implications of this study's findings can be summarized as follows. Contrary to some previous studies (Yang and Huang, 2004; Gabrielle and Maekawa, 2008), it was found that even advanced learners continue to make some errors attributable to L1 influence, providing further evidence of fossilization effects in second language acquisition (Han & Odlin, 2006). As such, acquisition of particular morphological forms may be aided by more explicit comparison of the TAM systems in L1 and L2. In addition, the maintenance of past tense throughout texts in English, whether main or subordinate clause, foregrounded or backgrounded information, appears to be challenging for learners. If learners have received explicit instruction on tense/aspect forms only through discrete sentences removed from wider context, they may have difficulties when required to maintain appropriate tense/aspect marking in a longer narrative (cf. Anderson, 2003, pp.95-96).

JLE generated far fewer errors overall, suggesting that the existence of grammatical tense in both L1 and L2 may have rendered the translation easier for them. However, in specific circumstances, e.g. relative clauses, L1-like use of L2 tense morphology resulted in prominent error types largely absent from the CLE data.

The methodology of this study has a number of limitations. One drawback of a translation task is that it conflates the effects of individual learners' interlanguage (and any L1 transfer therein) with direct stimuli from the text. Moreover, in the case of CLE, the "original" narrative was itself a translation. However, if the implication is that the Chinese translation took on characteristics of the Japanese text, this would presumably have exerted a homogenizing effect, if any, on the English texts produced by the learners and so reduced the differences observed. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the task type *exaggerated* differences induced by L1 characteristics. Regardless, the nature of the task

means that the findings cannot be generalized to freer written production and so corroboration with different types of data is required.

In addition, the narrative used in this study is largely in the past tense, so the prominence of past tense omissions is perhaps unsurprising. Future studies should provide greater balance of temporal reference to test learners' ability to provide the correct tense morphology in a wider variety of contexts.

Finally, proficiency measures were partial and somewhat imprecise; for this reason too, triangulation with different data sets is necessary to draw broader and firmer conclusions about L1 influence on tense/aspect marking in L2 English, particularly given the relatively small scale of the data.

Acknowledgements: This study was supported by KAKENHI (25284101) "Construction of a Japanese-English-Chinese Online Error Corpus and development of English, Japanese and Chinese language pedagogy taking into account learners' native languages" (2013-2015) and KAKENHI (17H02357) "Research on cross-referential learners' corpora of English, Chinese and Japanese through international educational collaboration at secondary and tertiary levels" (2017-2020).

Appendix: Translation Task

The Japanese, Chinese and English versions of the translation task are provided below for reference. Translations were conducted by the second author together with Ms. Caroline E. Kano and Dr. YaMing Shen.

A reviewer queries whether the Chinese and English versions are truly equivalent to the Japanese original. We acknowledge the inherent difficulty of providing an exact translation and recognize that this is one limitation of our methodology. We would like to stress, however, that the English text was used primarily as a reference for the authors during analysis, and that errors were identified based on their grammaticality, rather than on their degree of adherence to the English text.

a. Japanese Version

私は、20代から30代にかけて、北京、上海、ロンドン、台湾に留学したことがあります。留学時代の思い出として、今、懐かしく思い出すのは、先生方のお宅に招かれ、おもてなしを受けた思い出です。

まず、最初に、上海留学中の思い出についてお話しします。

東京外国語大学で中国語学の修士号を得た私は、中国政府公費留学生として、1986年から1988年にかけて、復旦大学(Fudan University)に留学しました。指導教授は、著名な中国語学者であった胡裕樹教授(Prof. HuYushu)でした。その頃は、復旦大学の先生方には、研究室がなく、論文指導は、大学に隣接する宿舎に住んでいらっしゃるご自宅の書斎兼寝室で行われました。先生方のご自宅には電話もなく、突然訪ねていくが多かったのですが、突然お伺いしても、必ずドアを開けてくださった、そんな牧歌的時代でした。

ある日、予約なしに胡先生のおうちを訪ねた私に、ご一家は、「ちょうど八宝飯(Babaofan; もち米で作った8つのドライフルーツが飾られたデコレーションケーキ)が蒸しあがったから、食べなさい」と、ふるまってくくださったのです。蒸したての八宝飯の「やさしく、柔らかく、幸福な甘さ」は、忘れることができません。その後、中国料理店で、八宝飯をみつけると、必ず注文し、胡先生のおもてなしを思い出すのです。

論文の個人指導は、蒲団がロールケーキのように巻かれ、整えられて長椅子と化した胡先生のベッドに座って行われました。私がベッドに座ると、胡先生はまず、龍井茶(LongJing Green Tea)を蓋付きの中国式マグカップにひとつまみ入れて、魔法瓶からお湯をいれ、お茶を淹れてくださいました。そして、結婚式の引き出物のような、赤いキャンディーボックスの蓋をとって、「キャンディーをどうぞ」と優しく微笑みながらすすめてくださったのです。とても質素な時代でしたが、胡先生ご一家のおもてなしは、いまでも宝物のような思い出として、胸に刻まれています。

b. Chinese Version

在我二三十岁的时候也曾经到北京、上海、伦敦以及台湾留学过。如今每当我回想起当时的留生活时，总是会想起每回到老师家里做客时的情景。首先，就让我谈谈在上海留学时的一段回忆。

从 1986 年到 1988 年，在修完东京外国语大学的硕士课程之后，我以中国政府公费留学生的身份到上海复旦大学留学了两年，我的指导教授是著名的汉语语言学家胡裕树教授。当时复旦大学的老师们并没有个人的研究室，每次的论文指导课都是在紧邻大学的老师宿舍里的书房兼寝室里进行的。也由于当时老师宿舍里还没有安装电话，所以常常都是无事先告知的突然造访，但是尽管如此，老师及其家人每次也都一定欣然开门迎客，我也从未尝过闭门之羹。那是一个如此纯朴的时代！

有一天，又是一个突然的造访。胡老师一家人对突然出现的我说道：“正好有蒸好的八宝饭，吃了再走吧！”，一边拿出八宝饭招待我这个不速之客。刚蒸好的八宝饭所具有的那种“软、热、甜”的幸福滋味，到现在仍然记忆犹新。从那以后，每当在中国餐馆里看到八宝饭，我一定会点来品尝，不为别的，就只为想再回味一次胡老师和他家人的待客之道。

每次上课时，老师都会将棉被卷成像西式卷心蛋糕似的长条状，然后将床铺整理得如同一条长凳子，要我坐在上面上课。我一坐定后，老师会先在一个传统中国式的、带盖子的茶杯里放入一小撮的龙井茶叶，然后从热水瓶里倒出热开水，为我沏上一杯热茶。之后，再拿出一个好象装喜糖用的大红色的糖果盒，打开盒子，亲切地微笑着要我吃糖。虽然是一个物资不是很丰裕的时代，但是胡老师以及他家人对我的热情款待的回忆，始终就像一个宝藏一样，永远地深深地埋藏在我的心中。

c. English Version

When I was in my twenties and early thirties, I myself had the opportunity of studying in Beijing, Shanghai, London and Taiwan. Of all my memories of studying abroad, what I still now remember most fondly, are the occasions when I was invited to the homes of my professors, and the warm hospitality I received. In this connection, I would first like to talk about my memories of studying in Shanghai.

After receiving my M.A. in Chinese from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, I went as a Chinese government-sponsored exchange student to Fudan University, where I studied from 1986 to 1988. My academic supervisor was the eminent Sinologist,

Professor Hu Yushu. In those days, professors at Fudan University did not have their own room, and supervision of students' theses would be conducted in their private bedroom-cum-study in the university lodgings adjoining the university building, where they lived. As the professors' lodgings were not equipped with a telephone, students would often call on them unexpectedly. But however sudden a student's visit might be, in those idyllic times, their professor would always invite them in.

One day, when I arrived at Professor Hu's home without an appointment, he and his family welcomed me with a "We've just steamed a *babaofan* (a cake made with glutinous rice, decorated with eight kinds of dried fruit), so do have some!" I will never forget the 'gentle, delicate, blissful sweetness' of that freshly steamed *babaofan*. Thereafter, whenever I go to a Chinese restaurant and find *babaofan* on the menu, I always make a point of ordering it, and recall the kind hospitality which Professor Hu extended to me.

An individual guidance session on a student's thesis would be conducted seated on Professor Hu's bed, which, with the bed cover rolled up like a Swiss roll, was turned into a sofa. As soon as I had sat down on Professor Hu's bed, Professor Hu would place a few leaves of Longjing green tea in a Chinese-style mug with a lid, add some hot water from a thermos, and serve it to me. He would then take the lid off a red sweet box which looked as though it might have been a gift he had received as a guest at a wedding, and, smiling kindly, and with a "Do have a sweet!", offer me one. They were very modest times, but the warm hospitality which I received from Professor Hu and his family still remains like a treasure engraved in my memory.

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