Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

This Chapter presents the results and discussion of findings derived from Chapter 3. Section 4.1 presents the general pattern of referential forms produced by EFL learners, including their frequency and percentage. Each category will be examined from the perspective of their function, appropriateness, and the possible reasons of inappropriateness. Section 4.2 will explain the use of referential forms for the three discourse functions: Introduction, Maintenance, and Reintroduction. The distributional tendency and the appropriateness of each discourse function will be explored. In section 4.3, we will examine the correlation between values of referential distance and categories of referential forms. In addition, we also refer to distance values derived from genuine English narratives. Sections 4.4 will presents all the improper use of referential forms pointed out by English native speakers. The last section 4.5 will summarize this Chapter.

4.1 Types of referential forms and their frequency

In the first part of Chapter 4 is the frequency of each referential form produced by our learners. The number of all referential forms in the five categories on the scale is 815 tokens in total. Look at Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1   Types of referential forms and the frequency in each learner's text

Form type \ Learner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL	%
Zero	15	5	17	13	10	17	15	10	102	13%
Pronoun	44	30	46	32	21	12	23	25	233	28%
Definite NP	3	15	6	2	8	4	9	4	51	6%
Name	54	43	25	55	43	47	48	76	391	48%
Name+ modifier	3	3	3	4	9	7	6	3	38	5%
TOTAL	119	96	97	106	91	87	101	118	815[17]	100%

As can be exemplified in Table 4.1 above, the most frequently used form is Name,

amounting to nearly a half (48%) of the total mentions of referential forms. Learners

favor Name when referring to a certain participant in their narratives. The second one

goes to Pronoun (28%), with 233 mentions in its frequency. Next one is Zero (13%),

produced by learners from time to time. The least frequent types of referential forms

are Definite NP (6%) and Name + modifier (5%). When referring to the participants

in the movie, learners are less likely to produce Name + modifier or Definite NP.

The most widespread use of Name across the texts, at first sight, appears unusual,

when compared with previous research. In previous investigations, Pronoun tends to

serve as the most widespread topic form and is the most extensively used referential

form in English discourse. But in our data, different from this convention, Name (i.e.

full NP) stands out as the primary referring mechanism for advanced EFL learners in

written narratives. The reason is that the major participants in the movie constantly

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[17] The total number of tokens in Table 4.1 is different from that we presented in Table 3.1, because we deduct the tokens of reflexives and indefinite NPs, both of which are of low frequency in the data we have collected. Besides, neither of them is considered on the framework that we have devised.

interact with one another within episodes. Consequently, when more than one

participant is in focus, the writers tend to refer to them by using Name, in order to

avoid ambiguity. Below is an excerpt from one of the written narratives which

illustrates the extensive use of Name.

> (16) Before <u>Carl</u> arrived [sic] <u>Molly's</u> house, <u>Sam</u> and <u>Oda Mae</u> met <u>Molly</u>. With <u>Sam</u> entering <u>Oda Mae's</u> body, <u>Molly</u> was able to feel <u>Sam</u> again. However, the good time did not last long. <u>Carl</u> drew near, chasing the two women, and almost killed them. (Learner 5)

In example (16) presented above, due to the interwoven interaction among the

four participants *Carl*, *Sam*, *Oda Mae*, and *Molly*, in this brief text, they need to be

specified by Names. Below is another excerpt which abounds in Name.

> (17) <u>Sam</u> protected the two women secretly and <u>Carl</u> was threatened because he saw <u>Sam's</u> name appearing on the mirror in the bathroom. At last, <u>Carl's</u> heart was stabbed through by the falling broken glass of the window. <u>Carl's</u> spirit, like <u>Willie's</u>, was taken away by a group of black spirits and could not stay in the world any more. Suddenly, there came a light from heaven to greet <u>Sam</u> to return back. <u>Molly</u> and <u>Oda Mae</u> both blessed <u>Sam</u> and wished him a better life there. (Learner 4)

Like Learner 5's excerpt in (16), excerpt (17) above also produces several full

NPs in the excerpt mentioned above. Toward the end of the story, Learner 4 managed

to explain the rest of all the details. Therefore, all the participants, including *Sam*,

Carl, *Willie*, *Molly*, and *Oda Mae*, are lumped together, which could have run the risk

of causing ambiguous interpretation of their identities. By using Name, several

referents can be clearly specified, because Name facilitates the immediate retrieval of

the intended participant.

The extensive use of Name in our data can also be justified by means of Fox's

(1987a) proposition: in a paragraph with fast-paced events or confrontations among

participants, the occurrence of full NPs (Name) becomes more frequent. That is to say,

narrators produce Names because they intend to indicate quick actions or to put

emphasis on conflicts. Below are some examples.

(18) <u>Sam</u> protected the two women secretly and <u>Carl</u> was threatened because he saw <u>Sam</u>'s name appearing on the mirror in the bathroom. At last, <u>Carl</u>'s heart was stabbed through by the falling broken glass of the window. <u>Carl</u>'s spirit, like <u>Willie</u>'s, was taken away by a group of black spirits and could not stay in the world any more. (Learner 4)

(19) In order to protect <u>Molly</u>, <u>Sam</u> takes away the money stolen by <u>Carl</u> and hurts some of his goons. <u>Carl</u> is so angry that he is attempted to hurt <u>Molly</u>. But <u>Oda Mae</u> and <u>Sam</u> are on time to save <u>Molly</u> from him. <u>Sam</u> finally revenges and is going to Heaven. (Learner 8)

(20) As <u>Sam</u> and <u>Willie</u> struggle over <u>Willie</u>'s gun, a shot rings out, and <u>Willie</u> runs off. <u>Sam</u> chases <u>Willie</u>, but <u>Willie</u> escapes. <u>Sam</u> then runs back to <u>Molly</u> to see if she's alright but finds himself dead in <u>Molly</u>'s arms, and <u>Sam</u> realizes that he is now a ghost. (Learner 8)

Excerpt (18) produced by Learner 4 shows that the three events are distinct: Sam

protects the two women; Carl is threatened; and Carl is killed. The same is true of

example (19) above, where the events under spotlight are: Sam takes away the money;

Carl attempts to hurt Molly; and Oda Mae and Sam save Molly. As can be seen in the

first two excerpts above, both (19) and (20) portray the same scene: the conflicts

between *Sam* and *Carl* toward the end of the movie. In describing a scene with several

actions, the use of Name becomes frequent. In the third excerpt (20) produced by

Learner 8 above, there are also fast-paced events: Sam and Willie struggle; Willie runs

away; Sam chases Willie; and Willie escapes. The emphasis on fast-paced events and

confrontations, as is exemplified in the above examples, tends to motivate the use of

full NPs, because using Names would be the most convenient way to specify each

participant, as the above excerpts have shown.

Although in the narratives the interpretation of Name is never a problem for

readers, in Learner 8's written narrative, the proportion of Name is comparatively

high among the texts, amounting to 76 times in its frequency. The extensive use of

Name reminds us of the conventional repetition of noun phrases in Mandarin. In

Christensen's (2000) empirical study, the repetition of noun phrase is proved to be one

of the primary mechanisms[18] in anaphoric reference management in Chinese written

narratives. The high frequency of Names in Learner 8's data suggests that L1

interference may play a role when she produces Names in her written narratives.

Next we move to the relatively high frequency of referential forms with limited

information load, Pronoun and Zero. As far as Pronoun is concerned, it has been well

established that pronominal form in English discourse is an unmarked form in

referring to an activated entity, and therefore it is widely used in both spoken and

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[18] The three major anaphoric expressions in Mandarin Chinese are zero anaphora, pronominal form, and repetition of noun phrases, including proper name and definite NP.

written form (Givon et al. 1983; Ariel, 1990). As long as the current NP is kept in

receiver's state of consciousness, a Pronoun can invariably be used to replace an NP.

In our data, indeed, Pronoun is frequently used to refer to a successive mention of an

activated participant. Below are two excerpts.

(21) He becomes a ghost lingering around her. Caught in between the two worlds
of life and death, he can see and hear, but he can no longer touch and feel as
human beings. (Learner 2)

(22) Strolling, they chatted and just when they started talking about their future
and marriage and how they love each other, *a man* jumped out from
darkness. Shocked and terrified, they tried to negotiate with the unexpected
bandit. (Learner 3)

In excerpt (21) mentioned above, the pronominal form of *he* is consistently used

to refer to the same participant *Sam*. In the second excerpt (22) above, even though

there is an interference of another NP, i.e. *a man*, between successive mentions of the

same referent, the writer can still use a plural pronominal form *they* to refer to the

couple without leading to any confusion.

In addition to the use of Pronoun in subject positions (i.e. nominative case), there

are other pronominal cases such as objective and possessive. For example,

(23) To his surprise, he finds that he is dead and nobody could see him nor hear
him although he is around. He follows his body to the hospital and meets
another ghost, who makes him, gradually, used to be a ghost. (Learner 1)

(24) Nevertheless, Sam persuades her into donating it to the two nuns raising on
the street. Reluctantly she gives away the money for her life's own safety.
(Learner 2)

In excerpt (23) above produced by Learner 1, both possessive pronoun *his* and direct object *him* are produced. These forms refer to the same participant *Sam*. In the successive mentions of the same participant, Pronoun would be the most convenient form. Although another new participant *another ghost* interacts with *Sam* and intrudes upon the storyline, this new participant does not cause any ambiguity when the reader decodes the last Pronoun *him*. The reason is that in the relative clause *who makes him, used to be a ghost*, the relative pronoun *who* already refers to *another ghost*. The Pronoun *him* cannot be co-indexed with the head NP *another ghost* again. For in the use of pronominal form, it is widely accepted that a pronominal and its antecedent do not occur in the same clause (cf. e.g. Jacobs, 1995; Hurford, 1995). Therefore, *him* would refer to *Sam*.

In excerpt (24) mentioned above, the same problem for interpreting pronominal forms may also arise. The two possessive pronouns *her* refer to the same participant *Oda Mae*. But there is an intervening participant *the two nuns* between the two mentions of *Oda Mae*. In this situation, the original participant *Oda Mae* can be easily distinguished from the new participant *two nuns* by being singular. So readers can feel certain that the second pronominal form *her* refers to *Oda Mae* rather than *the two nuns*. Although the pronominal form carries little information, the production of a pronoun must take the agreement of number (singular or plural) and gender into

consideration. With these two indices, the risk of ambiguity would be reduced.

In inspecting Pronoun, we also noticed the occurrence of reflexive. From the data we have collected, only three tokens of reflexive were identified. The rare use of reflexive can be attributed to its syntactic restriction of occurrence: reflexive (anaphor) needs to be bound by its antecedent within the same clause, which implies that it cannot occur in subject position; it can only be used as objects, complements, or prepositional complements. This restriction stifles the use of reflexive. Due to its being grammatically decided and scarcity in occurrence, reflexive is excluded from the discussion.

Now we will inspect the distribution of Zero. In producing Zero to refer to a highly accessible referent, narrators need to keep in mind the: 1) syntactic constraint, 2) interaction among participants, and 3) risk of ambiguity. Firstly, the syntactic constraint imposed on Zero is more obvious than any other forms. Unlikely other referential forms, Zero anaphora only appears in subject position. A Zero form cannot occur in non-subject position. In our data, no Zero form is identified in non-subject position. To understand how Zero form is used, look at the examples below.

(25) He approached the mysterious light but ϕ hesitated before he entered the light circle. (Learner 3)

(26) Along with the robber Lopez, Carl rushed to Oda Mae's house, ϕ trying to get the money back. (Learner 5)

In excerpt (25) above, the Zero represents the subject topic of the activated

participant *he* in the previous clause; in excerpt (25), the Zero marker occurs in

participial construction and is co-indexed with the activated participant *Carl* in the

previous clause. The participial construction is a more marked and complex structure

which is often confined to the formal written form in the English language. Unlike

other referential forms which can be subject, direct object, indirect object, etc., the

syntactic constraint of Zero form's occurrence in subject position would reduce its

occurrence. And indeed, its frequency is not very prominent, as the results in Table

4.1 have suggested.

Secondly, the use of Zero form is limited when there are several participants

involved in the interaction. In marking subject topic, Zero form is the most continuous

referential form, and it usually marks the primary participants, who often undertake a

series of events. But in the movie, we also need to bear in mind that primary

participants are inevitably in contact with other secondary or trivial participants, as

the storyline proceeds. The interlocked relationship among primary, secondary, and

trivial participants may restrict the use of Zero in the subject position, because when

different participants are interacting, the subject topics constantly switch. Only when

a series of events are undertaken by the same participant can Zero form appear in

subject position. For example,

(27) Sam was killed by the robber. __ϕ__ Knowing he was dead and __ϕ__ became a ghost, Sam felt so depressed but __ϕ__ remained in the man's world to accompany his lover, Molly. (Learner 7)

As is illustrated in (27) above, Zero forms are produced to refer to the same participant *Sam* when the learner intend to tell a series of events in which *Sam* is engaged: Sam knows he is dead, Sam becomes a ghost, and Sam remains in man's world. In other words, when several events are led by the same agentive participant, a Zero can head the series of events, as the above excerpt suggests.

Thirdly, the use of Zero form runs the risk of ambiguity. If not appropriately used, a Zero is more likely to cause ambiguous interpretation than any other referential form, because it is unexpressed, semantically empty, and thus readers have to retrieve the antecedent by themselves. As a result, the use of Zero would be quite challenging for EFL learners. When checking all the referential forms, English native reviewers have provided some suggestion on certain null subjects that should be refilled by pronominal forms. See below.

(28) At the same time, Molly went to the police office to report what *she* heard from the spiritual fixer, yet __ϕ__ unexpectedly found Oda Mae had involved in many cases of swindles and forgery. (Learner 7)

The referential form of Zero in (28), according to our reviewers, should be replaced with a pronominal form *she*. Different from the previous excerpt which is also produced by Learner 7, in this excerpt, although the series of two events that

Molly goes to report what she heard and Molly finds Oda Mae's criminal records

share the same subject topic *Molly*, a referential form of Pronoun *she* is recommended

to fill the null subject position. In this excerpt, a pronominal form is required because

of reader's processing effort and the boundary of linguistic unit. For one thing, the

distance between the Zero anaphor and its antecedent *Molly* is long, so a Zero cannot

be an eligible form in anchoring *Molly*. Furthermore, the use of the adverb

unexpectedly following the Zero poses a distinct boundary between the two linguistic

units. From the hierarchical perspective, a more explicit form would be required

where boundaries between linguistic units emerge. Therefore, a more substantial

Pronoun is recommended to take the place of the null Zero form.

Compared with Name, Pronoun, and Zero, the other two referential forms,

Definite NP and Name + modifier, are lower in their distributional frequency. Now we

move to the performance of Definite NPs.

After examining all the referential forms, we found that Definite NP is often

produced when learners refer to *the couple*, *the police*, *the spiritual fixer* or *the*

murderer. Below are some examples.

(29) The secrets and life details between <u>the couple</u> such as the place that <u>the couple</u> visited, the signature on Molly's underpants, etc. are revealed through the spiritual fixer who would never know. (Learner 2)

(30) To <u>the spiritual fixer</u>, that handsome sum of money is hard to resist. (Learner 2)

(31) He followed <u>the murderer</u> to his apartment and found the fact that utterly frightened him. (Learner 3)

(32) Although Oda Mae and Sam tried very hard to convince Molly of the existence of Sam the ghost and the danger, she somehow gave up the belief because <u>the police</u> showed her a long list of crimes Oda Mae had committed. (Learner 5)

In excerpt (29) provided by Learner 2, the Definite NP *the couple* is intended to refer to two of the participants in the movie: *Sam* and *Molly*. In excerpt (30), the participant with special identity *Oda Mae* is referred to by means of its occupation *the spiritual fixer*. In excerpt (31), Learner 3 refers to the villain in the movie by the use of *the murder*. In the last excerpt (32) above, the Definite NP *the police* is a conventional use to refer to a group of people of some occupation.

Overall, as Table 4.1 suggests, we learn that Learner 2 shows a preference for Definite NP. What concerns us with regard to learners' use of Definite NP here would be: do our learners consider the discourse function of definiteness when they produce Definite NPs?

When it comes to Definite NPs in communicative use, at least four circumstances can be established[19].

(a) When the identity of the entity has previously been mentioned. (e.g. A tall woman entered the house. Oscar noticed that *the woman* looked angry.)

(b) When the entity has been identified by the addressee, usually accompanied with spatial or temporal clues such as pointing. (e.g. Do you know *the man*?)

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[19] The examples in each circumstance are taken from Leech's and Jacob's works.

(c)   When the entity is assumed to be in existence in a given context. (e.g. *the sun*, *the defendant* in the court)

(d)   When the entity is thought to be unique and accompanied by some modification that follows it. (e.g. *the boy* from France)

(Greenbaum, 1991; Leech, 1975; Jacobs, 1995)

To sum up, the use of Definite NP suggests that the writer assumes the entity has entered the reader's knowledge and is mentally identifiable and accessible to the addressee (Givon, 1993). According to English native reviewers, some of the Definite NPs in Learner 2' text appear annoying when they read through his text. For example, the two Definite NPs *the spiritual fixer* and the one of *his kind spiritual helper* are recommended to be substituted by Name *Oda Mae*. For native speakers, Definite NPs are not as explicit and straightforward as Names.

Learner 2 often assumes that readers have known which participant is being talked about, so when he refers to Definite NP, he would add relevant attributes of adjectives, such as *his beloved woman* and *his kind spiritual helper*. The problem is that the seemingly relevant information often turns out to be unnecessary, although Learner may try to be informative. While reading through the summary, readers would have known the attributes of the entities which are referred to. A Name can also anchor the participant more promptly than a Definite NP can. Instead of mentioning the already known participant by Definite NP, the use of Names is recommended in Learner 2's narrative. The higher frequency of Definite NP may result from Learner

2's belief about definiteness. He believes that a definite NP can always refer to a previously mentioned NP, and he often produces this kind of referential form by adding more attributes to it. Nevertheless, after a certain participant is established, as the above circumstances suggest, there is no need to refer to the participant by using Definite NP in its subsequent mention. In such a short text as a brief summary, readers already know who the participant is once its identity is established in the given context.

Lastly, we turn to the distribution of Name + modifier in the data. The Name + modifier, holding large amount of semantic content, are usually used to refer to participants whom learners fear that readers fail to perceive. As we mentioned in Chapter Three, in this category there are some varieties of the modifiers: restrictive relative clause, nonrestrictive relative clause, and apposition. In our data, most forms of Name + modifier consists of nonrestrictive relative clauses and appositions.

The most discernible distinction between restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses is the use of comma. Without a comma between the head noun and the subordinate clause, a restrictive relative clause offers additional information in the embedded clause and narrows down the possible domain of head nouns (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). On the other hand, with a comma preceding the relative NP, a nonrestrictive relative clause serves as a separate and secondary information of the head noun that is

already adequately identified (Huddleston, 1984). The third variant of Name +

modifier refers to the apposition, which is sometimes regarded as a kind of

nonrestrictive clause. But with finer definition, apposition specifically represents the

combination of two NPs, both of which refer to the same entity (cf. e.g. Greenbaum,

1991; Hurford, 1994; Maclin, 1981), like *the robber Lopez*.

In our data, it is often the case that participants with much information to share

are represented by means of Name + modifier, such as *the spiritual fixer*, *Carl*, or *the*

villain. Look at the examples below.

(33) One day, as Molly and Carl, who is Sam's colleague as well as friend, go
out for a walk, Willie, the one who kills Sam, slips into the house. (Learner
1)

(34) Searching for help, he happened to find that the spiritual fixer, Oda Mae
Brown, could hear his voice. (Learner 3)

(35) Along with the robber Lopez, Carl rushed to Oda Mae's house, trying to get
the money back. (Learner 5)

(36) Curious, Sam followed Willie and unveiled a conspiracy of his best friend,
Carl. (Learner 6)

(37) Their good friend as well as Sam's coworker at the bank, Carl happened to
know Sam keeps an account with 400 million dollars. (Learner 7)

From all the excerpts that contain forms of Name + modifier above, we learn that

in the written narratives, *Oda Mae* (the spiritual fixer), *Willie* (the villain), and *Carl*

(Sam's friend) are prone to be referred to with considerable amount of information.

By using nonrestrictive relative clause, narrators can describe more behavior which is

undertaken by the secondary participants, as can be observed in the above excerpts.

The fact that these participants can be represented by the most informative form may

have something to do with narrator's point of view. While interacting with the central

participant *Sam*, all the other participants are regarded as subsidiary on the storyline,

and would require additional information to modify the referential forms (i.e. Names)

that represent them. As has been suggested by Kuno (1976, 1987), narrators often

identify themselves with the primary participants, and thus tend to tell the story from

the perspective of these major participants. From Clancy's (1992) perspective, it is

'plot centrality' that affects the use of referential forms. Therefore, unlike the major

participant, the referential forms of other participants usually carry more information

in order to mark their identities or display more of their attributes and the behaviors

they undertake, so that Name + modifier could be produced, as the above excepts

have shown.

Although Name + modifier is the most informative and rigid referential form,

native reviewers do not recommend the use of it, particularly the apposition. In

examining all the referential forms, for example, two forms of Name + modifier are

suggested to be replaced by Name. Both are produced by Learner 5. They are

presented below.

(38) At Oda Mae's work place, the robber Lopez attempted to kill her. (Learner
5)

(39) Along with <u>the robber Lopez</u>, Carl rushed to Oda Mae's house, trying to get the money back. (Learner 5)

The two forms of Name + modifier *the robber Lopez* in (38) and (39) above, as was suggested by our reviewers, can be substituted by *Willie*, i.e. a Name, since the readers already know *Willie*'s identity: a robber. Therefore, there is no need to restate the identity of the robber. In other words, when the referent has been activated and established, an apposition would not be recommended, because the additional information becomes unnecessary to readers. Learner 5 may have failed to perceive the function of appositive construction in the English text. Her improper use of apposition is indicative of her ignorance of the rule restriction imposed on appositive construction: when an apposition is used, both the two NPs within the construction provide complementary information which is needed to illustrate each other. In Learner 5's use of appositions, there is no such need.

All types of referential forms and their distributional frequency in the texts have been described and explained in this section. In the next part, we will examine the referential behavior in performing the discourse functions.

4.2 The use of referential forms for different discourse functions

In this section, we explore the discourse functions of referential forms in learners' written narratives. As has been pointed out in Chapter Two, cross-linguistic

research has proved that adults' referential choice is closely related to discourse

context (cf. e.g., Chaudron & Parker, 1990; Clancy, 1990). When inspecting

Maintenance and Reintroduction functions, we focus on the referring expressions at

subject position. In Introduction, all referential forms, regardless of their syntactic role,

will be explored. The frequency of referential forms fulfilling the three functions of 1)

Introduction, 2) Maintenance, and 3) Reintroduction is listed in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2   Distributional frequency of functions among referential forms
across the texts

Form / Learner	I. Introduction	II. Maintenance	III. Reintroduction
EFL learner 1	8	34	34
EFL learner 2	7	25	22
EFL learner 3	6	32	25
EFL learner 4	6	30	25
EFL learner 5	9	15	32
EFL learner 6	5	21	31
EFL learner 7	6	21	28
EFL learner 8	7	22	47
TOTAL	54	200	244

As Table 4.2 above reveals, the Reintroduction and Maintenance functions encompass

most of the referential forms in subject position across all texts. Most tokens in each

learner's narrative belong to these two categories. As the storyline proceeds, our

learners narrate the movie either by maintaining or by switching the topic subjects.

Some learners show a preference for Maintenance, whereas others are more in favor

of Reintroduction. In the following sections, the correlation between each referential

form and their discourse function will be further discussed and explained.

4.2.1 Referential forms for Introduction

We shall begin with the Introduction function. The number of tokens in

Introduction function is the lowest among the three. In all the texts provided by our

EFL learners, the frequency of Introduction function is consistently low.

The correlation of the discourse function of Introduction and referential forms[20]

compiled in the data can be shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3   Introduction Function and the referential forms

Learner / *Referential form*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	%
Zero	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pronoun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Definite NP	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	6	11
Name	2	2	2	2	4	1	0	1	14	24
Indefinite NP	**3**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**13**	**26**
Name + modifier	2	1	2	2	2	4	4	4	21	39
Total	8	7	6	6	9	5	6	7	54	100

As Table 4.3 above has displayed, the frequency of referential forms in Introduction

function is low. After deducting the non-subject referential forms serving the

Introduction, we find that those that occur in subject position are even fewer. Only 26

tokens at subject position perform the Introduction function. The rarity of referential

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[20] In Clancy's (1992) study, the context of Introductions includes first mentions of all entities in the
narratives, regardless of their sentential position. Following Clancy's approach, the present study
examines all referential forms serving the function of Introduction.

forms meant for Introduction function in subject position has something to do with the

communicative principle of old-new information flow (Brown & Yule, 1983), which

predicts that new information is prone to occur in non-subject position of a sentence,

while old information tends to occur in subject position. In terms of the Prague

school's thematic structure, the old information often occupies the theme, whereas the

new information conveys new message and is embedded in the rheme (Halliday,

1985). Since the referential forms serving Introduction function are brand-new entities,

i.e. new information, they are unlikely to appear in subject position, i.e. in the theme.

In Table 4.3 above, we also learn that the highly informative forms of Name +

modifier, Indefinite NP and Name are the most frequent ones in serving the

Introduction function. Look at the examples below.

(40) <u>Sam's colleague and also their best friend, Carl,</u> helped them move and later voluntarily assisted Sam to deal with his troublesome case and run some errands. (Subject 3)

(41) Sam learned how to "touch" the things from <u>another ghost</u> in the subway. (Subject 4)

(42) Sam made Oda Mae fake an ID of <u>Rita Miller</u>, from whose account Carl was supposed to make money transfer. (Subject 6)

As we can see from the three excerpts (40), (41), and (42) above, Name +

modifier, Indefinite NP, and Name are appropriately produced in introducing new

entities in the texts. This is reasonable. For one thing, when a new referent is about to

be evoked for the first time, more detailed information such as its name and status in

the film is expected. Furthermore, Indefinite NP refers to specific participants, with no

assumption that readers have already known about these participants. As a result,

Name + modifier, Indefinite NP, and Name are preferred for the Introduction function.

On the other hand, the least informative forms of Zero and Pronoun are never used to

introduce new entity, because they tell nothing about the entity, and should be

forbidden. The non-occurrence of Zero and Pronoun in Introduction function shows

that learners are aware that Zero and Pronoun are not appropriate for the discourse

function of Introduction.

In the English text, it is conventional for a newly introduced entity to be

presented by an indefinite NP, i.e. an NP preceded by the indefinite article *a*, because

the new entity has not entered receiver's state of consciousness. When we apply this

tendency of definiteness to examine certain referential forms in performing

Introduction function, however, there seems to be some problems. In learners' texts,

we found that there are Definite NPs which are used to introduce inactivated new

participants. Look at the examples below.

> (43) To have power, Sam learns how to move objects with <u>the subway ghost</u>.
> (Learner 1)

> (44) Nevertheless, Sam persuades her into donating it <u>the two nuns</u> raising on the
> street. (Learner 2)

> (45) He also consulted <u>the ghost</u> in the subway for "materializing" his power, in
> order to fight back when necessary. (Learner 3)

(46) To protect Molly and Oda from getting hurt, Sam tried hard to master his inner power with the help of <u>the ghost</u> in the subway. (Learner 7)

In each excerpt mentioned above, all the underlined referring expressions aim at the debut of brand-new participants into the text. The use of Definite NP to introduce brand-new participants contradicts with the grammatical convention that the first mention of a new entity are supposed to be realized by an indefinite NP. The use of the definite article *the* suggests that learners assume the entities have already existed in readers' knowledge, which is nearly impossible. But neither of the English native reviewers had provided any recommendation to modify these Definite NPs which represent new participants. Our native reviewers claimed that they can perceive the identities that the Definite NPs portray. So they did not make any suggestion.

The use of Definite NP to bring in new participants into the texts is grammatically inappropriate. But if we consider the appropriateness from the pragmatic perspective, they become more acceptable. For receivers, the participants *the subway ghost*, *the two nuns*, and *the ghost* are completely new information. But for narrators, they are not new. Rather, for learners, all the participants in the film would be treated as presupposed and part of their background information after they saw the movie. In producing their narratives, therefore, each participant becomes semi-activated, if not totally activated, in their consciousness. Besides, to help readers get acquainted with the new participants, Learners add modifying information to them,

such as *subway* in (43) and *in the subway* in (45) and (46). Consequently, their use of

Definite NP for first-time retrieval of new participant becomes understandable.

In this section, we have inspected referential forms that aim at the discourse

function of Introduction and their distributional pattern. In the next part, we will move

to the Maintenance function.

4.2.2 Referential forms for Maintenance

In this part, we investigate the referential forms which perform the discourse

function of Maintenance. To begin with, we present the distributional pattern of

referential forms in performing Maintenance function in each text. In Table 4.4 below

are learners' referential forms in subject position which are meant for Maintenance

function.

Table 4.4   Maintenance Function and the referential forms at subject position

Learner / *Referential form*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	%
Zero	12	4	15	13	8	14	13	8	87	43.5
Pronoun	13	15	16	14	3	5	3	6	75	37.5
Definite NP	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	1.5
Name	9	6	1	3	3	2	4	7	35	17.5
Name + modifier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34	25	32	30	15	21	21	22	200	100

Table 4.4 above shows that referential forms in subject position which are

intended for Maintenance are most likely to be realized by the less informative forms.

Zero and Pronoun comprise 81 % of all referential forms aiming at Maintenance

function. Next one goes to Name, with 17.5 % in frequency. The form Name +

modifier is never used to maintain a subject topic.

    Zero form is the most widespread referential form in the Maintenance function.

As we have mentioned in the previous section, a Zero usually occurs when a series of

events are undertaken by the same participant and the subject topic becomes highly

continuous. Below are some excerpts.

> (47) Sam seemed to live a wonderful new life, _ ϕ _ living with his girlfriend
> and _ ϕ _ working with his good partner. (Learner 3)
>
> (48) At a critical moment, Sam combated Carl and _ ϕ _ made him armless.
> (Learner 6)
>
> (49) Curiously, Sam followed Willie and _ ϕ _ unveiled a conspiracy of his best
> friend, Carl Bruner. (Learner 6)

    As can be observed in (47), (48), and (49) above, all the Zero forms represents a

continuous topic descending from the previous clause. The subject is properly

maintained by a Zero form.

    The high frequency of Pronoun in performing Maintenance function is also

reasonable. According to the universal tendency of narration in novels, within

episodes referring expressions representing major roles tend to be pronominalized

(Gundel, 1978; Hinds, 1977; Pu, 1995). The pronominalization tendency in narratives

can be evidenced by examining Learner 8's excerpt illustrated below.

(50) Sam then runs back to Molly to see if <u>she</u>'s alright but finds himself dead in Molly's arms, and Sam realizes that <u>he</u> is now a ghost. <u>He</u> is not allowed to enter Heaven because <u>he</u> is trapped as a ghost and ___φ___ realizes that his death was no accident. (Learner 8)

A major participant in the novel almost always serves as a continuous topic and therefore is most likely to be sustained and pronominalized within episodes (Pu, 1995), as example (50) above reveals. The main participant *Sam* in the film is maintained by means of Pronoun.

Among the texts, despite the consistent and wide use of Zero and Pronoun in Maintenance of the subject topics, another form is also noticeable: Name, with 17.5 % in proportion. The use of Name to maintain an activated subject topic in the narratives may appear redundant. But in fact, the use of Name in Maintenance function sometimes results from either communication consideration or hierarchical structure. Look at the three excerpts below.

(51) Fortunately, Sam stopped him in time by crashed [sic] something. <u>Sam</u> learned how to "touch" the things from another ghost in the subway. <u>Sam</u> needed to protect Molly from the attack of the murderer on the one hand and had to prevent Carl's wiles toward Molly on the other hand. (Learner 4)

(52) *He* also believed Sam the ghost did exist and φ thought *he* could use Molly to threaten Sam. [paragraph final]
[paragraph initial] Along with the robber Lopez, <u>Carl</u> rushed to Oda Mae's house, trying to get the money back. (Learner 5)

In (51) and (52) above, all the underlined referential forms of Name are intended to maintain the subject topic persisting from the previous clause. In excerpt (51)

produced by Learner 4, the use of Name to maintain the topic *Sam* is needed because

another participant *another ghost* intervenes between two mentions of *Sam*. If a

pronominal form is produced, it may refer back to either *Sam* or *another ghost*. The

use of Name in this excerpt can ward off the ambiguity. In excerpt (52) produced by

Learner 5, the use of Name *Carl* to maintain the subject topic is necessary for two

reasons. Firstly, the distance between *Carl* and its last mention is long. Secondly,

there are two competitors *Molly* and *Sam* between the two mentions of *Carl*. As Ariel

(1990) has proposed, when the distance and number of competitors between two

mentions of the same entity increase, a more explicit form such as Name is needed, as

the above excerpt shows.

On top of that, the hierarchical perspective of episode boundary can also justify

the use of Name in Maintenance. In excerpt (51) above, the three events that Sam

stops the villain in Molly's house, Sam learns to touch things in the subway, and Sam

protects Molly and prevents are three individual important events that involve three

separate episodes. The episode boundaries (narrative units), as Fox (1987a) has

observed, should be marked by full NPs, i.e. Name.

In (52), according to Learner 5's original text, the sentence *Along with the robber*

Lopez... starts a new paragraph, which constitutes an apparent episode boundary. To

mark episode boundaries, more explicit and informative referential forms are more

widely accepted (Clancy, 1980, 1992; Fox, 1987a; van Dijk, 1982, 1987). This can

explain Learner 4's and Learner 5's use of Names to maintain the same subjects *Sam*

and *Carl*. Below is another example in which a Name is used to maintain a subject

topic.

> (53) But Oda Mae and Sam are on time to save Molly from him. <u>Sam</u> finally
> revenges and is going to Heaven. Before <u>Sam</u> disappears, Molly finally sees
> Sam and they hug closely with each other. (Learner 8)

In excerpt (53) above, the Name is intended to maintain *Sam*. The full NPs in

this excerpts denote the episode-initial, because the sentence *Before Sam disappear...*

involves change of scene, place, and time in the film. Also, the above excerpt

describes the last scene of the film, where several events have to be clearly presented

before it ends. And the use of Name can indicate several episodes.

No suggestion was made to modify these forms of Names in fulfilling

Maintenance function. According to our native reviewers, more explicit referring

expressions are preferred over potentially equivocal forms, such as a pronominal form.

The overt referential forms such as Name are better accepted than the implicit ones,

because they can also mark major breaks of discourse structure.

In this section, the discourse function of Maintenance has been examined. In the

next part, we will move on to the third discourse function that referential forms fulfill:

Reintroduction.

4.2.3 Referential forms for Reintroduction

In this section we move to the last discourse function of Reintroduction. We first

present learners' referential forms in subject position which are used to fulfill the

Reintroduction function. See Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5   Reintroduction Function and the referential forms at subject position

Learner *Referential form*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	%
Zero	3	1	2	0	2	3	2	2	15	6.1
Pronoun	9	1	10	4	7	0	6	9	46	18.9
Definite NP	1	4	0	0	3	1	3	1	13	5.3
Name	20	15	12	20	16	26	17	35	161	66
Name + modifier	1	1	1	1	4	1	0	0	9	3.7
Total	34	22	25	25	32	31	28	47	244	100

Table 4.5 presented above suggests that when a subject topic is going to be

reintroduced, the highly informative form of Name is most readily available, with 66

% in total use. Pronoun is also produced from time to time to reintroduce a participant.

Zero, Definite NP, and Name + modifier are rarely used for the Reintroduction

function.

In the Reintroduction function, the use of informative forms such as Definite NP

and Name + modifier is understandable. Because switching subject topic bears the

potential risk of causing ambiguity, particularly when participants of the same gender

are interacting. Thus, the learners are inclined to produce the more informative forms.

Look at the excerpts that contain Name + modifier and Definite NP below.

(54) Sam was by her side and tried every way to comfort her, but at the same time, he also found that <u>the man who killed him, Willie</u>, attempted to hurt Molly, too. (Learner 4)

(55) Sam first rids his kind spiritual helper of her danger by haunting her house. <u>The killer</u> is of course scared away. (Learner 2)

In (54) above, the robber is reintroduced by means of a Name + modifier *the man who killed him, Willie*, while in (55), the robber is reintroduced by a Definite NP *the killer*. As we can see, the use of these two informative forms is convenient for the retrieval of a previously activated participant.

Now we will examine the extensive use of Name in the function of Reintroduction. Below are some examples taken from Learner 6's and 8's data. Both of them abound in Names serving the function of Reintroduction.

(56) Meanwhile, Carl was laundering money under Sam's nose, who had decided to crack the plan by all means. Sam made Oda Mae fake an ID of Rita Miller, from whose account <u>Carl</u> was supposed to make money transfer. <u>Sam</u> and Oda Mae closed the account just in time to block Carl's action. <u>Carl</u> furiously and desperately searched for the money that <u>Oda Mae</u> withdrew at the time of account closing, and was further haunted by Sam's revenge. (Learner 6)

(57) Sam then follows Carl to Willie's apartment, thinking that Carl is about to confront Willie, but instead, <u>Sam</u> watches in shock as <u>Carl</u> chews Willie out for killing Sam. (Learner 8)

The two excerpts (56) and (57) mentioned above show that for the EFL learners, the most effective way to reintroduce a previously mentioned referent is by using

Name. Unlike Zero or Pronoun, which can entail more than one interpretation for its identity, the use of Name would not cause any ambiguity. In the first excerpt above, the first subject topic is *Carl*, later it switches to *Sam and Oda Mae*, and then *Carl* is reintroduced to the text again. In the second excerpt, the initial subject topic is *Sam*, and then it switches to *Carl*. In the following sentence, both subjects *Sam* and *Carl* are reintroduced.

Despite the prevalence of Name in Reintroduction function, the proportions of Zero (6.1%) and Pronoun (18.9 %) are also noticeable. For a referent to be reintroduced, the forms of Zero or Pronoun do not seem to guarantee successful identification of the participant, since both of them are semantically poor. But in real use the Zero form seldom causes ambiguity in reader's perception. Look at the examples below.

(58) He also believed Sam the ghost did exist and ϕ thought he could use Molly to threaten Sam. (Learner 5)

(59) Sam then runs back to Molly to see if she's all right but ϕ finds himself dead in Molly's arms. (Subject 8)

We have proposed that some Zero forms can serve as null subjects when the agentive participant is engaged in more than one action. As the above two excerpts display, excerpt (58) includes *He also believe…* and ϕ *thought he could….* And excerpt (59) includes *Sam then runs back to Molly…* and ϕ *finds himself dead in*

Molly's arm. Although there are interference of different subject topics *Sam the ghost*

and *she* between the Zero forms and their antecedents, the intervening subject topics

all occur in embedded clauses: *Sam the ghost did exist*, and *she's all right* . The Zeros

can be traced back to their antecedents in the subjects of the previous main clauses

with little difficulty. In other words, the distinction of main vs. embedded clauses

helps identify the participants.

In addition to the Zero of null subject we mentioned above, there are also Zero

forms that occur in participial construction. See below.

(60) Unwilling as she is, Oda Mae still agrees to cooperate with Sam, who asks
her to close the account through which Carl intends to launder money. _ϕ_
Knowing so well about the bank, *Sam* successfully helps Oda Mae
withdraw the four million dollars. (Learner 1)

(61) The robber ran away and was followed by Sam. _ϕ_ Knowing where the
robber lives and what his name is, *Sam* went to Spiritual Advisor to ask the
spiritual fixer, Oda for help. (Subject 7)

When Zero forms occur in participial construction to reintroduce the participants,

the identification of the referents becomes more straightforward. A participial clause

in functional grammar is defined as a nonfinite adverbial clause which displays two

important features: referential coherence and temporal coherence (Givon, 1993).

Reference coherence means that the participial clause has the same subject as the

main clause. Temporal coherence means that either simultaneity or anteriority account

for the temporal aspectual relation between the adverbial clause and the main clause.

With this feature in mind, we feel certain that the two zero-marked subjects in the above two excerpts refer to the subject *Sam* in the main clauses. Therefore, despite that the Reintroduction function is fulfilled by the semantically empty form of Zero in the above two excerpts (60) and (61), no ambiguity would occur, thanks to the functional component of English participial construction.

Now we will move on to Pronoun in Reintroduction function. When the learners use a Pronoun to reintroduce an activated referent, an ambiguous interpretation of the intended referent is likely to arise, because like Zero, a pronominal form is semantically empty as well. So the use of Pronoun relies much on the agreement of gender and number in order for the referent to be identified. The excerpts below show how Pronoun successfully reintroduces subject topics.

> (62) At Oda Mae's work place, the robber Lopez attempted to kill her. <u>She</u> finally agreed to help Sam again by disguising as Rita Miller and withdrawing all the 4 million dollars, which was then all donated to a church. (Learner 5)

> (63) When Sam speaks, she can hear him, but not see him. <u>He</u> convinces Oda Mae Brown to tell Molly about the guy who broke into the apartment; however, Molly refuses to believe what Oda Mae says, and tell Carl about what Oda Mae has said to her. (Learner 8)

In both excerpts above, the Pronouns of Reintroduction do not cause ambiguity although the subject topics are switched to different participants, in (62) from *the robber Lopez* to *she*, and in (63) from *she* to *he*. In these two excerpts, the gender

agreement of pronominal form helps distinguish each referential form's intended

referent. In Learner 5' excerpt above *the robber Lopez* has a different gender from *she*

(Oda Mae), and in Learner 8's excerpt *he* (Sam) has a different gender from *she* (Oda

Mae).

But not all pronominal forms can be successfully interpreted in the written

narratives. Sometimes the agreement of number or gender may not facilitate the

interpretation of Pronoun. In performing the Reintroduction function by using

Pronoun, there are some inappropriate pronominal forms which were pointed out by

the native reviewers. Look at the excerpts below.

> (64) While Molly started to believe in Sam's existence, she found that Oda Mae
> had committed a lot of crime before and <u>she</u> thought she must have been
> cheated. She was upset and felt depressed about Sam's existence. (Learner
> 4)

> (65) Although Oda Mae and Sam tried very hard to convince Molly of the
> existence of Sam the ghost and the danger, she somehow gave up the belief
> because the police showed her a long list of crimes Oda Mad had committed.
> <u>She</u> was also told by Carl that the whole thing might just be a trap. (Learner
> 5)

In each of the excerpts presented above, both of the underlined Pronouns are

recommended to be replaced by the participant's name: *Molly*. For English native

reviewers, these two referring expressions are not clear enough. The two excerpts,

though produced by different learners, share something in common. Both excerpts

portray the same scene of the movie: the reunion of the couple through the help of the

spiritual fixer. In this episode, three participants are involved: *Sam*, *Molly*, and *Oda Mae*. Two of them are of the same gender: female. The use of the Pronoun *she* in this episode, as a result, may refer to either of the participants and thus would be ambiguous. In this case, unlike the previous excerpts (62) and (63) produced by Learner 5 and Learner 8, the gender agreement fails to help readers recognize the identities of the intended referents in (64) and (65). To solve this problem, the use of Name would be recommended, according to our English native reviewers.

In this section, we have explored learners' reference management from the perspective of the discourse function that each form performs. In sum, among the three discourse functions, the Reintroduction function would be more challenging for EFL learners to fulfill, while Introduction and Maintenance functions are less problematic for them. In the following part, we will move to the linear perspective of referential forms.

4.3 Referential distance value

In this section, to investigate how the factor of distance affects the use of referential forms, we apply the liner analytical procedures to examine the data we have collected. The primary goal would be to determine the role of distance in reference management, so we will manage to figure out the referential distance that each form displays. By means of Givon's standard measurements of referential

distance, the results derived from our data will be described and explained. In this

section, the same as Givon's approach, the target will be the subject topics in clauses

of the written narratives.

In Table 3.2 of Chapter 3, it has been displayed that 470 referential forms that

occur in subject position are identified. After identifying the subject topics, we can

now recourse to Givon's standard measurement. The results of measurements over

referential distance value (i.e. the average referential distance in terms of number of

clauses) of two mentions of the same referent (a referential form and its nearest

antecedent) are given in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6   Average referential distance and text distribution of each form at
                subject position

Referential Form	number of tokens	percent in text	average referential distance in number of clauses
Zero	102	0.22	1.14
Pronoun	119	0.25	1.45
Definite NP	17	0.04	5.53
Name	209	0.44	3.72
Name + modifier	18	0.04	13.78
Indefinite NP[21]	5	0.01	20.00
Total	470	1.00	

The results based on the standard measurement of referential distance are provided in

Table 4.6 above. In general, the values of referential distance for each category can

classify these NP categories into three groups: the forms of Zero (1.14) and Pronoun

---

[21] Indefinite NPs are rare in our data, as Table 4.6 has revealed. Only 5 Indefinite NPs occur in subject position. All of them are used to introduce new participants to the story.

(1.45) with short referential distance; the forms of Definite NP (5.53) and Name (3.72)

with intermediate referential distance; and the forms of Name + modifier (13.78) and

Indefinite NP (20.00) with longer referential distance. The referential distance values

manifested in each category, in general, conform to the cognitive requirement of

receiver's discourse processing efforts. That is, the more informative referential form

(e.g. Name + modifier) displays more recovering power and can refer back to a more

distant antecedent.

Now we shall begin with the forms of lowest distance values: Zero and Pronoun.

In the first group, with little information load, Zero and Pronoun cannot refer back to

remote antecedents, so both of their distance values are low. On average, their

antecedents can be identified in one or two clauses away.

As a member of the second group of intermediate referential distance value, a

Definite NP is more informative than Zero or Pronoun, and therefore it can retrieve its

antecedent which is located farther away. By using Definite NP, learners can always

retrieve a previous established entity, no matter how far it is. Name is also informative

and unequivocal, but its referential distance value is lower than that of Definite NP. It

is because of the limited space of our data. In the summary, narrators do not have too

much space on the elaboration of all the scenic details. What they would emphasize is

to describe who did what (to whom) in their summaries. Therefore, the distributional

density of Name would be reasonably high and it contributes to the low referential

distance value of 3.72.

In the third group of high referential distance value, Name + modifier is a highly

informative form, in that it not only displays the participant's identity but also

provides additional information to the participant being referred to. Therefore, it can

activate or even introduce any entities into the immediate discourse context. As for

Indefinite NP, which displays the highest referential distance value, is restricted to the

Introduction discourse function. This entails that it may not have an antecedent to

refer back to. As a result, the referential distance value of a maximum integer 20

derived from Indefinite NP is reasonable.

Now we will present more details concerning the referential distance value of

each referential category with examples. Overall, the average referential distance

values of most referential forms derived from our data do not resemble those acquired

from Brown's (1983) study of genuine English texts. In the first place, in his study,

Brown reports the average referential distance value of Zero to be 1.00, whereas in

our results, the distance value of Zero amounts to 1.14. The slightly higher distance

value implies that EFL learners would use Zero to refer back to the antecedent of the

referent that is identified in more than one clause away. Look at the three examples

below.

(66) *He* also believed Sam the ghost did exist and ___ϕ___ thought he could use Molly to threaten Sam. (Learner 5)

(67) *Carl* furiously and desperately searched for the money that Oda Mae withdrew at the time of account closing, and ___ϕ___ was further haunted by Sam's revenge—all the spooky signs and mischief. (Learner 6)

(68) *Sam* then runs back to Molly to see if she's all right but ___ϕ___ finds himself dead in Molly's arms. (Learner 8)

In (66), (67), and (68) above, each Zero refers back to its antecedent that is located in more than one clause away. In excerpt (66), the Zero refers to *He* (Carl); in excerpt (67), the Zero refers to *Carl*; and in excerpt (68), the Zero refers to *Sam*. Yet in genuine English texts, a Zero is unlikely to refer back to a preceding antecedent which is located in more than one clause away. In Brown's (1983) research, the average distance value for Zero derived from the genuine English text is 1.00.

Although the Zero markers in the above excerpts refer back to their antecedents which are located in more than one clause away, they do not cause ambiguity for interpretation of the participants. In the three examples, as we can see, all the intervening subject topics between the Zero markers and their antecedents occur within embedded clauses. In excerpt (66), the intervening subject is *Sam* in *Sam the ghost did exist*; in excerpt (67), the intervening subject is *Oda Mae* in *Oda Mae withdrew at the time of account closing*; and in excerpt (68), the intervening is *she* (Molly) in *if she's all right*. Because of the hierarchically lower syntactic status of embedded clause, the connection between the Zero markers and their antecedents in

the main clauses remains tight and the slightly higher referential distance would not

be a problem for readers.

The high frequency of English Zero in our learners' data reminds us of the

Chinese zero anaphora frequently found in topic chains[22] (Tai, 1978; Tsao, 1979,

1990). The Chinese zero anaphora in topic chains is often regarded as the unmarked

referential form (Li & Thompson, 1979). Look at the example illustrated by Li &

Thompson below.

    a. Yang-Zhi qu-lu
        Yang-Zhi take-to-the-road.
        'Yang-Zhi took the road.'

    b. lai-dao DongJing
        arrive   DongJing
  '(he) arrived in DongJing.'

    c. ru-de cheng-lai
        enter city
  '(he) entered the city.'

    d. xuan ge ke-dian
        find a   hotel
  '(he) found a hotel.'

    e. an-xi xia
        settle down
  '(he) settled down.'   (Li & Thompson, 1979: 313)

As can be observed in the above example, a topic chain can be made up of

successive events which share the same topic. Being affected by the way Zero is

---

[22] A topic chain refers to a series of sentences which share the same theme (Chui, 2001; Tsao, 1979, 1990).

utilized in Chinese topic chain in an unmarked way, EFL learners are inclined to

transfer the Zero form of Chinese topic chains into the English texts. And such

tendency leads to the relatively high proportion of Zero in subject position (22%) in

our data, as Table 4.6 has displayed. The high frequency of Zero form, in fact, is

unusual in the English language. In examining empirical data, Kucera and Francis

(1967) have reported that in English the Zero anaphors are quite syntactically

constrained and are unlikely to be frequently produced by English native language

users. The higher distributional frequency of Zero in our data may result from the

conventional distribution of Zero in Chinese topic chain, and therefore it contributes

to the slightly higher value of referential distance.

Now we move to the production of Pronoun. The average referential distance

value of Pronoun derived from our data is 1.45. The constant use of Pronoun does not

necessarily bring about perception difficulty. In interpreting pronominal forms, there

are clues such as gender and number that readers can rely on.

According to our English native reviewers, unfortunately, many of the

problematic referential forms are pronominal forms (60 %), all of which are

recommended to be replaced by Names in order to be successfully identified by the

readers. Some examples of inappropriate use of Pronouns in learners' data are

presented in what follows.

(69) Meanwhile, with the robber Willie Lopez's help, Carl successfully obtained a set of code previously belonging to Sam and ϕ gained access to 4 million dollars under an account entitled Rita Miller. <u>He</u> was forced to transfer the money to another bank. (Learner 5)

(70) Although Oda Mae and Sam tried very hard to convince Molly of the existence of Sam the ghost and the danger, *she* somehow gave up the belief because the police showed her a long list of crimes Oda Mae had committed. <u>She</u> was also told by Carl that the whole thing might just be a trap. (Learner 5)

Pronouns in (69) and (70) above are recommended to be replaced by Name. In the above examples, we find that distance can account for the inappropriateness of these pronominal forms. As the distance between the Pronoun and its antecedent increases, a Pronoun becomes inadequate for readers to identify the participant because its information load is low and it cannot persist for too long. In (69) produced by Learner 5, the Pronoun *he* can be traced back to its antecedent, which turns out to be a Zero form. So it goes farther for its identity to be figured out when it reaches the more distant full NP *Carl*. In excerpt (70), also produced by Learner 5, the Pronoun *she* fulfills the function of Reintroduction, which involves the switch of subject topics. If not carefully handled, the Reintroduction of subject topics would be more likely to result in ambiguity than the other two discourse function, because it involves the change of subject topics. The Pronoun in excerpt (70) traces its antecedent back to 3 clauses away. For a Pronoun, a distance value of 3 would be high. In this example, there seems to be a correlation between the high distance value and native reviewers'

judgment of the inappropriate pronominal form. That is to say, when the distance

value of pronominal form is too high (more than 2 clauses), native reviewers would

point them out, because it is very likely to impede reader's perception of the intended

participant's identity.

Now we move on to the more informative groups of Name and Definite NP.

When inspecting the average referential distance value of Definite NP and Name, we

find that the distinction between genuine English texts and our EFL learners' texts are

noticeable. The average value of Definite NP derived from our data is 5.53, while the

one obtained in English texts is 16.66. The sharp disparity between these two

referential distance values suggests that advanced EFL learners' perception over the

function of Definite NP does not correspond with that of English native writers. For

English writers, Definite NP serves as a vigorous retriever, aiming at remote

antecedents. But for advanced EFL learners, they hold different opinion. There are

excerpts where the referential distance value of Definite NPs is low. See below.

(71) Accidentally Sam was killed by *the robber*. Knowing he was dead and became a ghost, Sam felt so depressed but remained in the man's world to accompany his lover, Molly. One night, Carl came to visit Molly and asked her for a walk to ease her grief. As they went out, the robber broke into Sam and Molly's house. While the robber was finding something, Molly came home. (Learner 7)

(72) *The robber* ran away and was followed by Sam. Knowing where the robber lives and what his name is, Sam went to Spiritual Advisor to ask the spiritual fixer, Oda for help. (Learner 7)

In excerpt (71) above, the value of referential distance is 9, and in (72) the value is 3. Neither of the Definite NPs' distance values is high, though, they are perfectly acceptable for the successful interpretation of the identities they represent. As we have mentioned before, each Definite NP represents a unique individual identity of certain participant in the film, because there is a one-to-one relationship between every Definite NP and the participant that they refer to. Although the production of Definite NP in learners' narratives does not resemble English writers' style, these forms are unambiguous in meaning.

The other apparent gap which can be observed in our results is the average value of Name, with an average referential distance value of 3.72, in tremendous contrast with that acquired by Brown in his inspection of genuine English texts: 9.99. The average value of Name derived from our data reveals that advanced EFL learners rely much on proper names when referring to different participants in their written narratives. The abundant use of Name in written narratives can be further confirmed when we compare the proportions of the token number in genuine English texts and EFL learners' narratives. In Brown's data of English written narratives, only 11% of the topic subjects are composed of Names, whereas in our data, 44% are Names, posing a stark contrast with that of genuine English texts. But as we have clarified earlier, our written narrative is short. And what learners are concerned about is who

did what (to whom) in their summaries. Furthermore, the film which is used to induce

EFL learners' narrative consists of several episodes. To mark the episode boundaries,

the explicit form of Name would be most convenient. Therefore, the referential

distance value of Name is low. In our data, there are 209 tokens of Name at subject

position, which make up 44% of all the referential forms.

In this section, we have examined our written data by means of the measurement

of referential distance value. It is demonstrated that distance remains a useful

instrument in accounting for referring behavior. In addition, the average distance

values in each category follow the need of cognitive processing efforts, though they

do not resemble those of English narratives.

In this section, the linear approach of referential distance values derived from our

data has been considered. In addition, we have also inspected the role that hierarchical

perspective can play in explaining the consistently low distance values which appear

unusual at first sight. In the next part, we will present all the inappropriate referential

forms identified by English native reviewers.

4.4 Inappropriate use of referential forms

In Chapter 3, it has been pointed out that the number of referential forms which

were thought to be inappropriate is 35. Each of them was recommended to be

replaced with another referring expression. See Table 4.7 below for more details about

the used forms produced by EFL learners and the corrected forms suggested by

English native reviewers.

Table 4.7   Inappropriate use of referential forms

Used Form	Corrected Form	Total	%
A. Pronoun	Name	21	60
	Definite NP	1	3
B. Zero	Pronoun	5	14
C. Name	Pronoun	2	6
D. Definite NP	Name	4	11
E. Name + modifier	Name	2	6

According to Table 4.7, in learners' written narratives, a majority of the

inappropriate referential forms are Pronouns, with 60 % in proportion. The 21

problematic Pronouns are suggested to be replaced by a more informative form: Name.

Compared with other referential forms on the framework, a Pronoun is more likely to

cause ambiguous interpretation, due to its being semantically empty. Although a Zero

is also semantically poor, its intended referent can often be perceived through the

referential coherence, as we have mentioned in section 4.2.3.

As we can see, the general tendency derived from Table 4.7 above is that from

readers' perspective, a more explicit and informative form such as Name would be

preferred over the less explicit and informative form such as Pronoun. But from time

to time, as it appears, EFL learners fail to perceive readers' comprehension need and

use the ambiguous form of Pronoun in their narratives.

In the last part of Chapter 4, we have presented all the inappropriate referential forms used by EFL learners in their written narratives. In the next part, the results of this chapter will be summarized.

4.5 Summary

In this Chapter, we have presented the findings from different aspects. Firstly, the referential type and token numbers produced by each learner are presented. The distributional pattern is roughly the same across EFL learners' narratives, Name being the most widespread form, Pronoun the second, Zero the third, and Definite NP and Name + modifier being the least frequent types. For the distributional pattern of each referential form, there are some communicative considerations behind. For example, Names are most constantly produced because of the frequent interactions among several participants in the movie. Without full NPs, the interpretation of participant's identity would be more challenging.

In the second section of this chapter, the referential forms are classified by being assigned into the three discourse Functions: Introduction, Maintenance, and Reintroduction. Among them, the functions of Reintroduction and Maintenance predominate in our data. In terms of Introduction, the highly informative forms of Name and Name + modifier are most widespread. The semantically empty forms Zero

and Pronoun are never used for the function. In the Maintenance function, the less

informative forms Zero and Pronoun are most extensively used. The use of Name in

Maintenance is sometimes necessary, because of the need to mark episode boundaries.

In the Reintroduction function, Name is the most convenient candidate and is widely

used. Zero and Pronoun are sometimes used in the Reintroduction function in

complex structure. The use of Zero would not cause ambiguity, due to the

hierarchically different syntactic status of main clause vs. embedded clause and the

referential coherence. The use of Pronoun in Reintroduction causes more ambiguity,

despite the agreement of number and gender in the context. In addition, the more

explicit form of Name would better secure the successful interpretation of participants

than a Pronoun in Reintroduction function. As we can see, among the three functions,

Reintroduction remains the most challenging function for EFL learners to fulfill.

Without paying attention to receiver's processing need, a switch of subject topics

often leads to ambiguous interpretation. On the other hand, the Introduction of new

entities is seldom a problem for learners, and neither is Maintenance.

 In the third section of the chapter presented here, Givon's standard measurement

of referential distance is considered. The overall referential distance values of each

category conform to the psychological need of textual processing. The semantically

empty forms of Zero and Pronoun can only refer back to their antecedents within

short distance, whereas the informative forms of Name and Name + modifier can trace their antecedents at a more remote distance. Although there are differences in the referential distance values between EFL learners' narratives and genuine English narratives, the interpretation of referential forms is seldom a problem.

Lastly, as we have discussed in the last section, there are a few inappropriate referential forms identified by English native reviewers. All the inappropriate forms are not ungrammatical. Rather, a referential form is labeled as inappropriate because it is pragmatically or textually unacceptable. Producing grammatical referential forms is never difficult. The real challenge is how to make proper use of referential forms at the discourse level. As our findings suggest, advanced EFL learners sometimes do "not handle anaphoric reference at the text level as efficiently as they might (McCarthy, 1991: 166)." Such proposition is evidenced in our analysis, from which the qualitative results shows that advanced EFL learners sometimes cannot free themselves from their L1 interference, and they may not pay much attention to the discourse convention in reference management in their written narratives.