

Narrative and Grammatical Analyses of Story-retelling in Chinese Speakers of Korean as a Second Language*

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<Abstract>

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Although the narrative development and the acquisition of the Korean grammatical morphemes by monolingual Korean-speaking children have been studied extensively, little is known about the narrative characteristics and the processes through which native speakers of other languages (L2 speakers) use the Korean grammatical morphemes. To understand the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 narrative skills and Korean grammatical morpheme use, 13 native Chinese-speaking college students who are learning Korean as a second language were studied. L2 participants used significantly fewer words, subordinate clauses, connective morphological endings, and pronouns per T-unit. Their speech also illustrated significantly more omission and confusion (substitution) errors in the use of auxiliary words and verb endings. Some of the syntactic and morphological factors need to be considered for the intervention of speakers with limited Korean proficiency.

* Keywords: Second language, Story retelling task.

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1. Introduction

According to the 2000 census, approximately 160,000 of native speakers of various minority languages live in Korea. In 2003, more than 250,000 people with foreign nationalities came to Korea on a long-term basis for their business, occupational training, or academic training.[1] A large portion of this population consists of Chinese-speaking population, due to its geographical adjacency and historical alliance with Korea. To prepare to serve the growing culturally and linguistically diverse population in Korea, we, as speech-language professionals, need to consider several issues which should be taken into consideration when attempting to design an intervention program for the culturally or linguistically different client. Although it is a challenging job to assess clientele with different linguistic backgrounds, functional assessment methodology for native speakers of Korean can be used with some modifications with these clients. However, sensitivity, unbiased administration of testing, and sampling within natural context are required for a fair assessment.[2] Therefore, Speech-language pathologists(SLP) must educate themselves about the clients' languages, cultures, and the process of second-language learning.

The purpose of this study is to provide a preliminary data on the quantitative and grammatical characteristics of narratives produced by adult Chinese speakers of Korean as a second language, in order to better understand the processes which normal second-language learners experience when they learn Korean. Narratives are self-controlled form of discourse and frequently found in the communication of more mature speakers.[2] Compared to its importance as form of communication in our everyday lives, qualitative or quantitative features of 'typical' narratives of Korean adults have been discussed relatively less in the literature. Therefore, both L1 and L2 speakers' narratives will be analyzed extensively in this study.

2. Method

2.1 Subjects

The L2 subjects included in this study are involved in the Korean language and culture program in D university. L2 subjects were recruited from the language classes of an intermediate level. Interested students were asked to fill out a questionnaire indicating their native language(dialect) and the length of Korean language learning.

All L2 subjects were Mandarin dialect users and they had been studying Korean language at least for 6 months. The L1 subjects were freshmen or sophomores in college, majoring in speech-language pathology (See Table 1).

<Table 1> Subject group description

Group	Native Language	N	Mean age	Mean Length of the Korean Language Learning
L 1	Korean	13 (F 10, M 3)	20yrs 10mos	N/A
L 2	Chinese (Mandarin)	13 (F 7, M 6)	20yrs 6mos	8.23 months(Range: 6-12)

2.2. Procedures

Narrative samples were collected using a wordless picture book, *Frog, Where Are You?*. [3] Each subject was told a shortened version of story script developed by Kim [4] and asked to retell a story. A series of 12 pictures were shown to the subject as the examiner told the story. No pictorial cues were given when they told the story back to the examiner. The subjects' narration was recorded on audiotapes, transcribed, and scored by three research members who are certified speech-language pathologists.

2.2.1. Narrative Sample Analysis Procedures

Firstly, for Quantitative measures of narrative structures. When the narratives were transcribed, they were divided into T-units, rather than utterances. A T-unit is defined by Scott [5] as "a main clauses and all subordinate or nonclausal structures attached to or embedded within. All main clauses that begin with coordinating conjunctions 'and', 'but', and 'or' indicate a new T-unit unless there is a co-referential subject deletion in the second clause". Korean language, due to its morpheme-bound characteristics, is highly dependent on the speaker's morphological skills, including verb inflection. In other words, a type of a verb ending in a clause determines a sentence type, such as compound or complex sentence. In this study, the calculation of T-units followed criteria suggested by Lee. [6] According to Lee, the connective verb ending in a conjoined clause signals the beginning of a new T-unit. All main clauses that begin with conjunctive adverbs were counted as a separate T-unit. Additionally, the number of subordinate clauses and words per T-unit, and percentage of T-units without grammatical errors were calculated. An omission of auxiliary words was included as a grammatical error when it affected the intelligibility of the sentences.

Secondly, For Textual level measures of cohesion. In order to examine the subjects' skills to connect the narrative components linguistically, the number of reference devices and the conjunctive devices per T-units were extracted. Pronouns and demonstrative pre-nouns were scored as conjunctive devices, and conjunctive adverbs and connective verb endings as reference devices.

Thirdly, for Morphological Analysis. In the Korean language, morphemes are far more important than word order in determining the grammatical role of each sentence part. In order to establish preliminary data on frequent morphological errors of Chinese speakers of Korean as a second language, the number and the type of morphological errors were identified by L2 subjects.

2.2.2. Reliability

Ten percent of the narrative samples were randomly selected and transcribed independently by 2nd and 3rd authors. The average percentage of agreement on the transcription was 91.0%. Two authors also independently rescored 10% of narrative samples to determine reliability of the narrative analysis procedures. Interrater reliability on the quantitative measures were 96%. The cohesion measure reliability was 95%. The morphological analysis reliability was 90%.

3. Results

The results on each of the variables studied were subjected to a T-test at the .05 level of significance. Table 2 gives the individual scores for the quantitative measures of narrative structure in the group L2.

<Table 2> Individual scores for the quantitative measures of narrative structure.

No.	Gender	Length of the Korean Language Learning	Number of T-units	Number of subordinate Clauses/ T-unit	Words/ T-unit	% grammatically correct T-units
1	F	8	10	.40	6.90	30.0
2	F	12	16	.09	6.19	31.3
3	F	8	15	.33	5.87	53.3
4	F	8	7	.14	6.86	28.6
5	F	7	13	.54	7.92	76.9
6	F	8	12	.25	7.83	25.0
7	F	12	16	.31	2.81	55.0
8	M	8	12	.08	8.25	25.0

9	M	6	8	.00	5.38	25.0
10	M	8	7	.29	6.23	28.6
11	M	8	8	.25	11.25	38.0
12	M	8	19	.16	6.21	53.0
13	M	6	13	.38	8.15	54.0

There was a significant difference in scores between two groups on the number of subordinate per T-unit ($t = -5.27$; $p < .001$) and on the number of words per T-unit ($t = -4.87$; $p < .001$). T-tests revealed that L1(Korean) subjects included significantly more subordinate clauses and words in their retelling of the story than did the L2 subjects. Chinese speaking subjects(L2), on the other hand, were not significantly different from L1 subjects on the number of T-unit(See Table 3).

<Table 3> Mean, standard deviation, and t-test results derived from quantitative analyses for two language groups.

	Number of T-units		Subordinate clauses / T-unit		Words/ T-units	
	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Mean	11.61	12.00	1.17	.26	12.56	6.91
SD	3.97	3.85	.61	.14	3.70	1.95
t	.251		-5.27***		-4.87***	

*** $p < .001$

There was also a significant difference in terms of connective verb endings per T-unit ($t = -7.14$; $p < .001$). The results of t-test indicated that the L1 subjects produced significantly more connective morphemes per T-unit than did the L2 subjects. The pronoun use in the narrations for each group was also significantly different ($t = -3.27$; $p < .05$). T-tests suggested that the native speakers of Korean used significantly more pronouns than did the Chinese speakers. The use of conjunctive adverbs and demonstrative pre-nouns per T-unit were not significantly different between groups(See Table 4).

<Table 4> Mean, standard deviation, and t-test results derived textual level measures of cohesion

	Reference devices				Conjunctive devices			
	Connective verb endings/ T-unit		Conjunctive Adverbs/ T-unit		Pronouns/ T-unit		Demonstrative Pre-nouns/ T-unit	
	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Mean	1.29	.27	.25	.27	.14	.02	1.46	2.15
SD	.49	.15	.21	.25	.12	.06	1.89	2.48
t	-7.14***		-.240		-3.27**		-.800	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$

Table 5 and 6 summarize the results of the morphological analysis of the L2 subjects. Overall, omission errors were more frequent than substitution errors. Subjective case auxiliary words were omitted frequently when followed by objective. Substitution errors of adverbial auxiliary words consisted 50% of substitution errors.

<Table 5> Substitution errors of case auxiliary words.

Target case	Confused case	Number of occurrence	
Nominative (이/가)	Assistive (은/는)	3	8 (24%)
	Objective (을/를)	3	
	Adverbial-location (에)	2	
Objective (을/를)	Nominative	7	8 (24%)
	Assistive	1	
	A*-target (에게)	1	
A-destination (으로)	A-departure (에서)	4	17 (50%)
	A-location (에)	1	
A-location (에)	A-departure (에서)	2	
	Objective (을)	1	
	Nominative (이)	1	
A-departure (에서)	A-location (에)	2	
	A-destination (으로)	2	
A-accompaniment (와)	Nominative (가)	3	
	Objective (를)	1	
Adjective (의)	Nominative (가)	1	
Total Number of Occurrence		34	

*A: Adverbial

<Table 6> Omission error of case auxiliary words

Target case	Number of occurrence
Subjective	58 (67%)
Objective	19 (28%)
Adverbial	5 (7%)
Adjective	5 (28%)
Total	68

4. Discussion

Most adult speakers of Korean as a second language are sequential bilingual learners. Sequential learning may maximize the interference between the two languages. The Korean language is morphologically inflected language where the sounds of a word are changed or added, to indicate grammatical relationship or differences. Thus, a morphological inflection is a far more important factor than word order in determining

the grammatical role of each sentence part.

Modern Chinese, on the other hand, never changes and seldom adds sounds for such purposes. Because no inflection of nouns exists to show whether they are, for example, subject or object. No indication is given that verbs, nouns, and adjectives agree with one another in number and case. Word order is very important indicator of the relation of words to one another in the sentence.[7]

The subjects in this study were sequential bilingual learners whose mother tongue has reached a level of maturity before acquisition of the Korean language. Although their experience in the Korean language and culture was somewhat limited, they were able to organize many of the episode structures from the given story. This may due to their adult-level attention span, memory, and cognitive skills supported by their native language skills. However, the L2 subjects exhibited significantly limited proficiency when they were required to use morphological inflection and complex sentences. L2 participants used significantly fewer words, subordinate clauses, connective morphological endings, and pronouns per T-unit. Their speech also illustrated significantly more omission and confusion (substitution) errors in the use of auxiliary words and verb endings.

In conclusion, the results of study suggests that, in case of Chinese speakers, the interference from their L1 may reveal most obviously in the form of morphology and syntax. This also indicates that the Speech-Language Pathologist(SLP) should recognize the process of sequential bilingual acquisition, including the interference from L1. However, performance may vary widely within and across clients with a diverse language background and learning experience. The SLP need to take a variety of factors into consideration when they assess client with different linguistic background, including the client's learning style, age, native language, parental and community attitudes, and the level of literacy.

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