

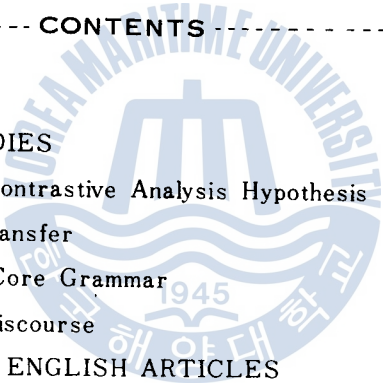
MARKEDNESS AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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有標理論과 外國語 習得

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〈요 약〉

최근에 와서 Second Language Acquisition Research 분야에 Markedness Theory와 Learning vs. Acquisition Dichotomy 이 외국어의 습득 과정을 설명해 줄 수 있는 이론으로 부상되고 있다.

본 연구는 미국에 거주하며, 영어를 외국어로 사용하는 한국 학생들의 영어와 관사 습득에 위의 두 이론이 적용될 수 있는가를 실험 연구를 통해서 밝혀 보고자 하였다.

이 연구의 실험에는 미국에 살고있으며, 그 곳에서 처음 영어를 배운 한국인 어린 학생 21명과 The University of Texas at Austin의 대학원에 재학 중인 한국인 유학생 53명이 참가하였으며, 이들 각 피실험자들로 부터 Test하여 수집한 영어의 관사 사용에 관한 문제를 15개의 범주로 분류하여 분석하였다.

분석 결과에 의하면 관사를 습득하는 순서는 첫째, 고유명사의 경우에는 무관사를 가장 빨리 습득하고 그 다음이 정관사의 습득이고 부정관사를 제일 늦게 습득하는 것으로 나타났으며, 둘째, Countable Nouns의 경우에는 부정관사, 정관사, 그리고 무관사의 습득 순서였으며, 셋째, Uncountable Nouns의 경우에도 관사습득의 순서는 Proper Nouns의 경우와 마찬가지로였다. 이 관사 습득의 순서는 모두 Markedness로 설명이 가능한 것으로 증명되었다. 또한 분석 결과에 의하면 미국에서 처음 영어를 배운 어린 학생들과 유학생들의 관사 습득에는 상당한 차이가 있는 것으로 밝혀져서 Learning vs. Acquisition 이론을 상당히 뒷받침 하여주는 것으로 믿어진다.

본 실험 분석 결과는 Markedness Theory가 외국어의 습득 과정을 어느 정도 설명하여 줄 수 있다는 것을 보여주어서 외국어 학습에 시사하는 바가 크다고 생각되어 앞으로 이 방면에 많은 관심과 연구가 필요하다고 본다.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of second language research is to find answers to the question of how children and adults acquire a second language. All such research has contributed to understanding some of the unfathomable process. In particular, "Operating principles" (Slobin, 1971) is said to have some strong explanatory power for the process.

Markedness theory, however, which has been recently applied to second language acquisition is also believed to have strong explanatory power. Most of the works in relation to markedness have been done at the level of phonology, morphology, and low-level syntax. The notions of 'core grammar' and the 'fixing of parameters' (Chomsky; 1979, 1981), and 'discourse presupposition and syntactic complexity' bring in a new interpretation of markedness in the field of syntax and

discourse.

The purpose of this study is to discover categorical acquisition of English articles by Korean speakers of English, and to suggest that acquisition of articles can be explained in terms of markedness, which is determined by numbers of paths. I further suggest additional evidence that the notion of acquisition is differentiated from that of learning in second language acquisition.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

1. Markedness in Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Eckman(1977) proposes that the contrastive analysis hypothesis should be revised to incorporate typological markedness which can predict not only the areas of difficulty for a second language learner, but also the relative degree of difficulty. According to him, markedness is defined : "A phenomenon A in some language is more marked than B if A in a language implies the presence of B : but the presence of B does not imply the presence of A"(p. 320).

This fact can be illustrated by Korean/English contrastive phonology. Whereas Korean has voiceless stops which contrast in tenseness, English has no voiceless stops which contrast in tenseness. Therefore, the presence of voiceless stops contrasted in tenseness in a language implies the presence of voiceless stops which do not contrast in tenseness, but not the reverse. According to the definition of markedness by Eckman, voiceless stops which contrast in tenseness are more marked than their counterpart which has no tense contrast.

To take an example from syntax, there are languages(e. g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean), which are known to be discourse-dependent languages, often delete objects in discourse. Such phenomena can be observed from the following dialogue in Korean:

- (1) A : John-ul po- ess- ni
 Obj see past Int
 'Did see you John?'
 B : mos po- ess- ta
 not see Past Dec
 I didn't see(him).

There are languages which cannot delete objects in discourse. Therefore, the presence of object-deletion in discourse implies the presence of no object-deletion, but the reverse is not true.

Accordingly, object deletion in discourse is more marked than its counterpart without deleting objects.

The above case of phonology can be supported by strong evidence that voiceless stops which contrast in tenseness are said to cause a lot of difficulty to both the native Korean children and adult foreigners at their early stage of learning. But a weakpoint with Eckman might be found in the latter syntax case. The deletion of object in a discourse-dependent language may be acquired naturally by the children who learn the language as a first language. If it is true that second language acquisition will parallel first language acquisition, typological markedness may lose some explanatory power as a theory of second language acquisition. As is suggested by Rutherford(1982), if discourse features are added to this theory, typological markedness can be incorporated into a strong theory of second language acquisition.

2. Markedness in Transfer

Kellerman (1979) has applied the notion of markedness to language transfer. Kellerman and Jordens have conducted some broad experiments on Dutch learners of German from idiom vs. non-idiom to more complex lexical systems and syntax. Their results are as follows:

<u>more frequently rejected</u>		<u>less frequently rejected</u>
idiomatic expressions 'opaque' idioms		non-idiomatic expressions 'transparent' idioms
sentences with secondary subjectivization	2	sentences with unmarked subjects
sentences 'marked'	3	sentences with 'unmarked'
serial readings	4	serial readings
sentences with TO- complements	5	sentences with THAT-complements

Jorden's findings(Kellerman. 1979, p. 7).

Jordens and Kellerman have accounted for the above results in three principled ways on the transference of the native language items to the target language. One of them is the learner's perception of language distance between native and target languages. When there is a great distance between Dutch and German, subjects will be less likely to transfer, and to make interference errors. On the other hand, if they perceive that distance is small between these two languages,

transfer is more likely to be predicted, and as a result more interference errors can occur. This prediction is believed to be exactly opposite to the “Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis.”

The second constraint is the learner’s recognition of markedness of transferable items in his or her native language. “Marked forms which are semantically odd, or syntactically less productive or less frequent when compared with normal forms, are less acceptable than unmarked ones”(p. 46). More transfer can be predicted for unmarked items, and highly marked items are not expected to produce heavy transfer. This result seems to be very much in the same vein as some aspects of first language development which are characterized by the acquisition of unmarked items before their marked counterparts. The third constraint is the actual knowledge which the learner has about the target language. The degree of such knowledge on the part of the learners will play some role in affecting the incidence of transfer in some predicted way. Thus, Kellerman’s view of language acquisition in terms of psychotypology and markedness is believed to have some strong explanatory power in the light of the fact that what seems as uncontroversial position on language universals is that language universals are a reflection of the complex structure of human cognition.

3. Markedness and Core Grammar

Chomsky(1977) has made a few general observations about the problems of markedness and core grammar. He writes that “It is reasonable to suppose that UG, understood to be one aspect of the genetically-determined human biology endowment, determines a set of core grammar, and that what is actually represented in the mind of an individual even under the idealization to a homogeneous speech community would be a core grammar with a periphery of marked elements and constructions. A core grammar, once again, is determined by fixing the parameter of UG in one or another of the permitted ways” (p.126). Core grammar, which can be derived by fixing the parameters of UG is believed to be unmarked elements of language acquisition. On the other hand, outside the domain of core grammar there is a periphery including marked elements and structures which have to be learned on the basis of slender evidence. Chomsky suggests that “Ultimately, the answers to the questions of the theory of markedness will have come from the deep study of particular languages within a principled theory of UG, combined with a kind of survey”(p. 127). From Chomsky’s perspective of markedness the primary task is to refine and elaborate theories of core grammar, one of which has been represented by the concepts of government-binding theory (see Chomsky, 1981).

Thus, the notions of ‘core grammar’ and the ‘fixing the parameter’ shed some light on the possibility that markedness may have explanatory power in the field of high-level of syntax.

4. Markedness in Discourse

Rutherford(1982) proposes that markedness theory should be applied to discourse. He argues that "There is a need for looking beyond the distributional characteristics of the exponents of formal syntax if great understanding of the acquisition of more complex language is to be achieved. And it is a need that may well dictate different procedures in data collection and analysis, since what is still there to be discovered is no longer the discrete, readily observable, surface-level language element. Discourse features do not conveniently materialize as a discrete morphology, lexis, and syntax"(p.103).

Rutherford's argument is that markedness theories we have so far discussed cannot give good account of discourse and its syntactic realizations. Consider Kellerman's prediction that highly marked L1 items and the learner's perception of typological distance between native and target languages will result in less potential of transfer and in less interference errors. This claim can be justified in lexical level and low-level syntax, but not in discourse level. For example, since there is great typological distance between English and Mandarin, the Chinese learners of English will not transfer the discourse features of topic-prominent Mandarin to subject-prominent English. Contrary to his predictions, however, several studies show that such transfer really occurs in discourse. This is due to the fact that, as is claimed, the Chinese learners of English will perceive that L1 discourse-determined information arrangement may be less marked than L1 syntax-determined information arrangement.

The object-deletion in discourse which we have already discussed in Markedness in Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis also provides strong evidence for Rutherford's argument. Thus, his markedness theory in discourse which underlies discourse presuppositions and syntactic complexity has some explanatory power in second language acquisition.

III. ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH ARTICLES

1. The Subjects

The subjects that took part in the experiment consist of two groups: one group consists of twenty-one native speakers of Korean between the ages of nine and seventeen who had not received formal instruction of English in Korea but have been exposed to English in the United States from one and a half to eleven years; the other group consists of 53 adult native speakers of Korean, who are now graduate students at The University of Texas at Austin, and have been in America between three months and four years, with heavy age concentration at their thirties; these subjects had

received formal education of English in Korea from six to twelve years before they came to America.

Some of the subjects in the first group were visited individually at their houses, and others were invited to my house for testing. On the other hand, most of the subjects in the second group were tested individually in the Perry-Castaneda Library. One thing to note during the period of data collection is that most of the subjects in the second group were curious about their test results.

2. Instrumentation

At first the test items were designed, so that the subjects would fill in the blanks with one of three different forms : a(an), the, and ϕ . After a dozen of the subjects were tested and their data were analyzed, it was observed that a variety of answers made it difficult to judge their grammatical correctness about articles. Thus, the same kind of test as Kim's(1983) was adopted. The problem with this method probably cannot rule out the possibility that subjects may judge the grammaticality and ungrammaticality of each sentence without knowing the exact usages of the three forms of articles. In order to avoid the problem, the noun which is in question in each sentence is underlined(see Appendix B).

As mentioned earlier, since the purpose of this study is to discover which usages of English articles are difficult to learn, and to explain why they are difficult, the usages of articles are categorized in fifteen different ways. To improve validity of the test categories more than three sentences were given from every category.

In order to minimize the ambiguities and counterexamples, all items in the test were examined by three native speakers of English prior to the administration of this experiment.

3. Results and Discussion

It was hypothesized that markedness might account for the sequence of articles acquisition in terms of their categories(see Appendix A). And then the hypothesis is accompanied by the following question : What determines markedness in English articles acquisition? I propose that markedness is defined in terms of numbers of paths. In other words, the more numbers of paths, the more marked. In order to determine markedness from the perspective of numbers of paths, it is necessary to classify nouns into either proper (or-common) or common nouns, and further to classify the latter into either mass (or-count) or count nouns. It is also necessary to classify common nouns into either specific or nonspecific references in speaker and listener, and finally to classify nonspecific references into either singular or plural. The results which can be seen from Table 1 will be explained

in terms of the markedness relations of articles in each noun.

Total Number of Errors on Each Category and Group Scores

Korean Children(N=21)			Korean Adults(N=53)		
Number of Categories	Number of Errors	Correct %	Number of Categories	Number of Errors	Correct %
12	49	22.2	8	75	52.8
11	29	53.2	11	65	59.1
13	24	61.9	6	55	65.4
14	24	61.9	2	52	67.3
15	23	63.4	15	50	68.5
8	22	65.0	10	48	69.8
9	21	66.6	12	48	69.8
7	19	69.8	7	46	71.0
10	19	69.8	13	46	71.0
5	17	73.0	9	45	71.6
6	13	79.3	4	44	72.3
3	10	84.1	5	40	74.8
2	10	84.1	3	39	75.4
4	10	84.1	4	38	76.1
1	9	85.7	1	28	82.4

Table 1.

1) The markedness relations of articles in proper nouns.

From Table 1 the following markedness relations of articles in proper nouns can be obtained:

indefinite articles < definite articles < ϕ

The markedness relations of articles in proper(-common) nouns can be easily explained from Figure 1. A basic assumption in proper nouns is that once proper nouns have definite or indefinite articles, they have the same features as common nouns do. This assumption, together with numbers of paths which indicate the degrees of markedness is clearly represented in Figure 1.

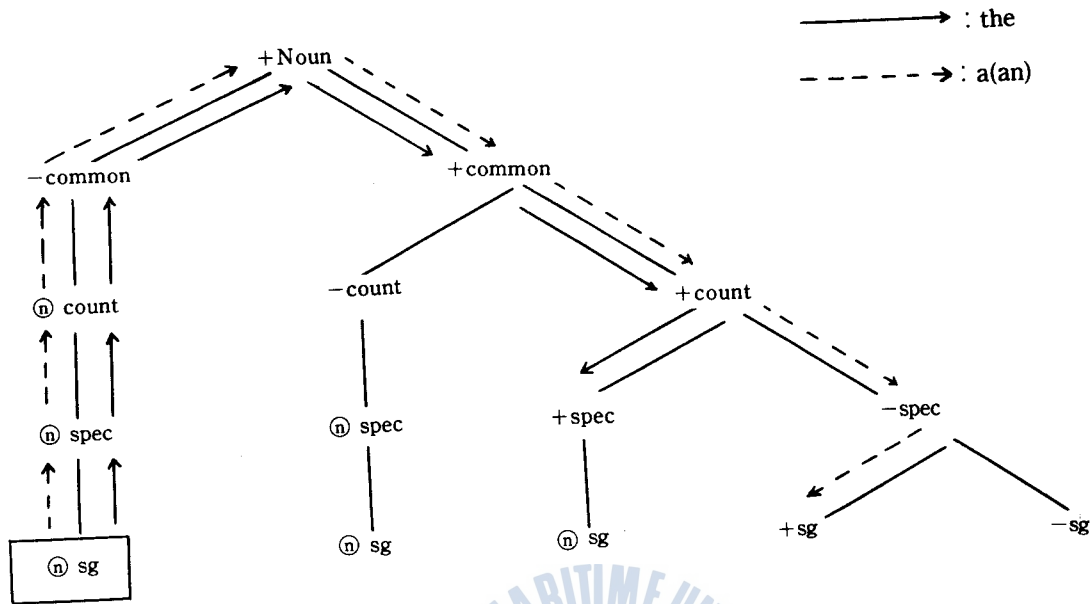


Figure 1 : The markedness relations of articles in proper nouns. (n) represents 'neutral'.

Figure 1 provides a satisfactory explanation of markedness relations of articles in proper nouns in the following sentences. Each of them represents a different category of articles in proper nouns.

- (3) What do you want to be? I want to be *a Columbus* in the future.
- (4) This is not *the David* I was talking about.
- (5) Every year many tourists come to see *Niagara Falls*.

A Columbus in sentence (3) has the most numbers of paths in Figure 1, and so it is more marked than *the David* and *Niagara Falls* in sentences (4) and (5) respectively.

The David in sentence (4) has less numbers of paths than *a Columbus* in sentence(3), but more numbers of paths than *Niagara Falls* in sentence(5). Therefore, markedness in this case has double values.

Figure 1 clearly shows that *Niagara Falls* in sentence(5) has the least numbers of paths, and naturally is unmarked.

With the application of the notion of markedness to L1 acquisition, Jakobson(1941) claims that unmarked values are acquired earlier by children than the marked values. If Jakobson's arguments are true, the acquisition of articles which we have discussed above has some consequences. In other words, acquisition process in L2 learners is similar to that in L1 learners.

Consider what numbers of paths mean. They can be interpreted as the degrees of semantic complexity. They may also include the notion of 'presuppositionality' which has been suggested by Rutherford(1982) as a discourse feature.

2) The markedness relations of articles in countable nouns

Table 1 provides the following markedness relations of articles in countable nouns :

ϕ < definite articles < indefinite articles

I assume that countable nouns have mass nouns features if the former have no definite or indefinite articles. The above markedness relations of articles in countable nouns are clearly illustrated in Figure 2.

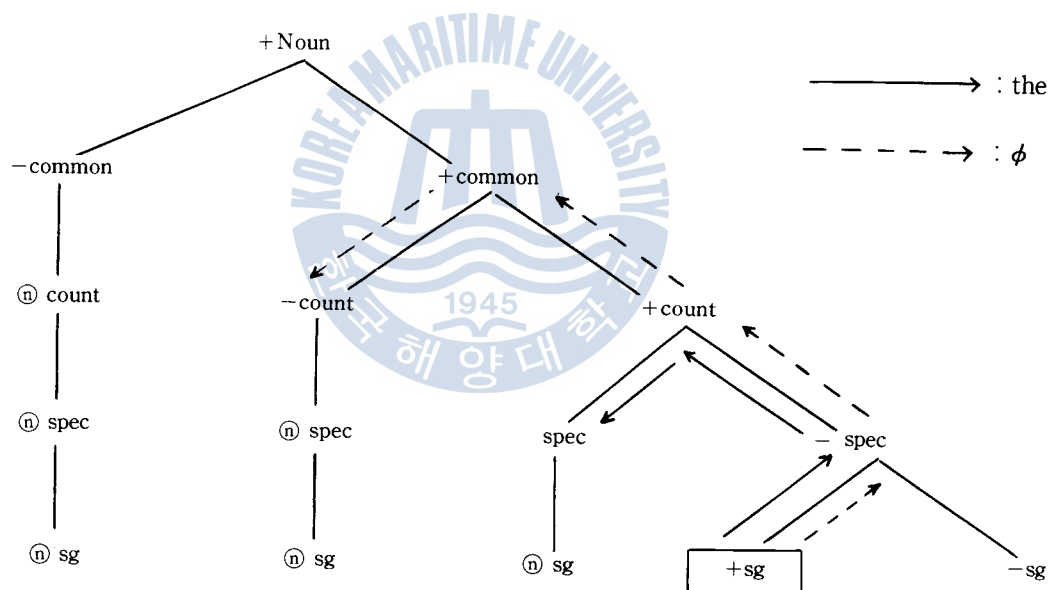


Figure 2 : The markedness relations of articles in countable nouns.

Consider the following three sentences :

- (6) Reagan was twice elected *president*.
- (7) Who invented *typewriter*?
- (8) *An honest man* would tell you the truth.

In sentence (6) the noun *president* has mass noun features, which are contrary to the learners' expectation about countable nouns. Figure 2 demonstrates why sentence (6) is more marked than any of the other two sentences.

Interestingly the markedness relations of articles in countable nouns provide a counter-example to some arguments in the literature of language acquisition.

Lado(1957) writes that "We assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be easy for him and those elements that are different will be difficult" (p.2). This "Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis" cannot account for the markedness relations of articles in countable nouns, since the Korean language has no system of articles equivalent to that of the English language.

The above case also runs counter to Eckman's(1977) typological markedness. Following his definition of markedness, whereas there are languages with a system of articles(English), there are also languages without a system of articles. Therefore, the presence of a system of articles in a language implies the absence of a system of articles, but the reverse is not true. Therefore, definite or indefinite articles must be more marked than zero-forms of articles. Eckman's arguments are exactly the other way round in our study of articles.

Dulay, Burt and Krashen(1982) argue that language acquisition must be viewed as a "creative construction process which means the subconscious process by which language learners gradually organize the language they hear, according to rules that they construct to generate sentences" (p. 11). The markedness relations of articles in countable nouns must be viewed in terms of a creative construction process. In order to lend strong support to this argument, more data must be collected from the native speakers of English.

3) The markedness relations of articles in uncountable nouns.

From Table 1 the following result has been obtained :

indefinite articles < definite articles < ϕ

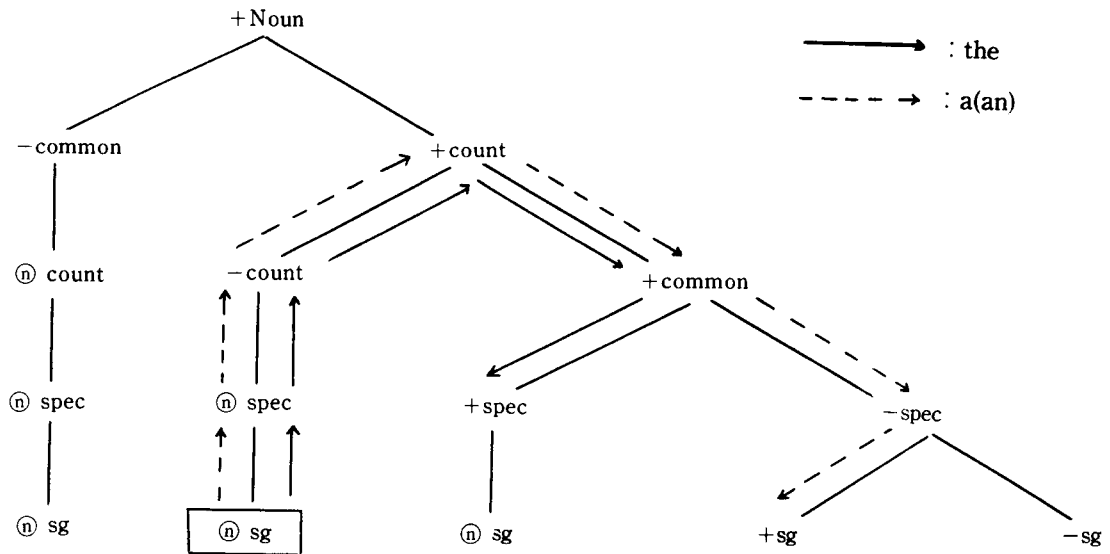


Figure 3 : The markedness relations of articles in uncountable nouns.

As has been assumed proper nouns, once uncountable nouns have definite or indefinite articles, they also have features of countable nouns. Consider the following sentences :

- (9) David is *a youth* to show great promise.
- (10) *Spanish language* is related to French.
- (11) In America, *school* usually begins at eight in the morning.

Figure 3 provides a good explanation of markedness relations of articles in the above sentences. I don't go into detail, since articles in mass nouns can be dealt with in almost the same way as those in proper nouns.

Consider now what remains unaccounted for in Table 1, There are noticeable differences between categories of indefinite articles in countable nouns, along with those of definite articles. In other words, markedness in numbers of paths cannot give us a good explanation about the differences between 12 and 7 in categories, but explanations of this phenomenon may be irrelevant to our intention in that markedness relations of articles are closely related to classifications of nouns.

Thus, as we have discussed so far, markedness determined by numbers of paths provides an insightful and systematic explanation of the acquisition of English articles, besides one or two cases. If a further study in the area of countable nouns confirms the results of the present study, I propose

that the notion of numbers of paths is incorporated into markedness theory in second language acquisition. So far we have discussed markedness in acquisition of English articles on the basis of data from the first group.

4. Implications in Acquisition and Learning Hypothesis

Krashen(1981) claims that “there are two different and independent ways of developing ability in a second language” (p. 115). Acquisition is viewed in terms of a subconscious process and product in the light of the fact that, while we are acquiring language, as it is claimed, we need not be aware that we are doing so, and knowledge that has been acquired can be automatically produced. In contrast, learning is the conscious process and product in that while we are learning, we know that we are doing so, and we cannot use this knowledge without being aware of it.

Consider how the results in Table 1 are compatible with Krashen’s acquisition and learning hypothesis. Before going into detail, we need to make it clear that, as said previously, all the Korean children in this study began to learn English in a host language environment(in Krashen’s terms) without the prior formal instruction of English, whereas the Korean adult speakers of English had received formal education in English in a foreign language context, prior to exposure to English in the United States.

Consider the following sentences :

- (12) I just finished reading *Hemingway*.
 (13) *Meter* is the standard French unit of length.

As is easily seen from Table 1, the Korean children and the adult speakers of English made the most errors in sentences (12) and (13) respectively. How can we account for such results? As markedness in our framework predicts, indefinite articles in front of proper nouns are perceived by the Korean children as highly marked forms. No wonder highly marked items are acquired later. The adult speakers of English, on the other hand, had already learned a certain rule through formal instruction of English. They had only to apply the rule to the category of articles which does not require any generalization. The correct or incorrect use of articles in this case entirely depends on their memory about the rule. Therefore, the distinctions between these two groups in connection with the category of articles are noticeable but quite natural.

Felix (1982) claims that “there is, in the human mind, a language-specific cognitive subsystem whose operations are restricted to processing linguistic data for the purpose of acquisition, and apart from the LSC-system, there is a further cognitive system which operates on general problem-

solving tasks of a large variety. This PSC-system is a fundamentally inadequate tool to process linguistic structures beyond a certain elementary level”(p. 7)

Felix’s argument would be on the right track, if the above-mentioned category of articles, which is a highly marked form for the children but not a difficult one for the adults, is proved as an elementary level in the acquisition of English.

On the contrary, if it is not proved as an elementary level in language acquisition, his ‘Competition Model’ may lose some part of explanatory power, since the PSC-system, in this case, helps the adults to learn a second language.

Consider the category of articles in sentence(13). Within our framework it is less marked than zero-forms of articles in countable nouns. Thus, the Korean children who are learning English in a natural environment may not perceive it as a highly marked form(see Figure 2). For the Korean adult speakers of English, on the other hand, the category is most difficult to judge correctly, since there is no obvious rule which applies to it. Grammatical judgment in the second language learners is usually both memory-dependent and surface form-dependent. Thus, they cannot generalize certain grammar from the underlying forms. What is worse in this category is that whether there are indefinite, or definite articles, or zero-forms of articles, the meanings may seem to remain unchanged to the Korean adult speakers of English.

Thus, what we have discussed so far may lend support to Krashen’s acquisition-learning hypothesis.

IV. CONCLUSION

The application of markedness theory to second language acquisition is relatively recent. Further intensive and extensive studies of markedness theory will be required in the field of high-level syntax. The notion of ‘core grammar’ (Chomsky; 1977, 1981) sheds some light on the possibility that markedness theory can have strong explanatory power in language acquisition.

In this study, I have tried to show that categorical acquisition of English articles by Korean children learning English as a second language can be explained in terms of markedness which is determined by numbers of paths. I have also tried to show that Krashen’s acquisition-learning hypothesis can be supported by comparing the results of data of Korean children with those of Korean adult speakers of English.

Findings from such research can be expected to provide small heuristic pieces that may fit into larger theories of markedness as well as second language acquisition.

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APPENDIX 1

Categories

- 1 . indefinite articles before countable nouns as the introductory use.
- 2 . no articles before proper nouns.
- 3 . no articles before mass nouns.
- 4 . no articles before countable plural nouns.
- 5 . definite articles before mass nouns.
- 6 . indefinite articles : generalization to several or all the numbers of a class.
- 7 . indefinite articles : all-representive use (the generic use of indefinite articles).
- 8 . the generic use of definite articles.
- 9 . definite articles before proper nouns(names of rivers, mountains, ranges...).
10. definite articles before specific mass nouns.
11. no articles before countable nouns.
12. indefinite articles before proper nouns.
13. definite articles before common nouns (the concepts of uniques).
14. definite articles before specific proper nouns.
15. indefinite articles before mass nouns.

APPENDIX 2

Please check R if the underlined part in each sentence is correct in terms of articles, and W if incorrect.

- 1 . *Man* sitting behind the desk is his uncle.
- 2 . In America, *school* usually begins at eight in the morning.

- 3 . People usually travelled in *a boat* because there were no airplanes at that time.
- 4 . Last Sunday he gave me *ride*.
- 5 . The American is familiar with *Korean History*.
- 6 . Reagan was twice elected *president*.
- 7 . Who invented *typewriter*?
- 8 . She is going to make *speech* at the meeting.
- 9 . He studied the laws of *universe*.
10. *Books* are a good companion for a **long** trip.
11. He will fly to *Florida* for the Christmas vacation.
12. Can you tell me where *Nile river* is?
13. I just finished reading *Hemingway*.
14. This is not *the David* I was talking about.
15. I saw *a strange-looking animal* in the zoo.
16. *Burnt child* dreads fire.
17. He always goes hunting on *the horseback* on Sundays.
18. *Spanish language* is related to French.
19. In those days few people believed that *earth* is round.
20. He always enjoys reading *a detective story* for pleasure.
21. Our friends like an evening of *good talk*.
22. This is not *the Korea* you saw thirty years ago.
23. *An honest man* would tell you the truth.
24. *Women* are sometimes stronger than men.
25. *Newsweek* is a popular magazine in Asia.
26. A funny show was on *TV* last night.
27. What do you want to be? I want to be *Columbus* in the future.
28. *The airplane* enables us to travel in comfort.
29. *A Miss Brown* came to see you in your absence.
30. The house was painted *a dark green*.
31. *Have you ever seen White House* in Washington D.C.?
32. David is *a youth* who shows great promise.
33. I met *a woman* called Jane on the train.
34. Every year many tourists come to see *Niagara Falls*.
35. Shakespeare is one of the greatest writers in *English literature*.

36. Thirty years ago he went to Japan by *steamer*.
37. The country is situated near *the equator*.
38. He had never spent *a fall* away from school before.
39. *The juice* in that carton went bad.
40. She is *a success* as a fashion designer.
41. Is this *the Italy* that she loved so much?
42. *Questions* of education are frequently discussed in every society nowadays.
43. *A smile a day* keeps you young.
44. He usually plays *basketball* after class is over.
45. *American* would never say such a word.
46. You will find many rare animals in *the Rocky mountains*.
47. Can *kid* do it? No, but *adult* can.
48. *Meter* is the standard French unit of length.
49. *A youth* is a brief part of one's life.
50. *The team* arrived late at the stadium.

Thank you very much

