

WORD ORDER TRANSFER OF KOREAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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본 연구는 한국학생들이 영어를 배울 때 word order transfer가 일어나며, 또한 어떤 형태의 word order transfer가 가장 빈번히 일어나며, 그리고 levels of English proficiency에 따라 word order transfer가 일어나는 차이점을 실험연구를 통해서 알아보 고자 하였다.

이 연구실험에는 중학생과 고등학생 각각 56명씩 참가하였으며, 이들 각 피실험자로부터 Test하여 수집한 20개의 영어문장을 10개의 word order으로 분류하여 분석하였다.

분석결과에 의하면 word order transfer는 정도의 차이는 있을지라도 실험한 모든 word order에 걸쳐 일어났으며, transfer가 가장 빈번히 일어나는 어순은 S+NEG+V+ that+S+V, Adj+thing, PP+part+N, 그리고 Adv+V구문으로 증명되었다. 또한 분석결과에 의하면 English proficiency가 향상될수록 Transfer의 현상이 감소한 것으로 밝혀졌다.

본 연구결과는 language transfer가 외국어 습득과정을 어느 정도 설명하여 줄 수 있다고 밝혀져서 외국어 학습에 기여할 수 있다고 생각한다.

WORD ORDER TRANSFER OF KOREAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

I . INTRODUCTION

The problem of word order transfer from one's native language to a foreign language is well-known to applied linguists and language teachers as a general phenomenon.

Selinker(1969) conducted a series of experiments which focused on the transfer of syntactic entities from the Israeli's Hebrew to his attempted production of English. The results of his experiments revealed that a speaker of Hebrew tended to transfer the distribution of Hebrew object and place strings to his production of English object and place strings. Interestingly, his results also showed that positive language transfer occurred four times, negative three times, and neutral once in the eight syntactic cases isolated.

Ervin-Tripp (1974), in her investigation of the English children's acquisition of French word order, discovered that her subjects relied upon the consistent SV(O) order. On the other hand, in her discussion of a 5-year-old Chinese-speaking learner's equational constructions Hatch (1976) maintains that her Chinese subject may employ the topic nomination plus comment strategy. Lightbown (1977), who has also investigated word order acquisition in the French learners of English suggests that word order transfer may be responsible for the consistent SV(O) order. Unlike Ervin-Tripp and Lightbown, Felix (1978) bases his account of word order transfer on the L2 learners' prior knowledge of the syntactic principle of linear arrangement. Pienemann (1980), in his investigation of the three Italian children's acquisition of German discovered that word order in his subjects' production of German was quite similar to that of the previous Ervin-Tripp's study. Unlike most of the previous studies, Zobl (1983) interestingly investigated the relationship between age of L2 acquisition and word order learning, employing two different native language groups of subjects : French children's acquisition of English and Spanish adolescents' acquisition of English (see Table 1). In this study he has discovered that two different kinds of transfer were involved : transfer of pragmatically based ordering strategies and word order strategies. According to him, nonprimary acquisition in a real

sense does not begin until a steady state in one's first language development is attained, but the question as to when this happens is far from clear. His study, however, reveals that word order transfer does occur in second language acquisition.

With a few exceptions, the subjects in most of the previous studies on word order transfer have been children whose first language development has not yet been completed. In the current study, however, the subjects are assumed to have attained a steady state in their first language development and have already had English instruction through formal and systematic teaching at school.

From the very inception differences of word order between Korean and English languages are believed to bring about one of the most serious problems which every Korean student must face in learning English as a foreign language.

The fundamental difference between these two languages is that Korean is a SOV language and English is a SVO language. The only similarities between them in terms of word order are that both of these languages share almost the same position of subjects and modifiers. It is no wonder that such total difference of word order will give rise to grave problems to Korean learners of English.

In such situations, we strongly need to investigate the problem of word order in the Korean learners of English.

Experiments were carried out to test three hypotheses : (1) Korean learners of English will tend to transfer word order from Korean to English in learning English as a foreign language. (2) Some structures of the Korean language will play an important role in word order transfer. (3) The phenomenon of word order transfer will decrease to some extent as learners' knowledge of English increases.

II. EXPERIMENT

1. Subjects

The total numbers of subjects involved in this experiment were 122 secondary school students in Korea (all boys). Common characteristics of them are that they have been

learning English at school for four hours a week and have been trained to acquire only reading skill.

The 56 subjects used in this experiment, were 14 year-old third graders of public Junior High School, and had 2.2 years of English instruction, whereas the other subjects used in experiment were 17 years old, in third grade of public Senior High School, and already had 5.2 years of English instruction. They never had any opportunity to expose themselves to English in and out of school except classes.

2. Method

For purpose of experimentally eliciting ten different types of word order of sentences, the questionnaire was made in terms of the subjects' production of English. Each experiment was conducted simultaneously by two Korean teachers of English.

In order to gather the accurate data which reflect the productive aspect of linguistic knowledge, we made each subject put twenty Korean sentences into English. Every English word necessary for translation was given along with each Korean sentence. But in some of the sentences subjects should add to one English word for making English sentences.

In order to enhance the validity of test, a pair of Korean sentences were given for each type of word order.

Ten different types of word order tested are as follows :

- | | |
|---|-------|
| (1) O+V | (Kor) |
| V+O | (Eng) |
| (2) PP+part+N | (Kor) |
| N+part+pp | (Eng) |
| (3) Adv+V | (Kor) |
| V+Adv | (Eng) |
| (4) $\frac{S+NEG+V+that}{\text{embedded clause}}+S+V$ | (Kor) |
| S+NEG+V+that+S+V | (Eng) |

(5) Pro+Quant+N	(Kor)
Quant+Pro+N	(Eng)
(6) Ti(Adv)+Pl(Adv)	(Kor)
Pl(Adv)+Ti(Adv)	(Eng)
(7) To+person+O	(Kor)
O+to+person	(Eng)
(8) NPOSS+Pro+N	(Kor)
Pro+N+of+NPOSS	(Eng)
(9) Adj+thing	(Kor)
thing—Adj	(Eng)
(10) Adj+Num+N	(Kor)
Num+Adj+N	(Eng)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Evidence for word order transfer

An analysis of our whole data revealed highly significant trend toward interlanguage errors. As is apparent from Table 2, interlanguage errors occurred to every type of word order, though frequency of occurrence of them is different from each other.

Particularly, high frequency of interlanguage errors occurred to some types of word order in comparison with the rest types of word order irrespective of levels of proficiency.

The four cases which showed salient frequency of occurrence of interlanguage errors will be investigated.

Kellerman (1983) suggests that both the learner's psychotypology and the transferability of structures of first language act as constraining factors to transfer in second language acquisition. Korean and English are typologically very different from each other in every respect. Thus, his psychotypological condition to transfer is not relevant to our discussion. Instead, let's consider his second condition to transfer. Kellerman (p. 48) put it as follows :

Transferability is not itself a predictor of performance but is one of the determinants of whether an L1 structure will be treated as language specific (not transferable to a given L2) or language neutral (that is, transferable to a given L2). This implies that a structure which is specific to the L1 in terms of one L2 may be neutral in terms of another L2. Furthermore, perceptions of specificity or neutrality may change over time within a pair of languages, particularly as learner's metalinguistic sophistication grows.

What is important in his arguments is that structures of first language play a great role in constraining transferability and there may be difference in degree of transfer between levels of proficiency.

The latter case will be discussed later. His arguments on transferability constraint are strongly supported by the results of our following data.

- (1) pang-eyse kongpuhanun haksyng-un con-ita. (36, .29)
 In the room the studying student is John.
 The student studying in the room is John.
- (2) pi-ka o-ci anhurirako sayngkakhanta. (.77, .75)
 I think that it will not rain.
 I don't think it will rain.
- (3) ku-y iyaki-enun usuun kesi amukes-to epsta. (.41, .30)
 There isn't funny anything in his story.
 There isn't anything funny in his story. —
- (4) ku-nun hakyo-ro hyanghayse ppalri talryessta. (.39, .27)
 He fast ran toward the school.
 He ran fast toward the school.

In the above sentence 1 the interlanguage frequency has showed a highly significant trend toward the dominant sequence PP + part + N. That is to say, more than one-third of students (JH : .36, SH : .29) answered in such a way, 'In the room the studying student is John'. or 'The studying student in the room is John'. Why did the students make the same interlanguage errors so much in this string? The Korean word order is of course responsible for this result, since it never happens that modifiers do not precede the

modified words in any case. Korean is what is called a right branching language. Thus, there is good reason to say that such a Korean structure had a great influence on word order transfer. What is to be asked is whether we can take into account all of these errors as word order transfer. Though all of them can not be regarded as transfer, we can not say that such errors have nothing to do with word order transfer.

As is evident from Table 2, the most salient evidence for transfer was found in a case related to position of negation in the complex sentence. This result is exceedingly unexpected and surprising to us. What brought about such amazing frequency of occurrence of inter-language errors? (JH : .77, SH : .75). Interestingly, when we ask Koreans such a question as “Pi-ka o-rirako sayngkakhap-nikka?” (Do you think it will rain?), the negative answer usually is that “Pika o-ci anhurirako sayngkakhap-nita” (I think it will not rain).

This is different from the American usual negative answer “No, I don’t think it will rain”. In other word, in such situation Koreans have a kind of speech habit of putting an emphasis on the event or matter itself, not on the opinion or feeling of other persons. This may be the main reason why our subjects made interlanguage errors most in this type of word order.

However, the unexpected frequency of occurrence of interlanguage errors in this type of word order led me to conduct another experiment here in America. We asked the same question mentioned above to 30 American students and 10 Korean students at UT. All English native speakers answered “No, I don’t think it will rain”. Whereas two Koreans out of ten gave such an answer” No, I think it will not rain”. Thus, the result of two experiments provided a clear evidence for word order transfer.

Apart from matter of transfer, this result suggests that Korean TEFL teachers should do something in their teaching of English.

Another strong evidence for transfer was found in the result of ‘thing + Adj’ sequence. As mentioned early, under any circumstances (that is, in any linguistic environment) adjectives must precede nouns in Korean, unlike the English language. This is just the case pointed out early by Lado (1957). He argues that the problem of the Chinese speaker learning English is greater than that of the English speaker learning Chinese because the Chinese speaker goes from a one pattern system—all modifiers precede the head—to a two pattern system—some modifiers precede and some follow the head (p. 13). The learning

burden to the Chinese speaker studying English which Lado pointed out can be interpreted as possibility of occurrence of interlanguage errors in terms of our study. Accordingly, this 'Adj+thing' sequence is no doubt a good candidate for transfer by Koreans who are not familiar with 'thing+Adj' string.

This case is somewhat different from the three cases I already discussed. Though 'Adv+V' string (He fast ran toward the school.) in Korean is exactly opposite to English string 'V+Adv' (He ran fast toward the school.), this is not the type of word order which can give rise to the learning burden suggested by Lado. Furthermore, the structure of both languages is so simple. Nevertheless, why did our subjects make interlanguage errors so much in this type of word order? (JH : .39, SH : .28). We have to find the answer in some other place. Repeatedly, Korean TEFL methodology which is requiring only acquisition of receptive linguistic knowledge (that is, reading comprehension) must be improved as soon as possible. As mentioned early, this experiment in some sense requires productive aspect of linguistic knowledge of English. Therefore, it is no wonder that students who have not been trained in writing sentences and making composition in English made such errors even in easy sentences. In the light of the fact that interlanguage errors in this case are sharply contrast with other errors in frequency of occurrence, we might not say that word order transfer never occurred in this case.

2. False Concept Hypothesis

Richards (1971) argues that developmental errors illustrate the learner's attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook (p. 206).

Unlike interlanguage errors resulted from structures of first language itself, developmental errors, as he maintains, occur as a result of learner's past experience with the structure of English (a second language) itself.

In a reanalysis of other errors in Table 3, another systematic errors were discovered in the following three types of word order.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| (1) <u>So</u> I think | (DE) |
| I <u>so</u> think | (IL) |

I think so

(2) I have many things to do other. (DE)

I have other many things to do. (IL)

I have many other things to do.

(3) Please give me that your father's book. (DE)

Please give me your father's that book. (IL)

Please give me that book of your father's.

As is apparent from Table 3, the most frequent occurrence of developmental errors can be seen in the above sentence 3 of 'to do other' string. Why did one-third of students make the same errors regardless of levels of proficiency? It might be understood that their experience with English led them to think that the verb 'do' in 'to do' is transitive and so must have some object in sentences. This may be the reason for 'to do other' form. What is noted in this case is that developmental errors have a much greater frequency of occurrence than that of the interlanguage errors. Accordingly, this result may be strong evidence that second language learners can have false concepts in the target language at some stage of their learning of it. Therefore, Richard's false concept hypothesis can be confirmed by our result.

The next developmental errors which have the same frequency of occurrence as interlanguage errors was found in case of 'that your father's book'. Possessive case led students to think that it must immediately precede noun (the head word) in English. For example, my ball, Tom's book, and your father's hat, etc..... This kind of concept about genitive case might act as a trigger of the above mentioned string.

The final clear evidence for developmental errors is provided from such a simple expression as 'I think so'. Why did some of Junior High School students make such errors? They already learned the use of 'so' in such expressions as 'So do I' and 'So am I'. Such knowledge of 'so' led some students to assume that the word 'so' must come in front of sentences. This may be the reason why they made such sentences as 'So I am' and 'So I expect' in cases where they had to say 'I think so' and 'I expect so'. Frequency of occurrence of the errors can be ignored in Senior High School students, as is evident from Table 3. Therefore, this is also a case showing that there must be a developmental stage in the acquisition of second language.

3. Difference of word order transfer between levels of proficiency

The results of our experiment reveal that the increase of learner's actual knowledge of English brought about less occurrence of interlanguage errors. As is apparent from frequency of occurrence in Table 2, however, it is not the case with all types of word order. Four cases which showed great difference in terms of interlanguage errors are as follows :

- (1) na-do kurehkey saynkakhanta.

I so think

I think so.

(.15, .07)

- (2) ku pakkey halil-i man-ta.

I have other many things to do.

I have many other things to do.

(.17, .05)

- (3) thom-i meyri-eykey chayk-ul hankwan cuessta.

Tom gave to Mary a book

Tom gave a book to Mary.

(.35, .09)

- (4) na-nun arumtaun seys sonye-ul poassta.

I saw beautiful three girls.

I saw three beautiful girls.

(.39, .14)

As is evident from the figures in the above four cases (the former JH, the latter from SH in each parenthesis), there is sharp contrast between these two levels in terms of interlanguage errors. One thing we must notice is that the frequencies of errors by Senior High School students are so low that they can be ignored.

Kellerman (1984) maintains that transfer from NL to TL does not take place willy-nilly. There are three principal interacting factors which control the use of transfer by a learner—his psychological structure of the NL, his perception of NL-TL distance, and his actual knowledge of the TL (p. 53).

What is important in his argument is that Kellerman pointed out learner's actual knowledge of the TL as a factor for transfer. The different frequencies of errors between these two levels strongly support his argument. Particularly, the last two cases (sentences 3, 4 above) give us a clear picture of degree of transfer between levels of proficiency.

Let's consider first the case of 'Tom gave to Mary a book'. Only 5 Senior High School students out of 56 made interlanguage errors, whereas 23 Junior High School students made the same errors. As mentioned early, as the actual knowledge of second language grows, not only developmental errors but also interlanguage errors tend to occur less frequently. Therefore, we might say that in a broad sense some of these interlanguage errors reflect a developmental process of second language acquisition.

Another case which we can not ignore in terms of both levels of proficiency and interlanguage errors is the case where 'Adjectives' must precede 'Numbers' in Korean, whereas English has the reverse order. As is apparent from Table 2, The frequencies of occurrence of interlanguage errors can be ignored in the SH group, while those of the JH group show highly significant trend (.39).

In a sense there is much probability that some of Junior High School students might employ 'desperate strategy'-word for word translation (Bley Vroman suggested this strategy to me personally). However, in the light of our discussion so far in this section, we can not rule out the possibility that there must be some distinctions of degree of word order transfer between levels of proficiency.

IV. CONCLUSION

We have investigated word order transfer of Korean learners of English through an analysis of our data gathered from the experiment conducted on Junior and High School students in Korea. Frequency of occurrence of interlanguage errors which we have regraded as transfer strongly confirmed our three hypotheses.

Though degree of transfer is different from each other, we have found evidence for transfer in all types of word order. To discover what types of word order are most likely to trigger transfer from Korean to English was another important point in our experiment.

An analysis of interlanguage errors shows that properties of Korean structures act as the conditions to word order transfer. The more peculiar the nature of Korean structures is, the more interlanguage errors are likely to occur. Therefore, word order transfer can

be predictable to a certain extent. We also have to notice degrees of transfer between levels of proficiency. After his analysis of transferability of 'break', Kellerman (1983) suggests that despite a wide range of proficiency, years of exposure, and age among subjects, the judgment of transferability were remarkably stable across the learners (p. 48). As is clearly seen from Table 2, we found almost the same rate of frequency of interlanguage errors regardless of levels of proficiency. Thus, his suggestion is supported by our results, but we can not overlook general tendency that transfer occurs with less frequency as learner's actual knowledge of English grows.

In the light of the fact that JH students made 64 percent errors in our test, Korean TEFL methodology must be improved toward the productive aspect of language learning.

Despite the limitations of this study, it is hoped that the results obtained here can be applied to the more general concept of language transfer.



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APPENDIX I

Table 1

Age	Sample size	Language	Explanation
2:6-2:10	3	French L1 English L2	Pragmatic production strategy
4~5	2	French L2 English L2	Word order strategy
10~13	2	Spanish L1 English L2	Pragmatic production strategy

Table 3

Types of word order	Levels	All errors except IL ones	developmental errors	interlanguage errors		
(1)	JH	20	7	.11	10	.15
	SH	15	8	.14	4	.07
(2)	JH	40	22	.33	11	.17
	SH	32	19	.33	3	.05
(3)	JH	36	13	.20	16	.24
	SH	23	14	.25	11	.20

APPENDIX 2

Table 2

Types of word order	Levels	Interlanguage errors		Other errors		Nonerrors	
(1)	JH	10	.15	20	.30	36	.55
(2)	SH	4	.07	15	.27	37	.66
(3)	JH	24	.36	33	.50	9	.14
(2)							
(4)	SH	16	.29	24	.42	16	.29
(5)	JH	26	.39	13	.20	27	.41
(3)							
(6)	SH	15	.27	4	.07	37	.66
(7)	JH	51	.77	12	.18	3	.05
(4)							
(8)	SH	42	.75	10	.18	4	.07
(5)	JH	11	.17	40	.60	15	.23
	SH	3	.05	32	.57	21	.38
(6)	JH	20	.30	14	.21	32	.49
	SH	13	.23	7	.13	36	.64
(7)	JH	23	.35	7	.11	36	.54
	SH	5	.09	2	.04	49	.87
(8)	JH	16	.24	36	.55	14	.21
	SH	11	.20	23	.41	22	.39
(9)	JH	27	.41	22	.33	17	.26
	SH	17	.30	13	.23	26	.47
(10)	JH	26	.39	12	.18	28	.43
	SH	8	.14	3	.05	45	.81
	J S	134	.35	209	.32	217	.33
	SH	134	.24	133	.24	293	.52

Table 2 The numbers in types of word order are corresponding to those of page 4~5.

APPENDIX 3

*주어진 단어들로 우리말에 맞게 영작하세요.

1. 방에서 공부하는 학생은 존이다.
(in the room, The, studying, is, student, John)
2. 영어는 미국에서 사용되는 말이다.
(English, in the United States, is, spoken, language, a)
3. 그녀는 역까지 천천히 걸어갔다.
(slowly, She, walked, station, to, the)
4. 그는 학교로 향해서 빨리 달렸다.
(fast, He, school, ran, the, toward)
5. 탐이 메어리에게 책을 주었다.
(to, Mary, a, Tom, book, gave)
6. 그는 어머니에게 소설을 읽어 주었다.
(mother, read, his, He, story, a, to)
7. 나는 그렇게 생각한다.
(so, think, I)
8. 나도 그렇게 생각하지 않는다.
(either, don't, I, think)
9. 나는 어제 공원에서 그녀를 보았다.
(her, yesterday, I, the, saw, park, in)
10. 그들은 온 종일 거기에 머물렀다.
(stayed, all day long, They, there)
11. 나는 해야할 다른 것이 많이 있다.
(have, many, things, do, I, do, other, to)
12. 그의 이야기에는 우스운 것이 아무것도 없다.
(There, funny, sin't, story, his, anything, in)
13. 나는 예쁜 소녀 셋을 보았다.
(I, girls, pretty, saw, three)

14. 메어리는 붉은 장미 다섯 송이를 가지고 있다.

(Mary, red, has, five, roses)

15. 지난해 그의 모든 책이 팔렸다.

(his, were, all, Last year, books, sold)

16. 그녀의 양쪽 눈은 충혈되었다.

(eyes, both, are, her, red)

17. 당신 아버지의 저 책을 저에게 주세요.

(me, book, your, that, give, father's, Please)

18. 당신 친구의 이 개를 보세요.

(your, dog, at, this, friend's, Look)

19. 비가 오지 않으리라고 생각합니다.

(rain, I, not, will, do, think, it)

20. 그가 오지 않을 것이라고 생각합니다.

(likely, I, to, he, think, not, come do, is)



