

Syntactic and Semantic Transfer in Second Language  
Acquisition: Transfer from English in Learning Korean  
제2언어 습득시 제1언어의 구문과 의미의 전이: 한국어 학습시 영어의 전이

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Key Words : L1:first language(제 1 언어), L2:second language(제 2 언어 ), mother tongue(모국어), positive transfer(긍정적 전이), negative transfer(부정적 전이), contrastive analysis hypothesis(대조 분석설), parameter(매개 변수), S:subject(주어), O:object(목적어), V:verb(동사), SM:subject marker(주격 조사), OM:object marker(목적격 조사)

ABSTRACT : This study is an attempt to test Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis made by Haegman(1986) that (1) the prediction of 'positive transfer' in areas where L1 and L2 are comparable, and (2) the prediction of 'negative transfer' in areas where L1 and L2 are different. A modeling experiment was conducted to determine if second language learners would transfer the strategies of their native language to those of a target language. The data from the experiment shows that the contrastive analysis hypothesis can serve as a major principle in second language acquisition, relating to the different stages of the second language learners.

## 1. Introduction

It is generally recognized by both linguists and language teachers that language learners tend to "transfer" elements of their native language to the target language in second language acquisition. The purpose of this paper is to test the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis(CAH). According to Lado we can assume that "we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning second language and those that will not cause difficulty." (Lado,1957. 78) In other words, we are able to predict learners' difficulty by finding differences between the first language and the second language. On this theory, most of the recent works on language transfer has been carried out in the area of phonology and syntax and this paper deals with the aspect of syntactic and semantic transfer . According to the CAH, in this paper, in order to show the fact that the transference from the native language appears in second language acquisition, A small experiment was conducted on the acquisition of Wh-questions and the answering Yes-No questions in Korean by native English speakers learning Korean. The hypothesis of the experiment will be that the native speakers of English will transfer the strategies of their native language to those of a target language. For example, second language learners of Korean whose native languages have Wh-movement in Wh-questions will make Wh-movement

which is not considered as a necessary step to make Wh-questions in Korean.

This paper will be divided into three parts. In the first part, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis will be briefly reviewed and the differences of basic elements such as word orders between English and Korean will be looked into. In the second part, the method and the procedures of the experiment designed for testing the hypothesis mentioned above will be explained. Also the result of the test will be discussed. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn from the data obtained from the experiment.

## 2. The Hypothesis and the Experiment

### 2.1 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

The contrastive analysis hypothesis has been described as "taking the position that a learner's first language interferes with his or her acquisition on a second language, and that it, therefore, comprises the major obstacle to successful mastery of the new language." (Dulay, 1981) The CAH makes two predictions about easiness or difficulty of L2 acquisition.

i) the prediction of 'positive transfer' in areas where L1 and L2 are comparable

ii) the prediction of 'negative transfer' in areas where L1 and L2 are different (Haegman, 1986, 252)

Here, 'negative transfer' is discussed in the acquisition of Wh-questions, and both 'positive transfer' and 'negative transfer' are dealt with in case of answering Yes-No questions when English speakers learn Korean as a second language. Through the experiment, the transfer from English into Korean is tested. The CAH that the first language has an impact on the target language seems plausible even if it may not be the only factor in explaining second language acquisition.

### 2.2 Contrastive Features between English and Korean

#### 2.2.1 Basic Word-Order in Korean

In order to compare Wh-questions, the basic word-order of L1 and L2 will be illustrated. A standard textbook sentences in English and in Korean are as follows.

1) John loves Mary. (English)

S    V    O

2) jon -eun meri -leul saranghamnita (Korean)  
 John SM Mary OM love  
 S O V  
 'John loves Mary.'

Korean is an SOV language while English is a SVO language. Although the most common word order which appears in standard grammars of Korean is subject-object-verb, word order in ordinary conversation is quite flexible. because the grammatical roles of each constituent in a sentence are marked by postpositional case particles such as '(n)eun, '(l)eul' and 'ege' that indicate a subject, an object and an indirect object, etc. At the level of surface structure 1) and 2) are quite 'contrastive'; in English the verb generally precedes the object, but in Korean the verb follows the object. in formal written form, the verb-final constraint is strictly kept in Korean.

### 2.2.2 Wh-Questions

Generally, questions can be divided into three major classes according to the type of answer they expect:

- Yes-No questions
- Wh-questions
- Alternative questions

Here, some of the most contrastive features between English and Korean are selected as follows:

- the position of Wh-element in Wh-questions
- the answers of Yes-No questions
  - positive oriented
  - negative oriented

Firstly, let's look at Wh-questions in English and Korean.

3) What is this? (English)  
 Wh-Q V S

4) ikos -in muot imnikka? (Korean)  
 this SM what is  
 S Wh-Q V

`What is this?'

Korean and English differ along many dimensions: In Korean there is no Wh-Q movement, an interrogative particle `kka' is used, Wh-Q are generally not in initial position and there is rising intonation. As shown above, in English the Wh-Q element must come first in the question, and the inversion of subject and operator in all cases occurs except when the Wh-element is a subject. In contrast, Korean speakers tend to keep Wh-element in its original position of the statement and the only thing which happens is appearance of interrogative suffix, `kka' at the end of the question. Here, CAH ,therefore, predicts `negative transfer' when English speakers learn Wh-questions in Korean.

Next, here are some strategies of answering Yes-No Questions in both languages.

positive-oriented questions

5) Is this a cat? (English)

6) Yes, it is.

7) No, it isn't.

8) ikosin koyangi imnikka? (Korean)

this cat is

`Is this a cat?'

9) ne, koyangi imnita.

yes cat is

`Yes, it is.'

10) anio, koyangi animnita

no cat not is

`No, it isn't.'

negative oriented questions

11) Isn't this a cat? (English)

12) Yes, it is. (a cat)

13) No, it isn't. (a cat)

14) ikosin koyangi animnikka?

this cat not is

`Isn't this a cat?'

- 15) ne, koyangi animnita  
 yes cat not is  
 `Yes, it isn't.` (It's true that it isn't a cat.)  
 = No, it isn't.
- 16) anio, koyangi imnita  
 no cat is  
 `No, it is.` (It isn't true that it isn't a cat.)  
 =Yes, it is.

In answering positive questions, there are no contrastive features between English and Korean. Of course, syntactic contrast such as word order exists there again, but I will only focus on the semantic aspect, that is, the answer `Yes' or `No' because maximal contrast appears in the answering negative-oriented questions. Korean speakers focus on whether the questions are positive-oriented or not while English speakers tend to answer on the basis of facts regardless of the question types. In other words, Korean speakers express the positive fact by using another negation when they are asked negative-oriented questions. For example, as shown in 16), they say `anio'(no) to express the fact that it is a cat to the question "Isn't this a cat?". Here, again, both `positive transfer' and `negative transfer' will be predicted when English speakers acquire answering strategies for two types of Yes-No question in Korean. Thus, the similarity between English and Korean would be that the learners expect not to find much difficulty answering the positive oriented questions while they would not be prepared to answer correctly to the negative oriented questions.

### 2.3. Experiments

#### subjects

The subjects involved in the experiment were made up of eighteen Korean-American children who enrolled in Suffolk Korean School for Spring semester 1992 and twenty native speakers. Twenty two of thirty six speakers were low intermediate and the rest of them were low to mid advanced. Twenty nine students were born in the U.S.A. and all the students speak English as a first language while they learn Korean as a second language even though it is their mother tongue. The grade of the first group(low intermediate) were third, fourth and fifth and those of the second group were ninth, tenth and eleventh. The part I of the test was also given to Korean native speakers to look for where they choose to put Wh-element in the Wh-questions. All of the third group were graduate students in various departments at SUNY, Stony Brook. They have learned

English for more than ten years but they do not have any linguistics background.

procedures

The written production test was designed for testing the hypothesis mentioned above and was divided into two parts. All through the two parts of the test, the questions were restricted to simple sentences only and did not include either relative clauses or embedded sentences to prevent the subjects from being misled by the complexity of the test items. In the first part, the subjects were asked to translate twelve English Wh-questions into Korean which are supposed to have various versions by using case markers in Korean. In the second Yes-No questions in Korean and were asked to answer in Korean on the basis of given pictures; Six of the questions were positive-oriented and the rest of them were negative-oriented. Both Part I and Part II were production tests and the type of questions are classified as follows:

#### PART I. Wh-Questions

Wh-questions beginning with who, when, where, what, how and why in English. -- Two questions were given with each of the six Wh-elements.

#### PART II Yes-No Questions

Type A	Yes-No questions (positive -oriented)	Is/ Are Do/Does Can Will
Type B	Yes-No question (negative oriented)	Isn't/Aren't Don't/Doesn't Can't Won't

The part I of the test was given to the two groups of subjects at Suffolk Korean School, New York. In the first part, the subject were informed all the vocabulary in Korean if they needed. in the second part, the experimenter provided them with the translation of the questions into English to help them understand the meaning of questions throughly. they were supposed to write down answers briefly by saying `ne'(yes) or `anio'(no) only in Korean. They were given enough time to answer the questions for both part I and part II.

## 2.4. Results and Discussion

The data obtained from part I will be analyzed on the basis of the choice of the position of Wh-element made by the subjects

Table 1. The Position of Wh-element in Part I

Questions	Group A		Group B		Group C	
	F.P. N(%)	O.P. N(%)	F.P. N(%)	O.P. N(%)	F.P. N(%)	O.P. N(%)
Q1	18(81.82)	4 (18.18)	5 (55.55)	9 (44.45)	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)
Q2	21(95.55)	1 ( 4.55)	8 (51.14)	6 (42.86)	3 (30.0)	7 (70.0)
Q3	17(77.27)	5 (22.73)	6 (42.86)	8 (51.14)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q4	16(72.72)	6 (27.27)	7 (50.00)	7 (50.00)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q5	20(90.90)	2 ( 9.09)	2 (14.28)	12 (85.72)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q6	18(81.82)	4 (18.18)	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q7	17(77.27)	5 (22.73)	4 (28.57)	10 (71.43)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q8	13(59.09)	9 (40.91)	0 ( 0.00)	14(100.0)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q9	16(72.72)	6 (27.27)	8 (57.14)	6 (42.86)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q10	15(68.18)	7 (31.82)	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)	0 ( 0.0)	10 (100.0)
Q11	19(86.36)	3 (13.64)	5 (55.55)	9 (44.45)	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)
Q12	20(90.90)	2 ( 9.09)	9 (44.45)	5 (55.55)	3 (30.0)	7 (70.0)

Group A: Low Intermediate Students

Group B: (Low) advanced Students

Group C: Adult Native Speakers

F.P. :Front Position

O.P. :Original Position

Looking at the Table 1, almost all of group A speakers chose to put Wh-Q in front of the sentence while group C speakers had a strong tendency to keep Wh-Q in the original position of a declarative sentence. In examining group B speakers' choice of the position of Wh-Q, it is not restricted to the front position. More than 50% of group B speakers tried to keep Wh-Q in the original position as native speakers do. Looking at Q8, "What is this?", majority of group A and all of group B chose not to move Wh-Q to the front. It seems that they recognized the ungrammaticality of Wh-movement in case of Q8. Because, in fact, it is an ungrammatical sentence that begins with Wh-Q 'what' in Korean. Interestingly, another 'transfer' from English to Korean was found beyond my expectation during the analysis of the results of the test. All English speakers tried to match English possessive case 's' to Korean possessive marker 'yi' such as the 's' in "Jane's brother that is considered as a redundant feature in Korean. Word order shows the possessor and possessed relation without any case markers of postpositions and genitive postposition 'yi'(of) is usually omitted among native Korean speakers.

Table 2. Yes-No questions in Part II

Classification	Group A		Group B	
	C.A. (%)	I.A. (%)	C.A. (%)	I.A. (%)
Type A	95.40	4.60	100.00	0.00
Type B	32.20	77.80	64.29	35.71

C.A. : Correct Answer

I.A. : Incorrect Answer

From the results obtained from Part II of the test we can also see strong evidence of the interference of the first language in learning the second language. The results show that English speakers experience no or least difficulty in answering the positive oriented question which is a parallel feature between L1 and L2. this fact is evidence for 'positive transfer'. but in case of negative oriented Yes-No questions, 77% of group A and 35% of group B speakers gave wrong answers attributable to the contrastive feature between English and Korean. On the other hand, more than 60% of group B speakers answered correctly the negative oriented questions. It seems that they might have realized the differences between L1 and L2 much more than group A speakers did.

#### 4. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis in second language acquisition was reviewed. According to the CAH, English speakers experience no difficulty in learning Korean where the parallel features exist between the first language and the second language. The evidence for this claim is found in the result of part II of the test in case of answering the positive-oriented Yes-No questions. In contrast, it was predicted that English speakers would have difficulty in acquiring Wh-questions and the way of answering the negative oriented questions in Korean. the results show that group A speakers and group B speakers had some problems in common. Both group speakers must cope with such difficulties as the contrastive features between the first language and the second language. But the learners of two groups had different degrees of difficulty according to the level of knowledge of L2. Group A speakers more strongly tended to transfer their first language aspect learning the second language. In other words, the occurrence of L1 transfer is closely related to the learner's stage of development in second language acquisition. For example, the transfer of Wh-Q movement into Korean is gradually reduced as they master Korean rules. That is, the advanced learners of Korean were more sensitive to the constraints on the application of Wh-question rule



even though English has obligatory Wh-movement rule. In other words, the large majority of advanced speakers have "reset the parameter" appropriate for Korean properly. This is consistent with the result of advanced subject performance in the experiment. Here, detailed discussion on second language development along the stages of L2 learners is left out for a further study. This experiment confirmed that the CAH can serve as a major principle in second language acquisition, relating to the different stages of the second language learners. It is believed that the CAH is plausible to explain second language acquisition even though there are many other contradictory hypotheses explaining the same phenomenon on second language acquisition.

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