*English Language & Literature Teaching*, Vol. *16*, No. 2 Summer 2010

# L1 Transfer and UG Accessibility in SLA: Acquisition of Verb Phrase Ellipsis by Korean Learners of English*

**Yeon Joo Jung**
(Korea University)

**Jung, Yeon Joo. (2010). L1 transfer and UG accessibility in SLA: Acquisition of verb phrase ellipsis by Korean learners of English. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 16*(2), 73-92.**

This study presents evidence of first language (L1) transfer and partial access to Universal Grammar (UG) in the acquisition of second language (L2) after puberty, concerning the acquisition of Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE) by Korean learners of English. Fifty Korean undergraduate students participated in a preference task and a cloze task to show their preference between elided phrases and proforms. Among the participants, five students were interviewed after the tasks for the purpose of investigating reasons for their preference. The Korean participants' performances were then compared with those of five English native speaker controls. The results indicate that the participants' differences in the performance of the tasks are attributed to full transfer of their native language and partial access to UG. It is also verified that although second language learners are exposed to any particular L2 for an extended period of time, they may never fully acquire the same syntactic representations as native speakers.

**[second language acquisition/first language transfer/partial UG accessibility/verb phrase ellipsis]**

## I. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the nature of the initial grammar in post childhood second language acquisition (SLA)[1]. There has been a lively debate within the field of SLA regarding the native language (L1) transfer within the universal grammar (UG) framework

* I would like to appreciate Prof. Hikyoung Lee for her constructive comments in the writing and the revision of this article. I have also benefited from feedback of three anonymous reviewers.

[1] 'Second language acquisition' (SLA) is a technical term which refers to the L2 learning by either an adult or a child; it is typically used to indicate acquisition by post-puberty learners (Brown, 1998). In this study, I will only consider SLA by adults.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

(Epstein et al., 1996; Eubank, 1996; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996; Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994; White, 1996). Researchers who have been concerned with the role of L1 transfer in SLA have exploited generative grammar so that they could understand the nature of interlanguage grammar which is attained by L2 learners (White, 2000). White noted that the relationship between linguistic theory and L2 acquisition theory can be attributable to the introduction of the Principles and Parameters framework (Chomsky, 1981). This framework adapted variation between languages in terms of parameters. L2 researchers began to be concerned with variation between languages and the role of L1 transfer, exploring whether parameters of UG can be (re)set in L2 acquisition (White, 1986). Accordingly, the phenomenon of language transfer can be examined within the context of UG parameters and the question of L1 transfer could be resolved in terms of parameter acquisition in SLA. As Slabakova (2000) pointed out, if L2 learners initially adopt the L1 value of a particular parameter, their hypothetical search space is effectively constrained by their native grammar.

Most researchers have agreed to the assumption that there are nontrivial differences between L1 and L2 acquisition. Post-puberty L2 learners already have their L1 grammar in place at the beginning of SLA and this grammar has influence on the L2 acquisitional process. However, there are still considerable debates about the existence of L1 transfer and the constituents of transfer. The role of the L1 grammar in the initial state of SLA has been argued from the early work of White (1986) and more recently by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) and Brown (1998) among others. L2 initial state denotes the nature of the linguistic knowledge which is available at the beginning stage of L2 acquisition (White, 2000). White argued that learners adopt their L1 value of a parameter in the L2 initial state. The *full transfer/full access* position supported by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) extended White's claims to the whole initial state of the L2 grammar. They claimed that all the values of parameters are accessible by UG, so that parameters could be reset during L2 acquisition.

Not all researchers have agreed that L1 transfer is necessarily involved in post-pubescent L2 acquisition. Epstein et al. (1996) proposed that UG is directly accessed, whereas transfer has nothing to do with L2 acquisition itself. This position is called the *no transfer/full access* hypothesis, following White's (1996) terminology. The *no transfer/full access* and the *full transfer/full access* positions have one assumption in common that UG is involved in adult SLA as it is in L1 acquisition. On the other hand, these two positions differ as to the initial state of L2 acquisition. The proponents of direct accessibility to UG claimed that the parameters already set to the L1 values have no impact when the L2 input is initially analyzed. Thus, researchers supporting the *full access* position insist on "parameter setting" instead of "parameter resetting." If L1 is not transferred to the L2 acquisitional process, all possible setting of a parameter provided by UG will be open and

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

available, and speakers from different native languages are predicted to demonstrate precisely the same acquisition sequences of a given L2 property.

In the two positions regarding the issue of L1 transfer, studies were also concerned with to what extent UG is accessible to L2 learners in SLA (see for '*full access*' approaches: Epstein et al., 1996; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996; White, 1986; for '*no access*' approaches: Bley-Vroman, 1989; Meisel, 1997; Schachter, 1988). However, as the issue of variability (Tsimpli, 2005) became on the rise in second language learners' judgments, the argument of *partial access* has been discussed by some scholars (Hawkins & Chan, 1997; Smith & Tsimpli, 1995; Tsimpli & Roussou, 1991). "Variability refers to the (in)consistent behavior of the language learner in the target second language (L2), which is contrasted with the performance of the native speaker (Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007, p. 216)." This *partial access* position hypothesizes that while both L2 development and mature L2 grammars are constrained by UG within the domain of parametric options, L2 representation could be influenced by L1 properties even at the advanced stage of L2 development.

As Tsimpli and Roussou (1991) and Smith and Tsimpli (1995) suggested, L1 parameters could not be reset due to maturational effects in spite of invariant UG principles constraining adult SLA. Hawkins and Chan (1997) also suggested that once L1 acquisition is completed, the domain of functional categories are not accessible. This position is labeled as *full transfer/partial access*, indicating the importance of the role of L1 and partial availability of UG in SLA.

The aim of the present study is to verify the following two hypotheses within the theoretical frameworks of the *full transfer/partial access* position and the status of VPE in Korean:

I. Post-puberty Korean learners of English show less preference for VPE, compared to native speakers due to the lack of an identical construction in their L1.

II. Linguistic competence is an important factor that influences the use of L2 English. Accordingly, advanced learners will show higher preference for VPE than intermediate learners.

The article is organized as follows. The following section discusses the (non)existence of an English-type VPE construction in the Korean language. Section 3 describes the method used for this study and section 4 describes the statistical results of the two tasks and the interview. The pedagogical implications of these results are discussed in section 5, as well as limitations of the study. Section 6 concludes the article by discussing the findings of the present study.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

## II. EMPTY CATEGORIES IN KOREAN[2]

There have been many debates about the status of empty categories in VPE-like constructions of East Asian languages including Korean, Japanese and Chinese. Examining empty categories, some researchers have been concerned with whether English VPE is a unique construction that is observed in certain languages such as English, Hebrew, and Portuguese (Goldberg, 2005) or whether it is more universal. This study introduces the arguments of Otani and Whitman (1991) and Hoji (1998) to investigate the (non)existence of VPE in Korean[3]. Although they offered evidence from various viewpoints, the availability of sloppy identity and strict identity readings are mainly concerned in this article.

A putative example of the Korean VPE-like construction and its equivalent English sentences are introduced in (1) and (2) respectively. If it is hypothesized that as discussed in Otani and Whitman, Korean is a verb-raising language, Korean should not distinguish on the surface between sentences involving VPE and those involving a null object. For this reason, Huang (1984) called examples such as (1b) "null VPs in disguise."

(1) a. John-nun [casin-ul] piphanha-yess-ta.
John-TOP [self-ACC] criticize-PERF-DECL
'John criticized himself.'

b. Paul-to e piphanha-yess -ta.
Paul-also criticize-PERF-DECL
'Paul also criticized himself.' (sloppy reading)
'Paul also criticized him.' (strict reading)

(Otani & Whitman, 1991)

(2) John criticized himself and Paul did, too.

Otani and Whitman (1991) presented the environment in which a sloppy identity reading is available as one piece of evidence for the existence of VPE. As seen from (2), Paul may

---

[2] The construction of empty category in Korean VPE-like construction is called as the Null Object Construction (NOC) by Hoji. Since I stand on the position that Korean has no English-type VPE, I will use this term instead of Korean VPE.

[3] Otani and Whitman (1991) and Hoji (1998)'s studies were concerned with Japanese empty categories. In addition, they argued that their results are extended to empty categories in Korean as well.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

criticize either John or himself. If John is criticized, then it is the case of the strict identity reading. On the other hand, if Paul criticized himself, it shows the sloppy identity reading. The above data (1) illustrates that we can get the sloppy identity reading as well as the strict identity reading from Korean NOCs in the VPE-like context. Otani and Whitman asserted that VPE exists in Korean on the basis that an example such as (1b) allows a sloppy interpretation in the relevant context.

They noted that it is impossible to derive the sloppy reading from Korean as long as they are analyzed as an example of independently null arguments. They suggested that as the sloppy reading can be derived only under VPE analysis, any example which exhibits the sloppy reading must be treated as an instance of VPE.

As the subsequent work to Otani and Whitman, Hoji (1998) argued against them, suggesting that what Otani and Whitman called the sloppy reading is in fact a "sloppy-like reading." Many examples were presented to support Hoji's claim that Korean sentences containing "null VPs in disguise" are not comparable to English VPE; he named the Korean constructions Null Object Constructions (NOCs). One piece of supporting evidence is as follows in (3) and (4):

(3) a. John-i casin-ul wiloha-yess -ta.
John-NOM self-ACC console-PERF-DECL.
'John consoled himself.'
b. Bill-to e wiloha-yess -ta.
Bill-also console-PERF-DECL.
'Bill consoled too.'

(Hoji, 1998)

(4) John consoled himself and Bill did, too.

Hoji explained that the English VPE sentence with a reflexive pronoun in (4) might mean that "John consoled himself and Bill consoled himself," whereas the Korean example in (3b) could means either "Bill consoled John" or "Bill consoled Bill." According to Hoji, this is the case of the coreferential reading and also it would not be ruled out by Principle B (see Hoji, 1998, p. 138 for further details).

Based on a number of differences including those presented above, Hoji (1998) claimed that although VPE operations are found in certain constructions of the Korean language, they don't seem to be exactly equivalent to English VPE.

In this section, some pure theoretical research on English VPE and Korean NOCs has been summarized. Comparing the different degree of preference by native speakers and Korean learners of English, this study investigates why Korean students face difficulty in

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

dealing with VPE constructions and hypothesizes that their difficulty results from the nonexistence of English-type VPE in their L1.

## III. METHOD

### 1. Participants

Fifty-five subjects participated in this study: five native speakers of English, twenty-five Korean advanced learners and twenty-five Korean intermediate learners of English. The experiment compared the behavior of native speakers with that of two groups of Korean learners. The native speakers were from the U.S. or Canada and had taught EFL courses at one Korean University. They provided native speakers' intuition with respect to the preference for either VPE or VPA. The rest of the participants were fifty university students enrolled in their first to fourth year at the same University. Their majors were varied from law to engineering. They had lived in an English-speaking country for less than one year and the native language of all the students was Korean. The participants had at least six years of English instruction in school settings and forty-six out of fifty answered that they had been taught English in informal educational settings. Therefore, it was expected that the participants had rich exposure to English language through formal and informal instruction. Although it is not clear whether the participants were explicitly or implicitly instructed about VPE, it is possible that they are unconsciously aware of these constructions through the exposure to English. Since proficiency was assumed to be an important factor for this study, a recognized criterion was needed to classify participants into different proficiency groups. Accordingly, the *Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test* (TOEFL iBT, hereafter TOEFL) and the *Test of English for International Communication* (TOEIC) were chosen, because they are widely used as indicators of general English proficiency. The twenty-five participants whose TOEFL scores were over 100 were divided into *advanced*, whereas the remaining twenty-five into *intermediate*. The TOEFL scores of the intermediate students ranged from 80 to 100. For the convenience of the study, participants' TOEIC scores were also collected in case that they hadn't applied for TOEFL[4]. Students who had neither TOEFL scores nor TOEIC scores were excluded from the experiment.

[4] As presented by *Educational Testing Service* (ETS), TOEFL score of 100 is almost equivalent to TOEIC score of 900 and TOEFL score of 80 to TOEIC score of 750. Therefore, the participants without TOEFL scores were classified into the advanced or intermediate group according to the converted scores.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

## 2. Test Material[5]

### 1) Preference Task

The preference task was employed through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 27 multiple choice questions. Each question was presented in three-sentence sets including a context sentence and two target sentences. A context sentence was presented first, and then two target sentences followed right below. One of the target sentences is ended with a surface anaphor (VPE), whereas the other with a deep anaphor (VPA). There were five choices in which subjects should select only one answer to show their preference between VPE and VPA. The participants were instructed to read the first sentence and then to choose the answer by using their instinct in the context of the first sentence. 7 out of 27 sets were distractors which were not under investigation in this research. The results from the preference task showed not only the learners' preference between the two target structures but their knowledge on the usage of VPE and VPA constructions.

### 2) Cloze Task

The cloze task aimed to lead the participants to show more straightforward preference between VPE and VPA. In this task, they were given 20 short dialogues. The dialogues contained a context sentence and a target sentence with a blank which the participants had to fill in. For the purpose of leading them to clearly show their preference between VPE and VPA, they were instructed to choose and write either *do it too* (*did it too, does it too*) or *do too* (*did too, does too*). The dialogues were originally excerpted from various books, magazines and TV show scripts and modified for the test to provide students with authentic spoken English.

### 3) Interview

In order to investigate the learners' strategy when they were asked to choose either VPE or VPA constructions, one-on-one interviews were conducted after completing the two tasks. Five participants joined in the interview session on a voluntary basis, because it was expected that voluntary interviewees would give more detailed and active responses to the questions. The participants were asked questions on three main issues: whether they have

---

[5] To determine the feasibility of the present study and to test the instruments for the experiment, pilot studies were conducted two times.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

been instructed on VPE constructions in classroom settings, whether they have any preference between VPE and VPA constructions in a given context and if any, what are the reasons for their preference.

## IV. RESULTS[6]

### 1. Preference Task

Under the condition of verified normality, a t-test for the results of the preference was conducted for the three groups. First, the frequencies that native speakers and Korean learners choose VPE in the preference task were compared.

**TABLE 1**
**Descriptive Statistics (Native Speakers vs. Korean Learners)**

| Variable | Group | M | SD | Score range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | Native Speaker (n=5) | 14 | 3.3912 | 10-18 |
| SCORE1 | Korean Learners (n=50) | 9.9 | 4.3764 | 0-20 |

*Note*. Score1 = frequency, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows that native speakers were more likely to prefer VPE than their Korean counterparts. What is interesting here is that there was one Korean learner who chose only VPE in every question, while there were no native speakers who preferred VPE for all twenty questions. Moreover, while most of the native speakers tended to prefer VPE for almost every question, one native speaker selected the answer that VPE is preferable only in ten questions and answered that both VPE and VPA are preferable for the rest of ten questions. Based on the descriptive statistics, a t-test was computed.

**TABLE 2**
**T-test for Preference Task (Native Speakers vs. Korean Learners)**

| Variable | DF | T | P>\|t\| |
|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | 53 | -2.03 | 0.0476 |

*Note*. DF=Degree of Freedom, P <.05

[6] For a t-test to be effective, normality was tested to verify the null hypotheses of the study. According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, each null hypothesis was proven to have normality so that a t-test could be computed.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

According to the t-test, the frequencies of the two groups are significantly different under the significant level, $\alpha$=0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that native speakers prefer VPE to a marked degree, compared to Korean learners of English.

Next, the influence of a learner's proficiency level in the preference task was investigated.

**TABLE 3**

**Descriptive Statistics (Advanced Learners vs. Intermediate Learners)**

| Variable | Group | M | SD | Score range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | Advanced (n=25) | 11.44 | 4.0204 | 3-20 |
| SCORE1 | Intermediate (n=25) | 8.36 | 4.0608 | 0-15 |

Table 3 indicates that the advanced learners of English more often chose VPE in the preference task than the intermediate learners did.

**TABLE 4**

**T-test for Preference Task (Advanced vs. Intermediate)**

| Variable | DF | T | P>ltl |
|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | 48 | 2.63 | 0.0113 |

As shown in Table 4, the frequency that the advanced learners preferred VPE significantly differs from that of the intermediate learners ($t_{(48)}$=2.63, p<.05).

## 2. Cloze Task

The results of the cloze task were also analyzed through a t-test.

**TABLE 5**

**Descriptive Statistics (Native Speakers vs. Korean Learners)**

| Variable | Group | M | SD | Score range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | Native Speaker (n=5) | 17.8 | 1.9236 | 15-20 |
| SCORE1 | Korean Learners (n=50) | 13.863 | 3.7364 | 2-20 |

As in Table 5, the difference between mean scores shows that native speakers preferred to fill out the blanks with VPE much more frequently than Korean learners did. Based on the descriptive statistics, a t-test was computed.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

**TABLE 6**
**T-test for Cloze Task (Native Speakers vs. Korean Learners)**

| Variable | DF | T | P>\|t\| |
|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | 53 | -2.31 | 0.0246 |

As the results of Table 6 indicated, the difference between native speakers and Korean learners regarding frequencies of preferring VPE was proved to be significant ($t_{(53)}$=-2.31, $p<.05$).

Lastly, the advanced learners' answers were compared to those of the intermediate learners to examine whether learners' proficiency would influence the performance in the cloze task.

**TABLE 7**
**Descriptive Statistics (Advanced Learners vs. Intermediate Learners)**

| Variable | Group | M | SD | Score range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | Advanced (n=25) | 15.462 | 3.0624 | 9-20 |
| SCORE1 | Intermediate (n=25) | 12.2 | 3.6968 | 2-19 |

Table 7 implies that on average, the advanced learners tended to prefer VPE more often than the intermediate learners did.

**TABLE 8**
**T-test for Cloze Task (Advanced Learners vs. Intermediate Learners)**

| Variable | DF | T | P>\|t\| |
|---|---|---|---|
| SCORE1 | 49 | 3.44 | 0.0012 |

And the result of the t-test confirmed that as learners become more proficient, they are likely to produce VPE constructions more frequently, as shown in Table 9, $t_{(49)}$=3.44, $p<.05$.

## 3. Interview

Both advanced and intermediate learners had no knowledge of VPE constructions. They pointed out that they were aware of VPE but didn't know the distinction between VPE and VPA. Based on school grammar, they classified VPE into pro-verb or auxiliary verb such as *can, may, will*, etc. They also indicated that they didn't recognize that VPE is

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

interchangeable with VPA[7]. They perceived VPE and VPA as separate constructions. Among the interviewees, no one had received explicit instruction on VPE. They said that VPE was not included in grammar instruction, whereas they had been taught VPA as a part of pronoun usage. Even though they had had no instruction on VPE, they became familiar with the construction to some extent through American movies, dramas and books. They seemed to have learned the usage of VPE from authentic spoken English in a natural way, but they still didn't know the specific condition under which VPE is preferred. Finally, the interviewees had no particular preference between VPE and VPA. They noted that their choices did not seem to be influenced by any preference but by their feelings when they encountered each question.

## V. DISCUSSION

Inspired by previous proposals on whether L1 is transferred to the initial state of L2 acquisition and to what extent UG is accessible to post-puberty second language learners, the acquisition of VPE constructions by Korean learners of English has been explored.

There were two main findings regarding the hypotheses in the experimental study. The first hypothesis was that post-puberty Korean learners of English show less preference for VPE, compared to native speakers due to the lack of identical constructions in their L1. As expected, native speakers demonstrated a higher preference for VPE constructions in both the preference and the cloze tasks. Although there were some answers preferring both VPE and VPA, they tended to choose VPE more frequently in most of the questions. To the inquiry why some of the native speakers preferred both constructions, they indicated that using VPE or VPA in a sentence is not the matter of grammaticality but the matter of pragmatic judgment. As the questions were presented in a written form, it was difficult to interpret the contexts of the dialogues. Thus, in some questions, they were confused about which one would be more appropriate in a particular context. Nevertheless, the native speakers showed a highly consistent pattern of answers, preferring VPE over VPA.

On the other hand, Korean learners' answers seemed to fluctuate between VPE and VPA. Although on average, Korean learners preferred VPE to VPA in the experiments, they had no idea on the distinction between the two constructions. As suggested in the previous section, the Korean language does not seem to have VPE constructions; however, Null

[7] Deep and surface anaphors can be used interchangeably in certain contexts (Matsuo & Duffield, 2001). Specifically, in this study, *do it* (deep anaphora) and *do* (surface anaphora) are minimal pairs, which can replace each other. However, VPE and VPA are not always interchangeable. VPA would definitely not be appropriate usage or at least odd sounding in some cases.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Object Construction (NOC) exists in Korean, which is not equivalent to English VPE. Lobeck (1991) claimed that it is the [+Tense] feature of Infl, realized on an auxiliary element, that designated Infl as specified for strong agreement in the relevant way to license and identify ellipted VPs in English. However, finite and nonfinite tense features in Korean are degenerate or not rich enough to identify null VPs, resulting in the lack of VPE constructions in Korean. Although Korean learners fully transfer their knowledge of NOCs to the interlanguage representation, they fail to exhibit the same preference pattern with the native controls because they are unable to acquire [+Tense] features which are not activated in their L1.

The second hypothesis considered a learner's proficiency as an important factor that affects the performance of the target language. This hypothesis is based on Hawkins and Chan's (1997) claim that as L2 learners get more exposed to the target language, their performance will approximate to that of native speakers. In the present study, advanced learners apparently showed a higher degree of preference for VPE, as compared to intermediate ones. According to Ellis and Morrison (1998), the more frequently a learner encounters an item, the easier s/he accesses the item. So the divergent performances of the two groups are assumed to be due to the amount of input they received. Since there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the period of learning English, it is predicted that the advanced learners might be more exposed to VPE constructions. In classroom settings, it's hard to provide students with chances to receive authentic English input. Most of classroom instruction relies on grammar translation or reading skill development. Since VPE constructions are not concerned with grammaticality, learners are not assumed to be taught about the use of VPE and the distinction between VPE and VPA. Knowing the appropriate use of VPE leads learners to achieve more native-like proficiency in English.

In this study, some limitations have been found. Since ellipsis is more commonly found in spontaneous speech (Santos, 2009), a spontaneous oral production task would have been more desirable. In addition, if processing time of the participants had been measured, more in-depth analyses of the experiment could have been possible. Lastly, any argument was not made to support the position that Korean does not have English-type VPE. Based on both theoretical and experimental research, it needs to be investigated in its own right whether English-type VPE exists in Korean. In line with ellipsis itself, the [+Tense] feature and its relation to ellipted VPs in Korean should be more examined in the following studies.

## VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

There are two pedagogical implications that arise from the results in terms of Korean learners' interlanguage representation of VPE. First, there is a need for explicit instruction on the appropriate use of VPE in English. A focused explicit instruction for enhancing language awareness may play a positive role in helping learners develop a more target-like interlanguage representation. Lee (2006) pointed out the importance of more explicit or intensive instruction in her study of English stylistic variation of Korean learners. Kim (2008) also demonstrated that the explanation of grammatical patterns played a significant role in helping learners achieve accuracy in the use of the target structures. More specifically, White's (1991) study indicated an importance of explicit instruction in learning a new parameter which does not exist in the learners' L1. She demonstrated that explicit instruction is more effective than positive evidence in helping learners master a new parameter. However, either form of input alone is not sufficient to reset UG parameter (Schwartz, 1987; White, 1991). Input from both explicit and implicit instruction seems to lead learners to increasingly perceive a new L2 parameter. Accordingly, the second implication of the study is the importance of positive evidence from implicit instruction. In his study of Arab students' acquisition of VPE, Al-Thubaiti (2009) suggested that the lack of VPE in Arabic poses a learning problem for post-puberty learners because the new features associated with VPE are not accessible beyond the critical period. Nevertheless, he argued that if learners are provided with substantial amounts of input, it seems possible to access new features to some extent and to learn the specific condition under which VPE is used. In addition, Larson-Hall (2008) found out that for a classroom instruction to be effective, L2 learners need to be exposed to a massive amount of input. Therefore, it is assumed in the present study that with sufficient input provided, learners would increasingly appreciate under which condition VPE is preferred and distinguished from VPA. To sum up, both focused explicit instruction and receiving extensive amounts of input in natural contexts are necessary for learners to acquire VPE constructions and their usage.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this study, two issues have been examined: whether Korean learners of English prefer VPE constructions as native speakers do and whether learners' linguistic competence has influence on linguistic performance. According to the results from the experiment, first, Korean learners showed less preference for VPE, as compared to native speakers. Second, the more proficient learners are, the more do they prefer VPE. The first finding indicates that Korean learners failed to acquire the new functional feature, which is a strong [+Tense] feature, due to partial access to UG in post-puberty L2 learning. However, as

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

NOC which refers to empty category in Korean is fully transferred to interlanguage representation, Korean learners show preference for VPE to some degree.

The second finding confirmed Hawkins and Chan's (1997) argument that as learners become more proficient in the target language, they perform more closely to native speakers. In both the preference task and the cloze task, advanced learners' mean scores of preferring VPE were significantly higher than those of intermediate learners. According to Hawkins and Chan, a rich exposure to L2 is the major factor in improving learner's proficiency; however, due to partial access to UG, L2 learners' performance is divergent to that of native speakers. Therefore, the *full transfer/partial access* hypothesis has experimental support from the two findings of the present study.

Note

1) The original version of the preference task consists of twenty-seven items, including seven distractors.

2) One reviewer suggested that *do so* is more appropriate than *do it* or *do* in some contexts. However, following Hankamer and Sag (1976), this study focused on the contrast between *do it* and *do* because they are minimal pairs which are replaceable to each other. The status of *do so* seems to be controversial in terms of whether *do so* belongs to deep anaphora or surface anaphora. It needs to be further studied but beyond the scope of the present research.

## REFERENCES

Al-Thubaiti, K. (2009). The acquisition of uninterpretable features: The case of VP Ellipsis. In M. Bowles, T. Ionin, S. Montrul & A. Tremblay (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th generative approaches to second language acquisition conference (GASLA 2009)* (pp. 192-200). Somervill, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Bley-Vroman, R. (1989). What is the logical problem of foreign language learning? In S. Gass & J. Schachter (Eds.), *Linguistic perspectives on second language acquisition* (pp. 41-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, C. (1998). The role of the L1 grammar in the L2 acquisition of segmental structure. *Second Language Research, 14*(1), 136-193.

Chomsky, N. (1981). Principles and parameters in syntactic theory. In N. Hornstein & D. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Explanation in linguistics: The logical problem of language acquisition* (pp. 32-75). London: Longman.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Ellis, A. W., & Morrison, C. M. (1998). Real age of acquisition effects in lexical retrieval. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition, 24*(2), 515-523.

Epstein, S., Flynn, S., & Martohardjono, G. (1996). Second language acquisition: Theoretical and experimental issues in contemporary research. *Brain and Behavioral Sciences, 19*(4), 677-758.

Eubank, L. (1996). Negation in early German-English interlanguage: More valueless features in the L2 initial state. *Second Language Research, 12*(1), 73-106.

Goldberg, L. M. (2005). *Verb-stranding VP ellipsis: A cross-linguistic study.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. McGill University, Montreal.

Hankamer, J., & Sag, I. (1976). Deep and surface anaphora. *Linguistic Inquiry, 7*(3), 391-426.

Hawkins, R., & Chan, C. (1997). The partial availability of universal grammar in second language acquisition: The 'Failed functional features hypothesis'. *Second Language Research, 13*(3), 187-226.

Hoji, H. (1998). Null objects and sloppy identity in Japanese. *Linguistic Inquiry, 29*(1), 127-152.

Huang, C. –T. (1984). On the distribution and reference of empty pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry, 15*(4), 531-574.

Kim, B. –J. (2008). Is a brief explicit grammar explanation needed in business English courses? *English Language & Literature Teaching, 14*(3), 69-94.

Larson-Hall, J. (2008). Weighing the benefits of studying a foreign language at a younger starting age in a minimal input situation. *Second Language Research, 24*(1), 35-63.

Lee, H. (2006). Defining the nature of online chat in relation to speech and writing. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 12*(2), 87-105.

Lobeck, A. (1991). The phrase structure of ellipsis: Heads and licensing. In S. D. Rothstein (Ed.), *Perspectives on phrase structure* (pp. 81-103). San Diego: Academic Press.

Matsuo, A., & Duffield, N. (2001). VP-Ellipsis and anaphora in child language acquisition. *Language Acquisition, 9*(4), 301-327.

Meisel, J. (1997). The acquisition of the syntax of negation in French and German: Contrasting first and second language acquisition. *Second Language Research, 13*(3), 227-263.

Otani, K., & Whitman, J. (1991). V-raising and VP-Ellipsis. *Linguistic Inquiry, 22*(2), 345-358.

Santos, A. L. (2009). Early VP ellipsis: Production and comprehension evidence. In A. Pires & J. Rothman (Eds.), *Minimalist inquiries into child and adult language acquisition: Case studies across Portuguese* (pp. 155-176). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Schachter, J. (1988). Second language acquisition and its relationship to universal grammar. *Applied Linguistics, 9*(3), 219-235.

Schwartz, B. D. (1987). *The modular basis of second language acquisition.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California.

Schwartz, B. D., & Sprouse, R. (1996). L2 cognitive states and the full transfer/full access model. *Second Language Research, 12*(1), 40-72.

Slavakova, R. (2000). L1 transfer revisited: The L2 acquisition of telicity marking in English by Spanish and Bulgarian native speakers. *Linguistics, 38*(4), 739-770.

Smith, N., & Tsimpli, I. M. (1995). *The mind of a savant: Language learning and modularity.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Tsimpli, I. M. (2005). Variation in the L2 speaker. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics, vol. 13* (2nd ed.) (pp. 387-394). Oxford: Elsevier.

Tsimpli, I. M., & Dimitrakopoulou, M. (2007). The interpretability hypothesis: Evidence from Wh-interrogatives in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research, 23*(2), 215-242.

Tsimpli, I. M, & Roussou, A. (1991). Parameter-resetting in L2? *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics, 3*, 149-170.

Vainikka, A., & Young-Scholten, M. (1994). Direct access to X'-theory: Evidence from Korean and Turkish adults learning German. In T. Hoekstra & B. D. Schwartz (Eds.), *Language acquisition studies in generative grammar: Papers in honor of Kenneth Wexler from the 1991 Glow Workshop* (pp. 265-316). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

White, L. (1986). Implications of parametric variation for adult second language acquisition: An investigation of the pro-drop parameter. In V. J. Cook (Ed.), *Experimental approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 55-72). Oxford: Pentagon Press.

White, L. (1991). Adverb placement in second language acquisition: Some effects of positive and negative evidence in the classroom. *Second Language Research, 7*(2), 133-161.

White, L. (1996). Universal Grammar and second language acquisition: Current trends and new directions. In W. Ritchie & T. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 85-120). San Diego: Academic Press.

White, L. (2000). Second language acquisition: From initial to final state. In J. Archibald (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and linguistic theory* (pp. 130-155). Malden: Blackwell.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

## APPENDIX
### Preference Task

(1) Obama was among several candidates to announce their campaigns by way of internet videos?

a. Yes, and Clinton and Richardson did it too.

b. Yes, and Clinton and Richardson did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(2) I never witnessed him actually taking drugs.

a. But I confiscated packages belonging to him, and Uri did it too.

b. But I confiscated packages belonging to him, and Uri did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(3) I was probably the first black person she had ever looked after.

a. But I managed, and she did it too.

b. But I managed, and she did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(4) If you missed the last ticket for the concert, don't feel bad.

a. Nearly everyone else did it too.

b. Nearly everyone else did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(5) We are not the only country which has Swine Flu problems.

a. You're right. Other European and Asian countries do it too.

b. You're right. Other European and Asian countries do too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(6) Did you watch the discussion program last night?

a. Yes, I saw problems and contradictions there and was wondering if you did it too.

b. Yes, I saw problems and contradictions there and was wondering if you did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(7) Certainly, I had some difficulties in hearing.

a. I believe that other committee members did it too.

b. I believe that other committee members did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(8) I submitted a formal complaint about the program.

a. I've no doubt that many other people did it too.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

b. I've no doubt that many other people did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(9) The summer Olympics has had its own theme since 1984.

a. I think it is time the winter Olympics does it too.

b. I think it is time the winter Olympics does too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(10) Do parents' eating habits have any influence on their children?

a. When adults have poor eating habits, their children usually do it too.

b. When adults have poor eating habits, their children usually do too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(11) How was the speech last night?

a. The rhetoric was so inspiring and the students love every minute of it. I did it too.

b. The rhetoric was so inspiring and the students love every minute of it. I did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(12) Have you ever listened to Obama's speech?

a. Yes, I have. Whenever I hear his speech, I get to agree to what he's saying. You will do it too.

b. Yes, I have. Whenever I hear his speech, I get to agree to what he's saying. You will do too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(13) A doctor said about 80 percent of Americans have excess fat.

a. And more seriously, about 50 percent of kids do it too.

b. And more seriously, about 50 percent of kids do too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(14) Did your grandmother make this chocolate cake? It's really delicious.

a. Yes, she always makes it at Christmas season, saying her mother did it too.

b. Yes, she always makes it at Christmas season, saying her mother did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(15) I cleaned the filters of the water purifiers.

a. But I'm not sure Mary did it too.

b. But I'm not sure Mary did too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(16) When I was young, my mom sang in church.

a. It's surprising that she did it too, just like her grandma.

b. It's surprising that she did too, just like her grandma.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

(17) Helen wants to go to the dance.

a. Helen and Jane have been competing with each other, so Jane does it too.

b. Helen and Jane have been competing with each other, so Jane does too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(18) The Catholic population remains constant in Europe.

a. The Protestant population does it too.

b. The Protestant population does too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(19) Are you reading Coelho's new book?

a. We love his books but we didn't know that you do it too.

b. We love his books but we didn't know that you do too.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

(20) Some politicians were warned because they had offered money to voters before the election.

a. The police found that other candidates did it too, so they will also be warned.

b. The police found that other candidates did too, so they will also be warned.

1) only ***a*** is preferred 2) only ***b*** is preferred 3) both preferred 4) both dispreferred 5) don't know

## Cloze Task

(1) A: I heard that lions have problems with aggression even when they were raised in the zoo. What about bears?

B: Bears ( ).

(2) A: It is easy to think that only kids take unimportant things too seriously.

B: But some adults ( ).

(3) A: I think I saw you with your baby in the park.

B: Probably that was me. After playing out with him for three hours, both of us got exhausted. Then, he started to cry and I ( ).

(4) A: Have you been to the restaurant which is famous for pizzas?

B: Yes, of course, with Margie. She wanted to have the recipe.

A: Tom said he ( ).

(5) A: John Keats, one of the greatest poets ever to write, understood the powerful connection between irreconcilable ideas.

B: That's right. I only wish the Keats of the movie, *Bright Star* ( ).

(6) A: The general raised his hand in salute when the president passed by.

B: So, I and all of the other soldiers ( ).

(7) A: Our first challenge is to allow Americans to keep more of their money.

B: The senators will not really care if the rich got richer as long as they ( ).

(8) A: I watched *The Bourne Identity* with Ally last night. We thought Matt Damon looked really cool, you know?

B: I ( ), so I saw *The Bourne* series more than three times!

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

(9) A: I've always ground my teeth at night. My father ( ).
B: Then, it seems to be a genetic.
(10) A: As an interviewer, I prepare questions for job interviews while I'm reading cover letters and most other interviewers ( ).
B: Then, interviewees should be more careful when they write cover letters.
(11) A: Visitors notice all this beauty and history in Venice.
B: Even though I'm a resident here, sometimes I ( ).
(12) A: My father kept referring to me as Johnny when I was young, so most of the neighbors ( ).
B: I remember that you hated that name.
(13) A: The lecture was too boring. Did you see Anna yawning?
B: Yes, but I thought everybody else ( ) in the class.
(14) A: My cousins and I spent summer vacations at our grandparents' farm. I still have a lot of fond memories there.
B: My family ( ). We enjoyed rural life at the farm during vacations.
(15) A: As computer power increased, the complexity of the modules ( ).
B: Yes, you're right. Even a single faulty part or solder joint would render the entire module inoperative.
(16) A: I want to know about Matt Damon's personal life. He's just too gorgeous.
B: I guess everybody else ( ).
(17) A: Every time I see Toni, I get elated.
B: Most of the employees in this company ( ), including me.
(18) A: Heather told me that she turned down a job offer from the FFR Corporation.
B: Oh, I didn't know that. I ( ). There is a rumor that FFR Corporation merges with bigger company.
(19) A: When I was a college student, I loved to go to see tennis tournaments.
B: Not only you but Mark and Alex ( ).
(20) A: Why are you getting mad?
B: Because I like to think for myself and run my own life, and I thought you ( ). But I guess you don't.

**Examples in: English**
**Applicable Language: English**
**Applicable Levels: College**

Yeon Joo Jung
Department of English Language and Literature
Korea University
Anam-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: 011-589-8679
Email: yeonjoojung@gmail.com

Received in April, 2010
Reviewed in May, 2010
Revised version received in June, 2010

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre