English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 19, No. 2 Summer 2013

Acquisition of English Dative Alternation by Korean EFL Learners*

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Pyo, Si-Yeon (2013). Acquisition of English dative alternation by Korean EFL learners. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 19*(2), 173-194.

The purpose of this study is to explore the acquisition of syntax-semantic properties on ditransitive verbs in English dative alternation by Korean adult learners of English. Besides negative L1 transfer caused by grammatical differences between English and Korean, this study provides compelling implications with the role of the Subset Principle. Using an Acceptability Judgment task with sentences containing typical target verbs involved in English dative alternation, the participants' sensitivity to semantic constraints was investigated. Although the overall accuracy for goal verbs was higher than that of benefactive ones in terms of the licit forms, the result was opposite as for illicit forms. Furthermore, they showed a strong tendency to accept prepositional dative constructions more readily than double object constructions, which is possibly due to the influence of Korean postposition, *-eykey* and *-ulwihay*, as counterparts of English preposition, *to* and *for* respectively. The results from cross-sectional data obtained by 111 Korean college students suggest a need of negative evidence as well as positive evidence. Due to the different semantic properties between Korean and English, they have difficulties in narrowing down the semantic value scope by positive evidence, but as their proficiency increases, their difficulties can be overcome by having more opportunities to encounter negative evidence.

[ditransitive verbs/dative alternation/syntax-semantic properties/the Subset Principle]

I. INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that since learning a verb means learning semantic roles related to the intrinsic meaning of the verb (Fillmore, 1977; Goldberg, 1995), learning a

* This study was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korean Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2012S1A5B5A07036182).

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construction involves the process of learning its associated semantics (Tomasello, 1992, 2000; Goldberg, 1999). In this respect, developing sensitivity to semantic properties of a verb is interpreted as an essential condition for acquiring the syntactic constructions containing the verb. Like this, the acquisition of syntax is closely related to the acquisition of semantics, which has been a recurrent topic in the field of second language (L2) acquisition. Recently, several studies have demonstrated this developmental syntax-semantics relationship (Lardiere, 2000; Lee, 1997; Oh, 2010; Slabakova, 2006).

Especially, when L1 knowledge of semantic properties L2 learners have is different from that of L2, they are expected to have difficulty, at least, in an initial stage of their interlanguage. One of the most intriguing examples regarding the acquisition linked to the syntax-semantics interface would be the acquisition of ditransitive verbs. Unlike Korean, English is well known for permitting ditransitive verbs, which take double objects, two NP compliments. Most ditransitive verbs can alternate between a pattern of two NP compliments and its dative pattern with one NP complement and one PP complement. This is known as the *Dative Alternation*. However, it is hard to say that there is dative alternation in Korean double object (DO) constructions. This is because the double accusative structure in Korean tends to be rejected, while the dative-accusative pattern is accepted (Oh, 2010; Whong-Barr and Schwartz, 2002). That's why Korean learners may show more or less difficulties in acquiring English dative alternation concerning ditransitive verbs.

Specifically, previous findings on L2 acquisition of English ditransitive verbs by Korean learners have shown that L2 learners have difficulties in acquiring English benefactive DO constructions while they seem to acquire its counterpart, goal DOs, with relative ease (Oh and Zubizarreta, 2003, 2006; Oh, 2010). In Whong-Barr and Schwartz's (W&S, 2002) study, it was concluded that this asymmetry was caused by different grammatical properties between Korean and English benefactive DOs. This case is generally referred to as a negative transfer of L1. Oh (2010) suggested that the negative effect can be overcome as English proficiency increases in her study because earlier acquisition of the semantic properties of goal DOs may activate that of benefactive DOs as a trigger. However, this issue casts the need for further alternative explanations to be probed more clearly from another angle.

The current study refers to the developmental process and patterns of asymmetrical acquisition of English dative alternation by Korean EFL learners. Apart from the negative effects of L1 transfer, which has been shown in previous studies, this study explores other potential findings concerning the acquisition of English goal DOs by comparison with that of benefactive DOs. In the process of restructuring L2 grammar, L2 learners are expected to develop their sensitivity to semantic properties of each construction until they fully acquire appropriate L2 knowledge. By analyzing and

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interpreting the results of tasks containing aspects of the inter-relationship between syntax and semantics, this research offers an articulated explanation with a learning principle. It is worthwhile to examine a phenomenon known as the dative alternation found with many English ditransitive verbs to refine our understanding of L2 developmental relationship between syntax and semantics. In this respect, the primary concern of the current study is to explore L2 learners' sensitivity to semantic constraints governing the English DO construction in acquiring English dative alternation. Since language teachers should be careful when they design and execute their grammar syllabi so that they should be integrated into communicative tasks (Choi, 2012), the findings of this study may be used as a guide to teach English dative alternation, one of some linguistic features which require intensive practices in the process of restructuring L2 grammar.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Argument Properties of English Ditransitve Verbs

In English, some ditransitive verbs which take two internal arguments allow dative alternation, making two kinds of constructions; a double object (DO) construction and its prepositional dative (PD) counterpart. A further distinction is made from the assumption that English ditransitive verbs are classified into two types. The first type refers to a group of verbs accompanying a goal argument[1] and a theme argument with the order [V NP_{GOAL} NP_{THEME}], which is termed a goal DO. The prepositional variant of goal DOs contains the preposition *to*. On the other hand, the other type consists of a benefactive argument and a theme argument with the pattern [V $NP_{BENEFACTIVE}$ NP_{THEME}]. It is called a benefactive DO, whose dative counterpart is headed by the preposition *for*.

(1) a. Mary gave John a book.
b. Mary gave a book *to* John. (Goal construction)

(2) a. Mary bought John a book.
b. Mary bought a book *for* John. (Benefactive construction)

[1] Different verbs can have different numbers of arguments. There are a fixed number of participants roles made available by Universal Grammar which arguments can assume. These are known as thematic roles or theta-roles, such as AGENT (the instigator of an event), THEME (a participant affected by an event), GOAL (the target of an event) and so on (Hawkins, 2001, p.178).

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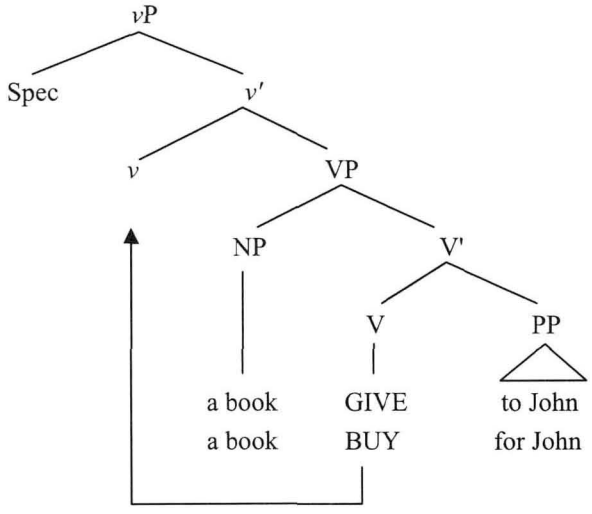
Syntactically, both (1) and (2) have a VP-shell structure, but the difference is in the position of the two arguments made available by the structure (Ouhalla, 1999). In (1a.) the theme argument *a book* is the Spec of the lower VP and the goal argument is in the complement position of the lower V. However, in its dative counterpart, (1b.), the goal argument is in the Spec of the lower VP and the theme argument is in the complement position of the lower V.

(3)



Also, in English DO constructions, the first object c-commands the second object, but not vice versa as in (4) (Barss and Lasnik, 1986; Larson, 1988; Maranta, 1993; Oh, 2010). On the other hand, only goal DOs can be passivized (Fillmore, 1965; Kay, 2001).

(4) a. Mary showed John himself.
b. *Mary showed himself John.

(5) a. *He was baked a cake on his birthday.
b. He was given a cake on his birthday.

Semantically, to make dative alternation possible, English double objects are assumed to be subject to the Possessor(Poss) constraint, according to which, the referent of the first object must satisfy the selectional restrictions for possession. That is, the first object has to be the prospective possessor of the second object (Mazurkewich and White, 1984; Pinker, 1989; Tremblay, 1991; Krifka 2001; Oh, 2010). In (6) below, *Mary* functions as a potential possessor, but *London* does not.

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(6) a. Ann sent a package to London.
b. *Ann sent London a package.
c. Ann sent Mary a package/a package to Mary. (Krifka, 2001, p.2)

Considering the PD counterparts of DO constructions, a big difference is made between goal DOs and goal PD variants. Only goal PD variants are governed by another semantic constraint. Only if the referent of a theme argument is an entity which can undergo physical movement, the goal PD construction can appear, encoded by a prepositional phrase (PP) complement containing *to*. In (7), although the DO construction is correct due to a prospective possession interpretation between *Mary* and a headache, (7b) is not well formed because a headache is not an entity which can physically move from one place to another place. In this study, this semantic constraint is termed the Movement Constraint, which has two opposite values transcribed as [±Move] and the Poss constraint is transcribed as [±Poss].

(7) a. The noise gave Mary a headache.
b. *The noise gave a headache to Mary. [+Poss] but [-Move]

Thus, in order to make English dative alternation possible between goal DOs and goal PD variants, the theme argument must bear the semantic notion of possession with its goal argument and be subject to [+Move]. Accordingly, in the goal DO form, when the second object, a theme argument, is not an entity with [+Move], the PD counterpart is ungrammatical although there is a possession relation between the two objects.

In addition, there is a morphological restriction for the goal DO pattern. This restriction involves latinate verbs which do not allow the DO construction. Verbs like *donate, report, explain* and *transport* fall under this category (Krifka, 2003). The following examples are taken from Pinker (1989, p.45).

(8) a. John gave/donated a painting to the museum.
b. John gave/*donated the museum a painting.

In contrast, the benefactive PD form shows a relatively free distribution pattern from the Poss constraint unlike its DO counterpart. As in (9b), the benefactive PD is grammatical in a context where there is no possession relation between the two objects.

(9) a. John fixed a drink for Mary.
b. John fixed Mary a drink.
c. John fixed the radiator for Mary.

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d. *John fixed Mary the radiator. (Jackendoff, 1990, p.196)

This semantic difference between the benefactive DO and its PD counterpart is referred to as the Applicative projection in some works (Marantz, 1993; Harley, 1995; Pylkkänen, 2008). Pylkkänen (2008) suggests that there are two types of applicative heads, high and low applicatives, as diagnostics to distinguish the two types of ditransitive verbs. According to the projection, only a low applicative head requires a possessive interpretation. Following this analysis, in English, goal PD forms as well as both goal and benefactive DOs belong to the low applicatives which encode a possession relation between the two objects. However, English benefactive PDs are incompatible with the low applicatives in that they can be free from the possession relation.

As another diagnostic test, compatibility with stative verbs and with unergatives is suggested by Pylkkänen (2008). According to this test, the high applicatives which are independent from the possessive interpretation can be compatible with stative verbs and unergatives while the low applicatives can not. Because low applicatives denote a possession relation between the direct and indirect object, they cannot appear in sentences with unergatives which lack a direct object. For this reason, the English DO is not eligible for stative verbs or unergatives as in (10a) and (11). However, the PD counterpart is compatible with stative verbs since English PD is classified as a high applicative which is not constrained by [+Poss].

(10) a. *John held Mary the bag.
b. John held the bag for Mary.

(11) *John ran Mary.

2. Argument Properties in Korean Dative-accusative Structure

In general, it seems that the double accusative structure in Korean is rejected while the dative-accusative pattern is accepted. The following examples are retaken from Oh's (2010) study, originated from Whong-Barr and Schwartz (2002).

(12) a. Mia-ka Youg-eykey Kulim-ul Kulye cwu-ess-ta.
Mia-Nom Youg-Dat picture-Acc draw Ben-Past-Dec.
'Mia drew a picture for Yong.'
b. * Mia-ka Youg-ul Kulim-ul Kulye cwu-ess-ta.
Mia-Nom Youg-Acc picture-Acc draw Ben-Past-Dec.
'Mia drew a picture for Yong.'

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In Oh's 2009 study concerning benefactive verbs, it is reported that Korean native speakers accept the dative-accusative pattern, rejecting the double accusative form (Oh, 2009). In line with the conclusion of Oh's study, this article assumes the dative-accusative pattern in Korean as a DO construction. As with English DOs, the c-command asymmetry is also observed with the dative-accusative pattern in Korean. According to the examples by Lee (1991; 1993) and Cho (1994) as illustrated below, syntactically, the DP with the dative-maker, *-eykey*, asymmetrically c-commends the DP with the accusative-marker, *-ul*.

(13) a. John-i Mary-eykey kunyecasin-ul poyecwu-ess-ta.
John-Nom Mary-Dat herself-Acc show-Past-Dec.
'John showed Mary herself.'
b. *John-i kunyecasin-eykey Mary-ul poyecwu-ess-ta.
John-Nom herself-Dat Mary-Acc show-Past-Dec.
'John showed Mary herself.'

In order to inquire further into grammatical properties of the dative-accusative form as a DO construction in Korean, the distinction between goal and benefactive types needs to be addressed. First, Korean goal DOs are also governed by the Poss constraint as a low applicative like English goal DOs. However, unlike English DOs, Korean goal DOs do not allow dative counterpart.

(14) a. John-un Mary-eykey sunmul-ul ponay-ss-ta.
John-Top Mary-Dat present-Acc send-Past-Dec.
b. John sent Mary a present
c. John sent a present to Mary.

As seen in (14), it should be noted that while there is dative alternation in English DOs, Korean DO forms have no dative counterpart. This could be a challenge for Korean learners of English to figure out which English form is correspond to its Korean DO.

Secondly, the most striking feature in Korean benefactive DO construction is that the light verb *cwu-* is required to be present. Although *cwu-* can be added virtually to any verb, including goal verbs (Oh, 2010, p. 415), the most crucial characteristic in defining Korean benefactive DOs is that an argument with the dative marker, *-eykey* can appear only in a benefactive DO with the light verb *cwu-*. In other words, *cwu-* is essential for a dative marked argument to appear in Korean benefactive DOs.

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(15) John-un Mary-***eykey*** sunmul-ul sa *(***cwu***)-ess-ta.
John-Top Mary-Dat present-Acc buy Ben-Past-Dec.
'John bought Mary a present.'

(16) John-un Mary-***ulwihay*** sunmul-ul sa (***cwu***)-ess-ta.
John-Top Mary-***for*** present-Acc buy Ben-Past-Dec.
'John bought a present for Mary.'

In addition, a big difference between the benefactive DOs in Korean and English is made semantically in terms of a possessor reading. The Korean DOs are not restricted by the Poss constraint. In (15), *Mary* is considered as a benefactor of the event of 'John's buying a present' due to the *on-behalf-of* interpretation, which is equivalent to *-lulwihay* in Korean as illustrated in (16) (Oh, 2010). Furthermore, because the benefactive postposition *-lulwihay* in Korean corresponds to the English preposition *for*, it is adequate to see an argument marked with *-lulwihay* as a benefactor in a benefactive DO construction. Also, the postposition *-lulwihay* makes the benefactive light verb *cuw-* optional (Oh and Zubizarreta, 2010).

Finally, since the Korean benefactive DOs are classified as high applicatives in that they do not require the possessive interpretation, they are well formed in stative verbs or unergatives unlike the English benefactive DOs (see the examples in (10) and (17)).

(17) John-i Mary-eykey kapang-ul tule *(cwu)-ess-ta.
John-Nom Mary-Dat bag-Acc hold Ben-Past-Dec.
'John held the bag for Mary.' (Oh, 2010, p. 415)

3. The Subset Principle in the Acquisition of English Dative Alternation

In the field of L2 acquisition, this study refers to the developmental pattern of acquiring English dative alternation by Korean learners. In this respect, the Subset Principle (Berwick, 1985), as a kind of a learning principle, needs to be considered with regard to learning different semantic properties between Korean and English. Under the Subset Principle, learners' first choice is assumed to be a subset grammar, which is a more restricted and smaller one than the other, a superset grammar. If learners' L1 grammar is a subset grammar, but L2 grammar is a superset grammar, the learners can subsequently expand their L2 grammar on the ground of positive evidence[2]. Positive

[2] When learners are exposed to grammatical utterances in the L2 input that L1 do not have, there will be a need to reset their L1 parameter. Like this, data involving grammatical utterances to which one is actually exposed, is referred to as positive evidence (O'Grady and Archibald, 2000, p. 427).

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evidence refers to L2 input itself provided to learners, which consists of a restricted number of well-formed sentences of the target language being learned. In terms of the acquisition of English dative alternation, if learners begin with a grammar that only allows NP+PP, such as *Randy explained the problem to Mary*. they can avoid making impossible errors, as in **Randy explained Mary the problem* (Ellis, 1999, p. 426), on the basis of positive evidence only.

For Korean learners of English, what matters here is benefactive DOs. As mentioned above, goal DOs both in Korean and in English are classified as low applicatives requiring a [+Poss] value between the two objects. However, Korean benefactive DOs cover a general benefactive reading regardless of prospective possession, while English benefactive DOs are restricted to the Poss constraint. Thus, an English learner learning Korean would initially apply the more restricted grammar, the English-type semantic constraint to L2 Korean either due to the native language or the Subset Principle. Subsequently, the evidence from the L2 input with a superset grammar would make a L2 learner gradually revise the hypothesis because the learner would encounter sentences in the superset. In other words, the learner's grammar can increasingly be expanded on the basis of positive evidence.

However, as for Korean learners learning English, whether the Subset Principle works in their initial state is not clear. When they begin to learn L2 of a subset grammar with L1 of a superset grammar, negative evidence would be required to narrow down its value scope. Because Korean has a superset grammar in terms of the semantic constraint on the benefactive DOs, it would be difficult to judge one correct form with a subset value among sentences with two values by a superset grammar. According to White (1989), L2 learners make use of grammatical explanations and negative evidence to help them establish what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical. Like this, "if the Subset Principle does not constrain the learner's initial hypothesis, the only way of changing from" the Korean-type semantic constraint "to the English one (the subset) is with explicit correction or instruction." (Gass and Selinker, 2001, p.172).

Considering Korean learners learning semantic properties of English ditransitive verbs, because they never encounter a sentence with [-Poss] relation between two objects in English, they would have difficulty in judging whether it is not given in the input either due to its ungrammaticality in English or merely accidential coincidence. In terms of the Poss constraint, benefactive DOs have the wider range of possible sentences in Korean than in English. Consequently, Korean leaners of English are expected to require negative evidence through explicit correction or instruction about the English subset value on semantic properties as well as positive evidence. In this respect, this study deals with the operation of the Subset Principle to account for the developmental patterns in adult L2 acquisition.

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III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Questions

In keeping with the purpose of this study mentioned above, the following three research questions guide the current study:

1. How accurately do Korean EFL learners judge the acceptability of the sentences regarding English dative alternation? Do they display more sensitivity to constructions with goal verbs than with benefactive verbs?

2. Do Korean EFL learners show any developmental patterns in acquiring English ditransitive verbs involved in dative alternation?

2. Participants

One hundred eleven participants participated in the current study. The participants were undergraduate students from two universities in Seoul. They were recruited from a total of five classes, based on their enrollment in the classes. The majority of the participants were freshmen (71.19%) and sophomores (21.25%). In order to classify them into three proficiency groups, English scores in Korean SAT (KSAT) were surveyed because most of the participants were freshmen. Additionally, a cloze test was conducted to see if there was a general consistency between the KSAT levels and the results of the cloze test. On the basis of Table 4.1, not a few participants were excluded. For example, students who belong to level 2 in KSAT, but received below 88 in the cloze test were not included.

TABLE 1

The Criterion of the Proficiency Levels by English Scores in KSAT and Close Test Results

Group	KSAT scores	Cloze test	Numbers
High	level 1-2	above 88	30
Mid	level 3-5	72-84	50
Low	below level 6	below 68	31

The participants in the low-level group in this study may be different from beginners who just start to learn English because they received formal school education from elementary to high schools. None of them had a background in linguistics.

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3. Source of Data and Procedures of Data Collection

The researcher collected and analyzed the data obtained from a questionnaire, a cloze test, two sets of Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT), a checklist to measure a degree of familiarity with the verbs used in the AJT and a translation task. The experiment was carried out in two sessions. At the beginning of the semester, each participant was involved in a background questionnaire first, then in a cloze test and in the first set of AJT during the first week. The second session occurred a week later. After completing the second set of the AJT, the participants were asked to translate the test verbs into Korean to confirm if they know the meanings of the test verbs. Additionally, a brief checklist on a degree of familiarity with the 12 test verbs was attached to the first AJT.

To enhance the reliability of grouping based on the levels in the section of English of KSAT, a cloze test was administrated. The test consisted of three paragraphs with 25 blanks and was designed to fill in each blank with the most suitable word for a given context, which was similar to what was used in Oh's study (Oh, 2010). The test was marked according to an acceptable-word criterion rather than an exact-word one. The three proficiency groups based on the cloze test results were compared with the grouping by English scores in KSAT. Ultimately, only participants who clearly showed consistency between the two were selected.

As a main experimental task of this study, the AJT was implemented to examine if the L2 learners have knowledge on the semantic constraints on English ditransitive verbs which have a goal argument and a benefactive argument. This task was designed to elicit the data concerning L2 knowledge of the constraints on argument properties. All the participants were instructed to judge the acceptability of the sentences in the given context by marking a scale from 1 (completely unacceptable) to 4 (completely acceptable).

In the main task, there were 29 test items with 17 target verbs, of which 16 items were designed to examine knowledge of the Poss constraint with goal and benefactive verbs. Each pair of sentences containing each target verb was presented in the [±Poss] contexts, respectively. That is, one test item consists of a pair of a double-object (DO) construction and its propositional dative (PD) counterpart. Additionally, among 8 test items, four goal verbs in the [+Poss] context were used in two different contexts, one of which satisfied the constraint governing goal PDs, [+Move]. Finally, the other 5 items with goal verbs related to the Latinate constraint were added as extra fillers. These verbs can not occur with double objects.

Since the same test verbs were presented twice in two different contexts with opposite values of semantic constraints, the task was divided into two sets for the participants to avoid encountering the items containing the same verb. Exceptionally, the five goal verbs

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concerning [+Latinate] were not repeated. The test verbs used here were selected with reference to the test verbs by Whong-Barr and Schwartz (2002) and Oh (2010). In Table 2, the verbs in the shaded boxes are unacceptable.

TABLE 2
The Test Verbs and Contexts

Type / Context	DO construction		PD Pattern construction	
	Goal	Benefactive	Goal	Benefactive
[+Poss]	bring send show throw	bake draw find pour	bring send show throw	bake draw find pour
[-Poss]	bring send show throw	bake draw find pour	bring send show throw	bake draw find pour
[+Move]	give hand lend sell		give hand lend sell	
[-Move]	give hand lend sell		give hand lend sell	
[+Latinate]	announce donate explain repeat transfer		announce donate explain repeat transfer	

*The verbs in the shaded boxes are unacceptable.

In the Acceptability Judgment Task used in the current study on the ground of Table 4.2, a sample item in opposite contexts is provided in (16). The highlighted responses are expected as correct ones.

(16) Sample item with a goal verb, *throw*

1. [+Poss] context

Rosa was doing her homework in her room. Her brother, Tom opened the door and asked her to give back his book which she borrowed yesterday, so ~

a. *Rosa threw Tom the book.* 1 2 **3** **4** Not sure

b. *Rosa threw the book to Tom.* 1 2 **3** **4** Not sure

2. [-Poss] context

Tom fell asleep on his bed without taking a shower because he was very tired. At that time, his dog, Alex barked loudly, waking him up, so ~

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a. *Tom threw Alex a pillow.* **1** **2** 3 4 Not sure
b. *Tom threw a pillow to Alex.* 1 2 **3** **4** Not sure

A week later from the first session, the second one was administrated under mostly identical forms and contexts. They had the full fifteen minutes to complete the task and the checklist, including time for directions, distribution and collection, and about twelve minutes in the first session. After finishing the two experiment sessions and marking the tasks, a follow-up interview was conducted in an informal atmosphere with twelve participants for the purpose of asking some detail reasons for their judging a certain construction as a correct form.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the two types of English ditransitive verbs, the results Korean learners showed provide significant implications on the acquisition of English dative alternation. First, in the AJT, they rated much higher in the PD forms regardless of the verb types, contexts and proficiency levels as seen in Table 3. In the PDs, the average correct rates were roughly 90% in the high and mid levels and approximately 80% in the low level. However, under the benefactive [-Poss] context, all the levels showed about 10% less accuracy than what they did in the other three PDs. Meanwhile, in terms of the DO construction, the average correct rates under the [-Poss] context were higher than those under the [+Poss] in all the levels, which means that the learners are more sensitive in judging illicit DO forms under the [-Poss] contexts than licit ones under the [+Poss]. Especially, concerning the benefactive DOs, much higher accuracy was measured under the [-Poss] context than under the [+Poss].

TABLE 3
Overall Percentages of Correct Response in AJT

Verb type	Goal				Benefactive			
Context	[+Poss]		[-Poss]		[+Poss]		[-Poss]	
Group	DO	PD	*DO	PD	DO	PD	*DO	PD
High (n=30)	50%	95%	58%	96%	41%	91%	73%	82%
Mid (n=50)	34%	92%	59%	88%	28%	89%	67%	78%
Low (n=31)	31%	77%	65%	84%	34%	79%	61%	71%

*Illicit forms are shaded.

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Table 4 summarizes the overall statistics on the comparison between licit and illicit forms in the [±Poss]. With regard to licit forms, overall accuracy was higher in goal verbs than in the benefactive ones, whereas that in the illicit forms was the reverse. Thus, the total rates of correct response were almost similar, showing that little difference was found (1.53%) between the two verb types, but the difference gradually became slightly bigger in the lower levels (1%, 1.5% and 2.1% respectively). Overall, the participants showed considerable sensitivity to the PDs, whereas they revealed relatively low accuracy in the licit DOs, below 50% in all the levels. Rather, their accuracy in the illicit DOs was higher than that in the licit ones. Especially, when it comes to the illicit goal DOs, the low group showed more correct responses than the higher groups did.

TABLE 4
Comparison of Correct Response in the [±Poss]

Form Group	Licit				Illicit		total	
	Goal		Ben		Goal	Ben	Goal	Ben
	DO	PD	DO	PD	DO	DO		
High (n=30)	50%	95.5%	41%	86.5%	58%	73%	67.8%	66.8%
Mid (n=50)	34%	90%	28%	83.5%	59%	67%	61%	59.5%
Low (n=31)	31%	80.5%	34%	75%	65%	61%	58.8%	56.7%

*Illicit forms are shaded.

Additionally, with close scrutiny of goal verbs in the [±Move] and [+Latinate] contexts, relatively higher accuracy was seen in the PD constructions under the [+Move] and [+Latinate], while the correct rates under the [-Move] were considerably lower than those of its counterpart as seen in Table 5. Strangely, the correct rate of the low level in the PD under the [-Move] was the highest although the differences were insignificantly little. Except that case, in the other contexts, gradually higher accuracy was seen in higher levels. Strikingly, all the groups showed the highest accuracy, 97%, 92% and 81% in the PD under the [+Latinate], followed by 89%, 87% and 77% under the [+Move], respectively.

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TABLE 5
Percentages of Correct Response in Goal Verbs under Additional Contexts

Context / Group	[+Move]		[-Move]			[+Latinate]
	DO	PD	DO	*PD	*DO	PD
High (n=30)	60%	89%	71%	26%	71%	97%
Mid (n=50)	49%	87%	55%	22%	66%	92%
Low (n=31)	40%	77%	39%	28%	57%	81%

*Illicit forms are shaded.

Turning to the [±Poss] context, percentage of correct responses were submitted to statistical analysis (ANOVA with repeated measures). The between-participants variable was the three proficiency levels and the within-participants variables were verb types(goal/benefactive), contexts(+/-Poss), and constructions(DO/PD). Strikingly, there were significant effects on all the variables ($p.$=.000, p<.05). Especially, noticeable was that the overall accuracy for the PD was considerably higher than that for the DO regardless of contexts and verb types. The results of ANOVAs suggest that there is a significant difference between the two verb types, between the [+/-Poss] contexts and among the proficiency levels.

TABLE 6
Results of ANOVAs in the [±Poss] Contexts

Variable and effect	*p*-value
Verb type (Goal/Benefactive)	***p* = .000**
Context (±Poss)	***p* = .000**
Proficiency level (High/Mid/Low)	***p* = .000**
Verb type × Context	***p* = .000**
Verb type × Proficiency level	***p* = .000**
Context × Proficiency level	***p* = .000**
Verb type × Context × Proficiency level	***p* = .000**

First, in the [+Poss] with goal verbs, a closer look at the results reveals that there was a significant interaction between the construction type and proficiency level, showing that as proficiency increases, accuracy of accepting both the DO and PD constructions also increases as seen in Figure 1. Especially, a sharp rise between the mid and high groups is seen in the DO construction. However, under the [-Poss] with goal verbs, although the DO construction is an illicit form, it was more accepted as proficiency increases like a licit form as Figure 2 shows. From this result, what is proposed is that the L2 learners are

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unlikely to have sensitivity to differentiate between [+Poss] and [-Poss] contexts in terms of goal verbs.

FIGURE 1
DO/PD distinction (Goal/+Poss)

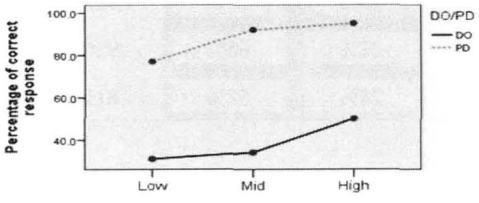
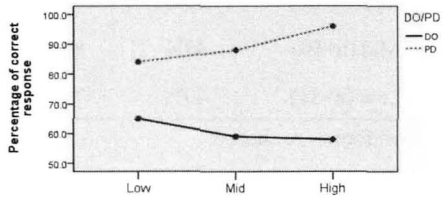


FIGURE 2
***DO/PD distinction (Goal/-Poss)**



On the contrary, under the [-Poss] context with the benefactive verbs, accuracy of rejecting the DO construction as an illicit form is in direct proportion to proficiency level as seen in Figure 3. Simply put, as for benefactive verbs, there was a significant interaction between the context type and proficiency level in the [-Poss] context as well as in the [+Poss], which means that as proficiency increases, L2 learners' sensitivity to the [±Poss] distinction also increases ($p.$=.000). Interestingly, only in the DO construction under the [+Poss] with benefactive verbs, the U-shape development was observed, showing the lowest percentage of correct response in the mid level as presented in Figure 4.

FIGURE 3
***DO/PD distinction (Ben/-Poss)**

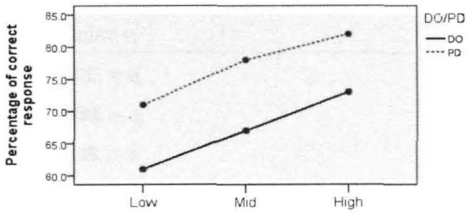
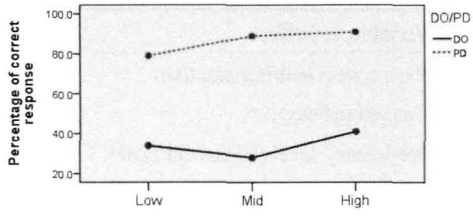


FIGURE 4
DO/PD distinction (Ben/+Poss)



Taken together, the analysis of the data to investigate the developmental patterns in acquiring English ditransitive verbs involved in dative alternation provides several implications. First, the L2 learners are considered to make progress in developing their sensitivity to semantic properties related to the acquisition of ditransitive verbs, showing much higher accuracy for the PD construction than the DO. The highest accuracy for almost all constructions concerning dative alternation was observed in the high group, except the only one case of an illicit form of the DO. Under the [-Poss] with goal verbs, the percentage of rejecting of the DO was relatively low. Regardless of the verb types, the contexts and the proficiency levels, what this result exhibits is that the development on the PD construction is faster than the DO. This finding is what comes from an extended

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exploration added to that of Oh's (2010) study which suggests that the acquisition of English DOs is made from goal DOs to benefactive DOs because the previous study focused on the DO construction only. In fact, the result of this study also showed that overall accuracy for goal verbs was higher than that for benefactive ones, but the gap was too narrow, 1% to 2.1% as seen in Table 4. Here, what is important is that the cause of the little gap comes from the illicit form of benefactive DOs under the [-Poss]. In other words, although the accuracy for goal verbs was generally higher than that of benefactive ones regarding the licit forms, the opposite was observed concerning the illicit forms in the high and mid groups.

In addition, in the [±Move] and [+Latinate] contexts under [+Poss] with goal verbs, the results also exhibited that the development on the PD construction is faster than the DO as for the licit forms. However, the percentage of rejecting the PD under the [-Move] as an illicit form was considerably low, 22% to 28% as seen in Table 5. This means that the participants have a tendency to accept the PD construction more readily than the DO. Interestingly, this tendency coincides with the fashion in which English-speaking children acquire the PD construction before the DO although English-speaking children showed overacceptance of both illicit benefactive and illicit goal Dos as a developmental pattern (Gropen et al., 1989).

Finally, as far as the Subset Principle goes, the results of the current study may be interpreted as two alternative scenarios as mentioned in Chapter Ⅱ. Suppose L2 learners have to reset their parameters, they are assumed to reset them from subset to superset or from superset to subset. In this process, L2 learners have access to two different types of evidence. Since positive evidence refers to L2 input itself provided to learners, what matters here is that when one does not find a particular sentence type, it would be difficult to distinguish whether the absence of the type comes from its disallowance in the language or just pure coincidence. Nevertheless, on the basis on positive evidence, L2 learners can not help making their own linguistic hypotheses.

On the other hand, when Korean learners with superset L1 start to learn English with subset as L2, they are expected to need negative evidence due to the fact that both goal and benefactive DOs in English are restricted to the Poss constraint, while Korean benefactive DOs are not. Thus, Korean learners learning English would need to reset the parameter on the benefactive DO construction from a general reading to a possessive one between the two objects. As their proficiency increases, when they face a need to narrow down the value scope of the semantic constraint on benefactive verbs, they are expected to have difficulties judging one correct form with a subset value, + value on the [Poss] constraint, from a superset grammar of L1 with two values, [±Poss]. That is why the acquisition of English benefactive DOs by Korean learners lags behind that of its goal DOs in terms of the Subset Principle. However, as proficiency increases, they are likely to have more

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opportunities to expose to negative evidence.

According to the follow-up interview, participants in the high and mid groups reported that they had learned about some English ditransitive verbs through explicit instruction from English teachers or English grammar books.

V. CONCLUSION

One of the difficulties Korean learners of English have may be the acquisition of English ditransitive verbs because it is closely relevant to the acquisition of semantic argument properties on the two types of NP objects. For the purpose of investigating whether Korean learners have syntax-semantic knowledge on English ditransitive verbs, this paper is mainly concerned with L2 learners' developmental process and pattern with the role of the Subset Principle as a learning principle in the acquisition of English dative alternation. The data obtained from 111 university-level Korean EFL learners through the AJT used in the current study may provide the answers to the two research questions presented in Chapter 3 as follows.

First, when it comes to the acceptability of the sentences regarding English dative alternation, the participants showed a very little more sensitivity to the goal verbs than to the benefactive ones with a very narrow gap between the two verbs. Because accuracy in the illicit form of goal verbs was relatively low, although overall accuracy in the licit forms was higher in goal verbs than in the benefactive ones, the total rates of correct response were almost similar.

As for the second question, Korean learners obviously showed a certain developmental pattern. Their development of the PD construction was faster than that of the DO both with goal verbs and with benefactive verbs. Indeed, their sensitivity to the PDs was considerably higher than to the DOs regardless of the verb types, contexts and proficiency levels. Especially, their percentage of correct response to goal PDs under the [+Latinate] context was considerably high, reaching almost 100% in the high group. In addition, they showed more sensitivity in judging illicit DOs under the [+Poss] context than licit DOs under the [-Poss].

Indeed, it seems to be true that Korean learners of English have difficulties in judging whether the absence of the DO under the [-Poss] context due to its disallowance in English or just pure coincidence on the basis on positive evidence. However, in the process of developing their interlanguage grammar, they increasingly have more opportunities to be exposed to negative evidence as well as positive evidence, considering what was reported in the interview. Such opportunities, consequently, may force L2 learners to have more sensitivity to semantic properties governing English ditransitive verbs.

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Finally, this study suggests one more compelling implication on the acquisition of English dative alternation by Korean learners. The finding of showing overall higher accuracy in the PD than in the DO, not only with goal verbs but also benefactive verbs, may be interpreted that the influence of Korean postposition, *-eykey* and *-ulwihay*, as counterparts of English preposition, *to* and *for* respectively, makes Korean learners accept the PD construction more than the DO. This tendency of accepting the PD more was much more clearly observed in the goal verbs with the [+Latinate] property, showing considerably high percentages of correct response (97%, 92% and 81%). In the informal follow-up interview after the experiment session, the participants in the high and mid groups reported that the reason for judging the PD form with the [+Latinate] goal verbs as a correct form is due to no experience of encountering the DO form with the [+Latinate] goal verbs as well as thanks to explicit instruction from English teachers or English grammar books. Consequently, L2 learners need both positive evidence and negative evidence in developing their sensitivity to semantic constraints governing English dative alternation because the acquisition of the syntax associated with English ditransitive verbs depends on mastery of semantic argument properties. Since language teachers would help their students by exposing them to the variety of forms they might encounter in different English-speaking contexts (Min & Lee, 2012, p. 203), English teachers need to provide learners not only with the explicit grammatical instruction on transitivity of verbs, but with various opportunities inducing practical and appropriate use of the relative clause constructions requiring knowledge on the transitivity .

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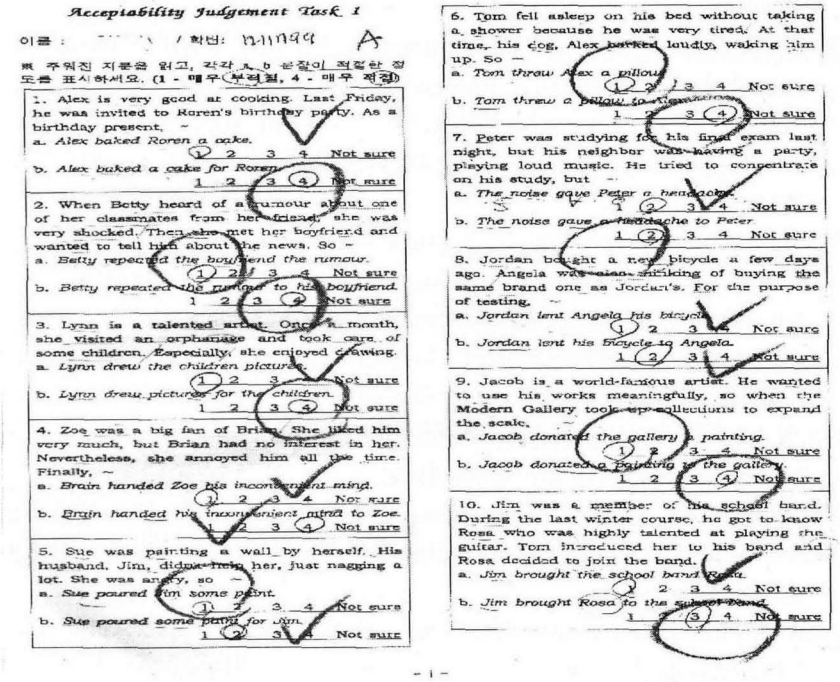
APPENDIX

Acceptability Judgment Task



Acceptability Judgement Task 1

이름 : / 학번: A

※ 주워진 지문을 읽고, 각각 a, b 문장이 적절한 정도를 표시하세요. (1 - 매우 부적절, 4 - 매우 적절)

1. Alex is very good at cooking. Last Friday, he was invited to Koren's birthday party. As a birthday present, ~
a. *Alex baked Koren a cake.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Alex baked a cake for Koren.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

2. When Betty heard of a rumour about one of her classmates from her friend, she was very shocked. Then she met her boyfriend and wanted to tell him about the news. So ~
a. *Betty repeated the boyfriend the rumour.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Betty repeated the rumour to his boyfriend.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

3. Lynn is a talented artist. Once a month, she visited an orphanage and took care of some children. Especially, she enjoyed drawing.
a. *Lynn drew the children pictures.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Lynn drew pictures for the children.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

4. Zoe was a big fan of Brian. She liked him very much, but Brian had no interest in her. Nevertheless, she annoyed him all the time. Finally, ~
a. *Brain handed Zoe his inconvenient mind.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Brain handed his inconvenient mind to Zoe.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

5. Sue was painting a wall by herself. His husband, Jim, didn't help her, just nagging a lot. She was angry, so ~
a. *Sue poured him some paint.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Sue poured some paint for Jim.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

6. Tom fell asleep on his bed without taking a shower because he was very tired. At that time, his dog, Alex barked loudly, waking him up. So ~
a. *Tom threw Alex a pillow.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Tom threw a pillow to him.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

7. Peter was studying for his final exam last night, but his neighbor was having a party, playing loud music. He tried to concentrate on his study, but ~
a. *The noise gave Peter a headache.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *The noise gave a headache to Peter.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

8. Jordan bought a new bicycle a few days ago. Angela was also thinking of buying the same brand one as Jordan's. For the purpose of testing, ~
a. *Jordan lent Angela his bicycle.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Jordan lent his bicycle to Angela.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

9. Jacob is a world-famous artist. He wanted to use his works meaningfully, so when the Modern Gallery took up collections to expand the scale, ~
a. *Jacob donated the gallery a painting.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Jacob donated a painting to the gallery.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

10. Jim was a member of his school band. During the last winter course, he got to know Rosa, who was highly talented at playing the guitar. Tom introduced her to his band and Rosa decided to join the band.
a. *Jim brought the school band Rosa.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure
b. *Jim brought Rosa to the school band.*
1 2 3 4 Not sure

- 1 -

Examples in English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable levels: University EFL students

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Received in April, 2013
Reviewed in May, 2013
Revised version received in June, 2013

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