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The Guessing Model Revisited: A Case Study of a Korean Young Learner

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This paper presents a case study involving one Korean primary school student and people around him in order to explore the reading process in English of a young Korean EFL learner and to investigate the social context in which his reading takes place. Six participants were included in the study (one primary school student and five adult participants). The student participant was asked to read a text in English and translate what he read into Korean and the teacher participants were asked to listen to the student's reading. Semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the student as well as five adult participants (his private tutor, his parent, his state school teacher, and two other state school teachers). The analysis reveals four characteristics of the way a young EFL learner approaches reading: word-by-word reading, disconnected word recognition, selective use of cues, and lack of awareness of difficulties. The four characteristics of Kilsu's reading suggest that reading can become a wild guessing game for young foreign learners, if they give selective attention to unimportant cues while reading. The pedagogical implications of this study are also discussed to help teachers designing reading lessons for young learners.

[reading practices/guessing /young foreign learners/reading processes]

I. INTRODUCTION

English has been incorporated into the primary school curriculum in Korea in 1997. The main focus of the curriculum is the development of oral English skills (MoE, 1997); according to the national curriculum, reading is heavily controlled, so as to avoid de-motivating students. However, Korean primary school students are more likely to be exposed to written, rather than oral, English. There are several studies which point out the mismatch between the focus of the national curriculum and the actual needs of Korean

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primary school students, with regard to reading in English (e.g., Boo, 2005; W. K. Lee, 2004; Y. Lee, 2005). For instance, Boo (2005) argues that most Korean primary school students are exposed to written language in their private lessons outside the classroom and therefore it is desirable to consider an integrated national curriculum of four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

The focus on oral skills prescribed in the national curriculum for Korean primary school students leads to scarcity of research on young readers of English in Korea and this paucity is observable in local Korean journals. Joh and Seon (2007) reviewed 77 papers about reading from three major Korean academic journals (*English Teaching, Foreign Language Education, Journal of the Applied Linguistics Association of Korea*), published between 1995 and 2005; they assessed them for their participants, themes, and research apporaches. Out of these 77 papers, 42 (approximately 62%) dealt with university students and only 11 (approximately 17%) used participants of primary school age or younger. S. Kim (2004) mentions that reading processes in Korean EFL young learners have been paid little attention by researchers. The paucity of research on reading suggests that understanding of the reading processes of young learners is very limited among teachers, especially those in state schools, as well as designers of reading materials and this lack of understanding has limited the development of suitable reading materials or teacher education with regard to reading in English for young learners.

The current study is designed to add a piece of empiricial research to a relatively unexplored area in the study of young learners: reading processes of young foreign learners. In particular, the study focuses on the 'guessing model' of the reading process to asses whether this can be successfully applied to young foreign readers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The 'guessing' model has often been used in reading theory, since Goodman (1967) first used the term 'psycholinguistic guessing game'. This model is predominantly based on the psycholinguistic perspective, which is concerned with the relationship between language and thought. This 'guessing model' is based on the assumption that reading is a process of attempting to reduce uncertainty. In other words, there are unknown parts in a text, which necessitate a guessing game. Readers will need to fill in the sections of which they are uncertain, in what they are reading, by making a guess, using syntactic and/or semantic cues. Goodman maintains that graphophonic cues are only needed to refine and check predictions made with semantic and syntactic cues. Because of this emphasis on semantic and syntactic cues and the relative neglect of graphophonic cues, this psycholinguistic view is often described as 'top-down'(Wallace, 1992). The top-down model assumes that

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guessing words based on contextual cues is an effective way of reading. Smith (1973) shares Goodman's view that visible cues are not as important as non-visible cues. Based on readers' selective attention to cues, the psycholinguistic perspective considers reading to be a selective process, in which partial language cues are extracted from texts according to readers' expectations. This psycholinguistic view of reading was well supported by a large number of miscue studies (e.g., Davenport & Lauritzen, 2002; Goodman & Goodman, 2004) which demonstrated that reading was not word-by-word based: in reality, many words are skipped during reading. This was a significant theoretical insight, but may have been applied in too general a fashion. Its over-emphasis on the use of contextual cues has been challenged by later researchers (e.g., Eskey, 2005; Macaro & Erler, 2008; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995; Paran, 1996). For example, Paran (1996, p.28) notes that 'the differences between good readers and poor readers may lie not in their ability to guess, but in their decoding skills'. Paran's argument is based on the assumption that if word recognition is automatic, guessing is minimal; therefore, the more important issue for him is how to encourage automaticity in readers, rather than guessing. Birch (2002:61) claims that psycholinguistics' selective models cannot apply to non-native readers, asserting that "the term sampling does not describe the reading process for beginning or intermediate readers, or ESL and EFL readers, who must process more of the cues in the text to grasp the meaning". Snow and Juel (2005, p.507) stated that "numerous studies in the 1980s indicated use of context for word identification is both inefficient and minimally useful". Eskey (2005, p.567) warns that we should not 'reduce reading to a kind of guessing game'. However, it is difficult to assume that young foreign readers are engaged in automatic word recognition. Although the ideal is to encourage automaticity, so that they can minimize guess work, it is inevitable that young foreign readers will encounter unknown sections in their reading, which they will be forced to guess at. Given the inevitability of guess work for such readers, the issue is how informed are the guesses that they are making and what types of cues they are using.

Reading theories are often based on a highly skilled, or 'ultimate', reading process, based on the example of first language readers. One possible reason for this is offered by Grabe and Stoller (2002, p.11): "At very advanced levels, L1 and L2 reading abilities tend to merge and appear to be quite similar. So, to understand the end-point of reading abilities, that of the fluent, critical reader, the research on L1 reading development offers us a much more complete understanding". Ideally, the reader will aim to achieve a native level of reading, but by focusing on this idealization, researchers in reading area may fail to develop a theory adequate to explain the reading processes of young foreign readers who have not yet reached a high level in a foreign language. As Porte (1988, p.171) puts it, 'poor' EFL learners do not need merely to copy their 'betters' in order to improve'. They may have their own ways to approach reading, possibly influenced by several factors, which may be different from L1 readers. In actuality, foriegn langauge readers are involved

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in a variety of reading practices that differ from those of first langauge readers. For example, foreign langauge learners are quite often engaged in reading as translation (e.g., H. Kim, 2004; Im, 2010; Liao, 2006; Song, 2000; Suh, 2004). Song (2000) states that reading as translation is the main reading activity for Korean students in class. H. Kim also describes that grammar-translation method as the most common activity in the reading practices of Korean students. Along with translation, oral reading has been a prevalent reading practice among Korean students (e.g., Amer, 1997; Cho & Choi, 2003; Cho and Seo, 2001; Dhaif, 1990; Ding, 2007; Gibson, 2008; Takeuchi, 2003; Yang & Wilson, 2006). Considering that cognition can be developed through participation (Vygotsky, 1978), we can expect that frequent reading practices may shape EFL learners' perceptions of reading in English. This is likely to be especially true for young EFL learners: they tend to be more susceptible to their environment and, therefore, the experiences they have as learners may well affect the way they perceive reading in English (Cameron, 2001; No, 2000). In this study, I pay particular attention to the guessing process of a young foreign reader through an analysis of the various elements of his reading context.

III. THE STUDY

The current study is part of a larger study which explores the reading processes of some Korean primary school students. One student from the larger study was singled out in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of reading processes and identify characteristics of a young ELF learner.

1. Participants

The participants were one Korean primary school student (Kilsu), his private tutor (Song), his mother (Sunja), his state school teacher (Hey) and two other state school teachers in two different schools (Jihi, Hana). All the participants in the study were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity. All the participants signed consent slips after they had been informed of the purpose and procedure of the study. Kilsu was chosen for the case study because he had been learning English with one private tutor for over a year at the time of the study and the people around him (his mother, his state school teacher, and his private tutor) were accessible, a factor that is often regarded as one of the most important considerations when selecting participants for a case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). At the time of the study, Kilsu was 12 years old and in sixth grade in primary school. He had started to learn English with private lessons when he was in second grade. Apart

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from Kilsu's state school teacher, two teachers (Hana, Jihi) were selected purposefully (Patton, 2002), for their English teaching experience and qualifications. Hana and Jihi were experienced teachers, having taught in state primary schools for seven years. Jihi was the most experienced English teacher who had taught English throughout her career, whereas Hana had taught English to students for three years of her seven year teaching experience. Both of them took a major in Teaching English for young learners (TEYL), at university and graduate school and had several in-service programs of TEYL. The participants who are related to Kilsu were included to better understand Kilsu's reading process whereas the two expereinced English teachers were included to investigate whether Kilsu' reading reflects reading processes amongst Korean primary school students.

2. Data collection and analysis

Kilsu was asked to read aloud the storybook, *Hansel and Gretel*, twice without any significant break, after the second oral reading, to translate what he read into Korean. His oral reading and translation was audio-recorded. Semi-structured interview data was collected from the five participants (Kilsu, his mother, his private tutor, his state school teacher, and two other state school teachers). A post-reading interview was conducted with Kilsu to identify his perceived difficulties and strategies in reading. Three state school teachers were asked to listen to the recordings of Kilsu's readings and were interviewed concerning Kilsu's reading processes as a reader. It was not possible to get Kilsu's private tutor, Song, to listen to Kilsu's reading and comment on it, since Song was very sensitive about his reputation as a private tutor. The interview with Song focused on the reading practices that he provides to teach Kilsu. For the data analysis, I connected the data from Kilsu with data from people around him, such as his private tutor, his mother, and his state school teacher, so as to better understand his reading processes in the context of the general characteristics of Korean primary school students, as perceived by three state school teachers. The details of these interviews appear in Appendix I.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I will start with some brief background information to provide micro context (Holliday, 1994) about the participants in the case study. This was gathered from the interview data. Later, I discuss Kilsu's reading processes in more detail and extend my discussion, in order to better understand the reading processes of Korean students in general. While doing this, I refer to some relevant literature and link it with my interpretation.

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1.The micro context of Kilsu's reading in English

In this section, I provide the micro context of Kilsu's reading in English, focusing particularly on his reading practices in English and background information about people around Kilsu, especially their perceptions about reading. At the time of the study, Kilsu had been taking private English lessons for five years. He was learning English through a 'worksheet company', which usually allocates one teacher, who visits once each week. He receives assignments for one week from his teacher and works on his own with the worksheets, before having his assignments checked by his teacher. Kilsu started receiving English lessons in the second grade. He changed the worksheet company once, from "Noen" to "Choon" (pseudonym). Kilsu's private tutor, Song, has worked for the Choon worksheet company for three years and was 30 years old at the time of the study. Kilsu had been learning English from Song for almost one year. Song explains the focus of the Choon worksheet company as follows:

> The Choon aims to teach phonics, that is, to teach language bit by bit. I think it suits EFL learners to progress gradually by phonics, rather than to teach English as whole language. This style of teaching only has short term effects on students and they end up back where they started. There is no point in teaching them English as whole language, since we don't use it.

Song seems to believe that phonics is suitable for EFL learners, although it is not clear what he means by 'phonics'. Examination of the learning materials for Kilsu's private lessons suggests that Song focuses on the translation of individual English words into Korean. It is possible that he understands phonics as a way of teaching words in a decontextualized way, rather than a method of explaining the relationship between sounds and letters.

In the textbook that Kilsu uses in private lessons, there are many circles around each word, which have been made by Kilsu's private tutor, Song. He teaches Kilsu English in the following way: when Song names the word out by circling it, Kilsu says the translated equivalent. For example, the following extract has Kilsu reading the sentence 'This grass is so delicious':

> Extract 1. Kilsu's lesson with Song
> Song: (circling the word 'this') this
> Kilsu: 이것[eecodt] (meaning 'this' in Korean)
> Song: (circling the word 'grass') grass
> Kilsu: 풀[pooll] (meaning 'grass' in Korean)

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In the interview, Song explains how he teaches reading in English to Kilsu:

> When I teach reading to Kilsu, I make a circle around every word. When I do that, I read each word aloud in English, and Kilsu gives the equivalent word in Korean. When he fails to think of any words, I write the meaning in Korean under the unknown word. After that, I read the text sentence by sentence and Kilsu reads those after me.

In this way, Song says that students can maintain a good reading speed, which seems to be an important criterion for Song in evaluating students' reading in English. Song does not consider Kilsu to be at an advanced level in reading English, relative to his other students. He explains this by saying that "Kilsu is not among the most advanced of my students. I consider reading speed when I evaluate their ability in reading. Some students can read texts in no time." Song does not allow enough time for Kilsu to guess the meaning of unknown words, during reading in English. When Kilsu encounters an unknown word, Song immediately teaches him its meaning. Song explains that he does not encourage Kilsu to retell the story or ask him to state the meaning of the sentence that Kilsu read. He explains the reason for that by saying that "words can be memorized. Since Korean and English grammar are different, I would like to make him develop a sense of the differences in grammar between the two languages." Song explains that the way he teaches Kilsu English is designed to make Kilsu more familiar with the different word order of English. By just following English word order, by naming out equivalent words in Korean in English word order, Song seems to believe that he can help Kilsu to develop a sense of the different word order of English. Song seems to think that if he asks Kilsu to retell the story in Korean or asks him to talk about what he reads at the sentence level in Korean, he might inadvertently hamper Kilsu's sense of English grammar. This is becasue Kilsu has to relocate the word order in summarizing or retelling what he reads in Korea and it would prevent him following English word order in his mind. Song's approach seems to be influenced strongly by contrastive analysis, which attributes learning difficulties to differences between learners' L1 and the target language. However, as Ellis (2006, p.89) puts it, this approach is not a tenable or sound basis for the teaching of grammar. Although researchers in applied linguistics do not consider contrastive analysis useful, some teachers, like Song, may be influenced by it. Song's focus on word translation does not seem atypical in Korea. According to Lee (2006, p.73), 'a mechanized 'word-for-word' translation, based on the dictionary denotation' is a widely-used classroom practice in Korea. He points out that this practice can be misinterpreted, giving the impression that each word has a single, fixed meaning and thus obstruct the use of contextual cues.

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Kilsu's mother, Sunja, was not able to give educational factors priority in her choice of private lessons. She told me that she chose the Choon worksheet company, because it is not that expensive compared with the price of private institutes. She also said that she had hoped to send Kilsu to a private institute, but could not, because of financial difficulties. She had no opportunity to discuss Kilsu's ability in English with his private tutor. She believes that Kilsu is not good at English in general; in particular, she thinks that Kilsu does not have sufficient English vocabulary. She said that she is hardly involved in the process of choosing the reading materials in English, because she does not know what to choose. The following quotation demonstrates her lack of confidence in English:

> I have never chosen English books for Kilsu. How can I choose books if they are written in English? To be honest with you, I don't know what to choose [when it comes to books in English]. One day, I got an English book from someone, but it was no use, since it did not have accompanying tapes with it.

Sunja's comment about the need for accompanying tapes for reading materials indicates her emphasis on the oral aspect of reading. The fact that Sunja provides private lessons for Kilsu, in spite of their lack of financial resources, is typical of the expectation placed on parents, in Korea, to provide extra, private, tuition for their children. As Nunan (2003, p. 601) puts it, there is an 'explosive demand for English language' in Korea and a huge amount of money is spent in the effort to learn English. Sunja even admitted that she is considering getting a part-time job as a cleaner or maid to earn the money for Kilsu's private lessons; this level of interest in Kilsu's education is not unusual in Korea, where parents place a heavy emphasis on their children's education.

Hey is Kilsu's state school teacher and was twenty-two when I met her. She was not Kilsu's class teacher, but a subject teacher, who taught only English. She was the fourth state English teacher Kilsu had had that year. When I met Hey, she had just started school teaching and was not very confident of her ability to teach students. Also, she was not confident in her reading of English and felt she was not good at English in general. She hardly reads in English in her daily life. She said that, for a mid-term test, she designed a translation exercise to test her students' reading ability. For example, she gave students one English sentence and asked them to write the equivalent sentence in Korean, or gave them a Korean sentence and asked them to translate it into English. It may be that Hey adopts these teaching strategies because she was taught in that way herself. It seems to be a technique for reducing unpredictable responses from students to the questions she asks, since she feels insecure about her command of English.

The interviews quoted above indicates that Kilsu participated in reading English mainly as a translation exercise : Hey, his state school teacher, used a translation exercise to test

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her students' reading ability and Song, his private tutor, used translation as the main method to teach Kilsu reading in English. The reading literature reports that translation is one of the most frequent reading practices among Asian EFL students (e.g., Kim, 2004; Liao, 2006; Nunan, 2003; Song, 2000). In this sense, Kilsu's reading instruction is not atypical in an Asian context, although first or second language learners would not participate in reading in the way Kilsu did.

2. Kilsu's wild guessing as a young EFL learner

In this section, I provide a detailed explanation of Kilsu's reading processes, using a variety of data: Kilsu's miscues and translations, interviews with Kilsu, his private tutor (Song), and three state school teachers (Hana, Jihi and Hey). The interviews with the three state school teachers are used to examine whether Kilsu's reading processes are typical of the way other Korean students approach reading in English. Three notable characteristics were identified from the data: word-by-word reading, disconnected word recognition, and selective use of cues.

1) Word-by-word reading

The three state school teachers said that Kilsu read the story aloud word by word rather than reading it with a natural intonation. The following are three comments on it:

> I get the impression that he reads the text without much attention. I hope he can make pauses that split sentences into meaningful units. (Jihi)

> If the native speaker listens to this, he/she would have difficulty in understanding Kilsu's intonation. He reads the story in a monotone, whether the sentence ends with a period or a question mark. (Hana)

> It seems that he reads the story as an unrelated series of words. Unless he encounters a familiar phrase or expression, in long sentences, he seems to engage mainly in word by word reading. I got the impression that he is eager to read words, rather than to think of their meaning. (Hey)

However, Hey said that in his second reading Kilsu appeared to insert pauses between each individual word. She notes that, like Kilsu, many of her students read word by word, as if one line is one sentence.

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> There are a lot of students who read word by word, rather than sentence by sentence. They do not read text in terms of meaningful units. Rather, they read one line without stopping.

Considering his English reading practice, in private lessons with Song, in which Kilsu learned reading in English by offering an equivalent word for each circled word, it is not surprising that he does not see a sentence as one meaningful unit.

2) Disconnected word recognition

Disconnected word recognition was clearly apparent in Kilsu's reading; he produced the same type of unexpected oral responses thirteen times (for the same word in the same sentence). Ten out of these thirteen were non-words; for the words 'pebbles', 'breadcrumbs', and 'treasure'. He may have encountered these words for the first time, but his translation shows that he did understand their meanings, although he made non-word substitutions for them. By contrast, he sometimes cannot fully understand words that he names out successfully. For example, he could not make a good guess at the word 'witch' and translated it as 'old lady'. Although the page where the word 'witch' appears shows a picture of an old wicked looking lady, he was unable to infer the correct meaning, and made a long pause before translating the word 'witch'. At first, he took five seconds and then said that he did not know the meaning of the word 'witch', before taking another thirty three seconds to interpret it as 'old lady'. What is interesting here is that he did not pause in the same way in his oral readings. This implies that he does not think very intently about the meaning of words when he reads aloud.

Disconnected word recognition was also observed by all three state school teachers; they expressed their surprise at finding out that Kilsu did not know the meaning of the word *witch*, although he named it out successfully. Jihi comments as follows:

> That's what I wondered. I think for Kilsu, it is one thing to read aloud words and another thing to know the meaning of the words. For example, he read the word 'witch' aloud in his first reading, so I thought he knew the word, but after I listened to his second reading, I was surprised to find out that he did not know the meaning.

The word *witch* may be fairly easy to pronounce, simply from the spelling. What may have surprised the three teachers was that Kilsu did not show any significant hesitation, when naming it out, causing his listeners to assume that he knew the word. Jihi notes that disjunction between decoding and comprehension also occurred with her students.

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> They are good at reading words. But there are often cases where they do not understand the meaning of what they read. They can read (aloud) words based on their knowledge of pronunciation, but do not know the meaning of them.

3) Selective use of cues

The third characteristic of Kilsu's reading is that he tries to construct meaning with the words he believes he knows and disregards unknown or confusing parts. For example, in translating the sentence 'we are going to get some wood', he takes the word 'go' to mean 'go somewhere', rather than 'be going to' do something. And he understands the word 'wood' as 'forest'. Once he recognises these two words, he constructs a plausible meaning as being 'and they went to the forest'. His way of reaching understanding seems to be as follows: first, he takes the familiar words in the sentence and constructs a hypothesis about their meanings: then he confirms this meaning by checking it against pictures in the book or his own knowledge. Kilsu's selectiveness in translation was identified by Jihi and Hana. Here, selectiveness means his strategy of constructing meaning using the words he knows and ignoring the unknown parts:

> He seems to ignore or omit the difficult parts…He can reach the comprehension with one word he knows. (Jihi)

> At first, he connects the words he knows. He ignores the unknown words and disassembles a sentence and then assembles it as he likes it. He ignores the unknown parts. He does not worry that much about unknown words. He used the words he knows, until he assembles a meaning. I think this is connected with Korean ability, since it is about assembling words. If you know the words 'eat' and 'good', you can construct the meaning 'good to eat'. (Hana)

He pays little attention to syntactic cues. If he used them more, he would realise that it is not syntactically correct to say 'to get some forest', because 'forest' is a countable noun. Also, it is semantically inaccurate to say this: the statement does not make sense. This lack of attention to syntactic cues may be caused by the approach taken in his private lessons. His private tutor, Song, revealed in the interview that he does not consider grammar important: he remarked that 'I do not think reading has a close association with grammar. It is important to grasp meaning.'

Kilsu's lack of attention to syntactic cues appears to be a general characteristic of young Korean learners when they read in English. Hey and Hana reported their students' difficulties with syntax when reading English. Hana assumed that students would reach

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understanding eventually, with several cues available, but would have difficulty in understanding in detail. The following interview data illustrates this point:

> Once they know the story and a certain amount of vocabulary, they will understand the text… even if they don't know grammar. However, they may not know the detailed meaning [of the text]. They will make a guess using words they know; there are pictures [in the storybook], and if they know the story they will try to understand it from the pictures. Although they know the story, they will find it difficult to understand the details.

4) Lack of awareness of difficulties

The selective use of cues in Kilsu's reading appears to be connected with his low level of awareness of his difficulties: he hardly checks his initial attempts to construct meaning. Also, he does not make significant changes to his initial attempts to understand the meaning of words. His mistaken insistence on using the words 'forest' and 'old lady' are examples of this. This is relevant to his metacognitive ability: even when he makes a guess at unknown words, he thinks that he knows their meaning. Because he thinks he understands what he first encounters in the text, he does not check the meaning when necessary. Extract 2 demonstrates this point clearly:

> Extract 2. Interview with Kilsu
>
> Me: Is there any word you do not know?
> Kilsu: No.
> Me: Is there any word whose meaning you guessed at?
> Kilsu: No.
> Me: Is there any word you encountered for the first time?
> Kilsu: Yes.

Kilsu seems to think that he knows a word if he manages to guess the meaning, even though he is encountering the word for the first time. In fact, he seems unaware that he is guessing the meaning. If he succeeds in constructing a plausible meaning for the word, he assumes that he knows its meaning, whether or not his guess is correct. The fact that he is not aware of his guessing strategy can lead him to pay little attention to checking his word. Macaro and Erler (2008, p.5) use the word 'wild guesses', when readers overuse prior knowledge, without considering possible bottom up strategies. Kilsu's selective use of cues clearly shows how a young foreign reader makes such 'wild guesses' in his reading.

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Kilsu's lack of awareness of unknown words may be linked to his experience in private lessons. Here is Kilsu's private tutor, Song, on how he teaches Kilsu:

> I write the meaning of words which seem to be unknown to Kilsu. With my support, Kilsu can read texts without stopping, although he encounters unknown words. I can predict what Kilsu may know or may not since I have taught him for a long time. Therefore, I write the meaning of unknown words, when Kilsu pauses in oral reading. In that way, Kilsu's reading speed is not diminished. If I give this kind of support, he seems to get a sense [of English word order]. Kilsu thinks he knows the unknown words because I write their meaning.

The interview with three state school teachers verified that Kilsu's selective reading processes, in which he constructs the meaning of sentences with selective attention to familiar words, disregarding syntactic cues, are a strategy commonly used by Korean primary school students when reading English.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This case study illustrates the reading process of a young foreign learner. Four characteristic were identified: word-by-word reading, disconnected word recognition, selective use of cues, and lack of awareness of difficulties. Kilsu engages in guessing games while reading, in the sense that he makes selective use of cues. However, his guessing appears to be wild, since he often disregards syntactic cues, which are the cues usually favored by the guessing model. The three state school teachers interviewed in the study confirmed that Kilu's reading process is not atypical of Korean primary school students.

The guessing model is based predominantly on the psycholinguistic perspective, which is mainly concerned with type and amount of information readers need in order to understand texts. However, if we try to understand Kilsu's guessing from the psycholinguistic perspective, we only reach a limited understanding of why he shows such a different pattern of guessing from first or second language learners. The examination of the way he has been taught reading seems to provide more explanation of why his attention is limited to the word-level and his word recognition is often disconnected; Kilsu learns reading in English as a translation exercise which demands rapid word-level translation of texts. His learning experience seems to provide few opportunities to develop ability to use a variety of cues and make more informed guesses. If readers read in this disconnected way, focusing on only one or two cues, it is difficult for

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them to gain a fuller understanding of texts. The pedagogical implication for primary school students in reading English is that students should be encouraged to use all kinds of information in an organic way, so that they can make more informed guesses during reading. For this, more favourable reading practices should be provided, which help students to make use of different kinds of knowledge simultaneously during reading. Introduction of phonics can be a good starting point to make reading practics more favourable for students. By teaching phonics, we can help students to understand the relationship between spelling and sound. However, issues still remain with regard to when or how much we teach phonics to students in order to assist them in connecting phonics with reading for meaning. It may be possible to address these issues by the examination of recent developments in synthetic phonics, which help students to develop phonemic awareness and the ability to blend sounds within words.

Another pedagogical implication concerns the awareness of uncertainty when reading in a foreign language. Kilsu showed no awareness of their own uncertainty during the reading process. This lack of awareness of uncertainty is closely related to the lack of a checking strategy: Kilsu thinks he knows the words, so he fails to check his initial understanding and continue to construct meaning, but incorrectly. In order to make students aware of their own uncertainty, it would be useful to help them come to understand what it means to 'know' a word and all the different aspects of word knowledge that contribute to this. Nation (2001) illustrated more than twenty aspects of knowing a word, and it is important to know which particular aspects a student focuses on; for example, if they focus on pronunciation, they may think that the ability to pronounce a word equates to knowing the word. Similarly, if they can construct meaning in any plausible way, they may think they understand all the words in the sentence; in the present study, Kilsu thought they knew unknown words if they could make a plausible guess at them (in fact, he did not seem to be aware that he was guessing). As I noted in the literature review, reading as translation is one of the prevalent reading practices among Asian EFL learners. It may be worth conducting further research in order to investigate how the translation method is used in other EFL contexts and whether the experience of students in those areas is similar to that of Kilsu.

This study has a methodological limitation with sampling. In selecting a participant for a case study, I chose Kilsu, who had been learning English with one private tutor. However, Kilsu is not typical of the participants, since most primary school students are likley to have several different English private tutors simultaneously and these tutors change frequently (approximately every six weeks). Although Kilsu was atypical in his contact with private tutors, I chose him for the case study, since it seemed more practical to investigate the influence of private lessons with a student who had consistent lessons with one private teacher.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions

Interview questions for the student :
Was it difficult to read Hansel and Gretel? If so, what made this book difficult?
Show me the unfamiliar words in this story. How did you understand these words?

Interview Questions for the State School Teachers :
What impression did you get?
What level do you think he is at in terms of reading in English?
What are Kilsu's weak points and his strong points?
What support do you think he needs in his reading?

Interview Questions for the Private Tutor :
Do you have a particular focus in teaching English to your students?
How do you teach reading in English to your students? Do they like your approach?

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What level do you think your student is at in terms of reading in English?
When do students seem to experience difficulty while reading in English?

Interview Questions for the Parent:
How do you choose private lessons?
Do you have a particular focus in English education for your children?
Do you know your child's weak points and strong points in terms of reading in English?
Do you buy books in English for your children? If so, how do you choose them?

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Primary

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