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Use of Common Verb Phrases in Describing Everyday Activities by Advanced Korean-speaking Learners of English

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As an attempt to investigate the use of common verbs by a small group of Korean college students at the advanced level, the present study describes the students' speech production data collected from picture description tasks. The primary focus of the data description was how the students used high-frequency verbs in describing everyday activities. Out of total 442 units, 149 verbs were erroneously used. All erroneous utterances were classified into four categories according to their characteristics. The most prominent error type was overgeneralization due to incomplete knowledge of lexical items. Results showed that verbs used in everyday life were not easy even for the advanced level students. Although in some cases, L1 influence was discerned, the students' problems are more fundamental. In particular, the data revealed lack of knowledge of collocational possibilities and restrictions, and confusion about semantic boundaries between verbs which have similar semantic areas. The findings suggest that teaching at the advanced level should take contrastive approaches intralingually as well as interlingually to the high-frequency verbs.

[High-frequency verb phrases/Collocation/Contrastive approaches]

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally in second language acquisition research, many studies focused on the acquisition of language structures. However, as Hatch (1983) admits, basic communicative competence is largely concerned with the strategies that the learners use to solicit the vocabulary they need in order to get meaning across. It is not difficult to imagine a situation that insufficient vocabulary causes communication breakdown.

This does not necessarily mean that knowing rare and difficult words is prerequisite for successful communication. Rather, proper use of common and high-frequency words might be more important for effective communication.

From this standpoint, the present study examined the choices of common verb phrases such as *blow out the candles, get into bed* by advanced Korean-speaking learners of English in speech production. Given that EFL students do not get many chances to use those verbs in conversations, it would be difficult to notice whether the verbs were stored in the lexicon in erroneous forms even though most verbs involved here were very common and high-frequency ones. Thus, the study focused on whether the verbs were appropriately used in certain contexts.

The problem is not just whether a verb is available in real-time production or not, but how the verb is being used in production. Most L2 vocabulary research to date has focused on the acquisition of individual words in various learning conditions (Chun & Plass, 1996; Fisher, 1994; Prince, 1996) and on vocabulary learning strategies and retention (Brown & Perry, 1991; Fraser, 1999; Sanaoui, 1995). Accordingly, a lot of discussion about learning and retention of vocabulary was centered on mostly reading skills (Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996; Rott, 1999; Wode, 1999).

This study is an attempt to investigate the state of vocabulary that is likely to be already acquired or at least recognizable to advanced level Korean students. To do this, speech data were collected from the college students by using the pictures describing ordinary daily processes where verbs were highlighted as the main ingredient of sentences. However, as pointed out by Meara (1997) and Jiang (2004), this line of research is likely to be descriptive and model-free rather than explanatory and model-driven. The present study will not be an exception to this generalization.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Lexical Problems in Language Acquisition

The study of lexical choice, an area that may be classified under interlanguage semantics has not received as much emphasis as the other parts of interlanguage, namely, form-oriented research. However, it has been claimed in EFL literature that the majority of advanced learners' errors are semantic in nature (Martin, 1984) or content-oriented as opposed to form-oriented (Zimmermann, 1987). Studies of

language production show that lexical problems far outweigh grammatical ones (Chafe, 1980; Dechert, 1984; Schlue, 1977). Grammatical vagary and temporal disruption of performance together with various dysfluency markers may be the result of lexical search problems where automatisation is imperfect, even if error does not result (Lennon, 1990; McLaughlin, 1987; Nation, 1990). Counts of lexical error will, therefore, considerably underestimate lexical difficulties in production. That is to say, most of the errors are not due to the ignorance of the words uttered but because of an incomplete knowledge of the words. As Drum and Konopak (1987) claimed, learners do not know words on an all-or-nothing basis, even mature native speakers may often be in a state of partial knowledge.

Lexical problems may result in simplified language, as discussed by Levenston and Blum (1978), or adoption of various compensatory strategies. Such strategies may involve various forms of avoidance, use of near-synonyms, co-hyponyms, superordinates, word-coinage and recourse to L1. Among these strategies, L1 semantic transfer has been dealt with as a core issue by several researchers. According to Jiang (2004), lack of contextualized input and the presence of existing conceptual and L1 system make adult L2 vocabulary acquisition fundamentally different from L1 vocabulary acquisition. In other words, L2 vocabulary acquisition is accompanied by little conceptual or semantic development. Instead, the existing L1 linguistic and conceptual systems are actively involved in L2 learning process.

Although a lot of research has addressed crosslinguistic issues in lexical processing and use, research on the influence of L1 on acquisition of lexical meaning is sparse. Some studies have shown that learners avoid lexical items that do not have counterparts in their L1 (Blum & Levenston, 1979; Sjöholm, 1998). Yu (1996) demonstrated that Chinese L2 learners of English, whose L1 had crosslinguistic similarities with English in the semantic components of motion verbs, had a superior performance to Japanese-speaking learners whose native language did not have such similarities.

Likewise, Zughoul (1991) analyzed the lexical choice errors made by Arabic speaking learners of English and found that L1 interference is a major variable in lexical choice. He maintained that interference is not in lexical shift form, but it takes the forms of assumed synonymity, derivativeness, literal translation, and idiomaticity. The most obvious form of L1 influence is assumed synonymity where the learner assumes that a lexical item in English has the same reference sense, connotation, and register as its translation equivalent in Arabic. He proposed the use of problematic

word lists in the classroom in order to help the learners adopt practical strategies for improving their semantic competence.

On the other hand, Sonaiya (1991) explained the vocabulary acquisition by the notion of lexical disambiguation. Through the examination of lexical errors made by learners of French, Sonaiya showed that in most cases the lack of knowledge about two or more semantically related items caused the errors. That is, the learners were unaware of the lexical relationships that held between two items within the language, presumably because of the disparity between their own native language and the target language. In conclusion, as Sonaiya suggested, lexical choice errors were caused from the partial knowledge of the target language rather than L1 transfer. Some words are more difficult to master than others. The reasons for this are only partly contrastive.

To sum up, lexical problems in L2 acquisition have been addressed from crosslinguistic perspectives. Regarding the significance of L1 influence on lexical learning, this is still controversial.

2. Verb Choice Errors

As stressed by Viberg (1993), since verbs are shown to play a central role for the acquisition of the lexicon in general as well as a variety of structural areas, a lot of studies concerning the acquisition of verbs were conducted. Although nouns may predominate in the speech of beginning learners of L2, verbs appear to be most centrally involved in lexical development (Harley, 1995). So an increase in the proportion of verbs relative to other word categories was positively associated with overall richness, whereas the opposite was the case for nouns: The higher the proportion of nouns in a learner's lexicon, the lower the overall lexical richness tended to be (Broeder et al., 1989). Broeder and others suggested that an increase in the proportion of verbs corresponds to development in the structuring of learners' utterances.

Harley (1993) presented the production data from children learning French in Canadian immersion programs showing that these learners made substantially greater use of general verbs of high coverage in writing than did the same-aged native speakers. With increasing grade level, more specificity of verbs was observed.

In a study of six-year-old children learning Swedish, Viberg (1993) reported that they had a tendency to favor one or two typologically unmarked nuclear verbs in each of several semantic fields. These learners overused the nuclear verbs and

overextended their primary meanings, and underused their language-specific meanings compared with native Swedish speaking children. Viberg suggested that nuclear verbs serve as syntactic prototypes, providing entry points to L2 sentence structure. Ard and Gass (1987) proposed something similar — that lexical development is a cause and not an effect of syntactic development in L2.

In a similar vein, Blum and Levenston (1978) found that foreign learners tended to use superordinates where the majority of the native speakers used co-hyponyms. For instance, the learners used the Hebrew equivalent of *put* instead of *impose*. Blum and Levenston concluded that learners would prefer words that can be generalized to use in a large number of contexts. Since the general item covers a larger area of meaning and could fit in a number of contexts, the learner who remembers and uses it runs a smaller risk of making an error than if he were to learn and use the specific item with its restricted area of meaning and use.

Most of the above studies were based on the data from beginning level learners. Lennon's (1996) study showed that the acquisition of basic verbs is an intractable task even for advanced learners. Lennon examined four advanced learners' speech data on familiar, non-technical subjects and found that these learners have problems with the correct usage of high-frequency verbs. The evidence is that learners may have a broad outline of verb meaning, but that their lexical knowledge is hazy concerning polysemy, contextual and collocational restrictions, phrasal verb combinations, and grammatical environment. However, Lennon presented the errors by individual verbs, so all of the erroneous uses of 'easy' verbs seemed to be one broad category, which leads to the conclusion of a deficit of qualitative vocabulary knowledge.

To sum up, studies on the choice of verbs seem to arrive at a similar conclusion that verbs representing general meaning replace the specific verbs in many L2 learners' lexical development. The question is what causes this overextension and how it could be prevented through instructional interventions. Furthermore, overextension might have more than one layer of semantic levels. Owing to the nature of lexical phrases, comprehension is normally unproblematic for learners, so that identifying the problems of learners must mean analyzing their production of these phrases.

The present study attempts to shed some light on the problems of advanced Korean learners of English in the production of verb phrases. To do this, the students' speech data were categorized and described according to their distinctive characteristics. Analysis of errors by categories will provide some perspectives on L2 verb acquisition.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants consisted of 9 college students taking the advanced communication course in Spring 2005. All of them scored over 900 on TOEIC test and three of them have been in English speaking countries 6 months to one year and a half. All of them are non-English majors and some of them were members of English conversation clubs on campus. Through an interview before audio-taping session, the researcher got the impression that most of the students seemed to feel confident about their English proficiency.

2. Data Collection Procedure

To elicit the verb forms, some pictures from Zwier's (1999) *Picture Process Dictionary* were used. As the author emphasized, the dictionary highlights verbs for doing, acting or describing everyday activities. The students were given pictures without captions. When nouns seemed to be unfamiliar to the students, captions were provided because the verb form was the focal point of the study. Their speech was taped by the research for transcription.

3. Data Analysis

This study adopted the position that the production data were not considered as errors in the first place. The objective of the study was not identifying the learners' errors, but showing the state of learners' productive use of basic verbs. As a start, the utterances with different verbs from the captions were identified. These utterances were screened by native-speaking teachers to decide if an utterance was the alternative way of speaking the same activity. If the verbs were not the typical one to describe the activity, then the utterances containing those verbs were classified into 4 categories; *paraphrase, overgeneralization, underspecificity* and *L1 translation influence*. Each of these types will be discussed and illustrated with examples from the data. It is necessary to point out that all these types are by no means exclusive. That is, these categories overlap and some utterances might be classified under a couple of categories at the same time.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All 442 verb phrases were produced by using 9 processes like *brushing teeth* or *taking a shower*. Each process consists of 9 to 12 scenes, but the number of verb phrases describing the same scene was different by participant. Most of the time, the students used run-on sentences, so transcribed data consisted of verb phrases not complete sentences. The percentage of inappropriate verb choices out of total 442 was 33.7%. The frequency of each type is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Frequency of Inappropriate Verb Phrases by Type

Paraphrase	Overgeneralization	Underspecificity	L1 Influence	Total
18 (12.08%)	61(40.94%)	37(24.83%)	33(22.14%)	149

1. Paraphrase

When students cannot think of a proper word to use in a certain context, they may provide a paraphrase that would convey the intended meaning. Almost thirteen percent of deviant utterances belonged to this type. Following are some examples. The number in the bracket indicates how many students chose the verbs.

(1) put the brush under the tap and get the water on it (2, run water over brush)
(2) move water enough to clear all over your mouth (2, swish water back and forth)
(3) clean the brush with water (3, rinse off her brush)
(4) gave them a puzzle and they have fun (1, put a puzzle together)
(5) catch the stick and hand in the stick to him (2, fetch the stick)
(6) cover the shower box using shower curtain / move the shower curtain (3, pull the shower curtain shut)
(7) break an egg and put the egg on the pan (5, crack an egg into the pan)

This type of description is usually longer than the native speakers' and most of utterances strike the native speaker as 'something awkward'. However, example (4) looks fine except for the tense. Thus, it should be said it is not appropriate in context rather than it is ungrammatical because the picture showing a hand holding a piece and an unfinished puzzle. Other examples are decomposition types according to Nilsen's (1975) categorization. Since they did not know the exact word for the

situation, they used the verb available for them to get through the meaning to the researcher. Interestingly, the likely target verbs for these errors are usually themselves also easy, frequently-occurring verbs.

2. Overgeneralization

The largest percentage of deviant utterances (40.94%) belonged to this category. The students were overextending the verbs available in their lexicon to compensate for their lack of knowledge of specific and less-frequently used verbs. That is, they used superordinates instead of specific verbs. Specially, verbs like *take, put,* or *get* were overused and as a result, the descriptions of some activities sounded awkward although some of them might understandable in the contexts.

These verbs are among the commonest in the language. Even lower-intermediate learners might be expected to have recognition knowledge of them. Yet they are repeatedly used erroneously by this group of advanced learners as examples demonstrate:

(8) put water out of my mouth (1, spit water into the sink)
(9) put his hand on his dog (3, pet his dog)
(10) put the towel on my hip/bottom (4, wrap a towel around oneself)
(11) put the butter on the pan (5, melt some butter in the pan)
(12) put the egg on the pan (1, crack an egg into the pan)

We can see that the choice of preposition is not so much a big problem as the choice of verb itself in terms of understandability. That is, we can easily understand *melt some butter on the pan*, but in the case of *put the butter on the pan* has apparently different meaning from the intended meaning. The problem is in all cases specific verbs should have been used instead of *put*.

On the other hand, as Laufer (1990) suggested, *put* is likely to be a difficult verb for learners because of its rich polysemy and its syntactic complexity. Thus the students' reliance on the neutral or versatile verb for cases where they were hazy as to which verb to use resulted in inappropriate utterances.

The overuse of *get* revealed more diverse aspects than in the case of *put* as follows.

(13) get out of the tub (4, step out of the shower)
(14) get out of the house (2, step outside)

(15) gets his backpack (5, pick up his backpack)
(16) get his keys and wallets (5, pick up keys and wallet)
(17) get their children (2, pick the children up)
(18) get the stick (4, fetch the stick)
(19) get through the blanket (2, get into bed)

Although (13) and (14) display the same grammatical pattern, the degree of acceptability is different. That is, the example (13) is acceptable while the example (14) is not in the given context because it functions only as an order. Similarly examples (15) and (16) should be used as orders like "Get your keys and wallets, Tom" not as a description of movement. But in (17) *get* is somewhat distant from describing the real action of picking up some object, and it is acceptable in context. In other words, when you describe a specific action, you should use the specific verb instead of *get*. The use of *get* for *fetch* as in (18) has the same problem with the examples of (15) and (16). In (19), the students used *get through the blanket* for *get into bed.* This expression might be come from Korean, but regardless of L1 influence, it is evident that the students did not retain the collocational expression *get into bed*.

The above examples show that the students have problems in understanding the complicated deictic system of action verbs in English. Since all utterances were produced as a response to the picture showing the very specific moment of movement, it was not difficult for the students to understand the specific situation. Here, again, the neutral verb *get* was used. Probably the students already knew that *get* could be used for various senses and overextend it. As a result, sometimes it was used properly but sometimes it was not.

Some students used *take* for *pick up* as seen below.

(20) take a shoes (3, puts on his shoes and ties them)
(21) take his backpack (3, picks up his backpack)
(22) take my keys and wallet in my pocket (3, picks up keys and wallet)
(23) take the remote control (2, pick up the remote)

Verb *take* was used for describing the action of lifting something in examples (21), (22) and (23). It should be taught that examples might have the connotation of taking something without the owner's permission. In that respect, determiners are needed as in the above examples because they delimit the meaning. However, the use of *take* is still inappropriate in the given contexts. It should be pointed out that verbs of

movement like *take*, *pick up, get*, *put* etc. need to be presented together so that learners clearly understand the semantics of each verb and discern them in context. One student used *take* instead of *put on* as seen in (20). This error might be the result of overextension of *take off* which has the opposite meaning.

Another replacement of *pick up* was *grab*.

(24) grab keys and wallet (5, picks up keys and wallet)
(25) grab his backpack (5, picks up his backpack)
(26) grab the remote (2, pick up the remote)

Apparently, *grab* has the semantic element of 'quickness' or 'roughness' which *pick up* does not have. In addition, the above examples sound colloquial. The reason for the availability of *grab* over *pick up,* which is a very common English phrase, is not clear.

All these examples are the instances of overextension of some common verbs. Also, each of them belongs to the other types of error at the same time. In other word, most of the above examples are the reflection of underspecificity of polysemic verbs. The reason we deal with them as a separate category is these neutral, common verbs should be presented as a group to have learners recognize the semantic differences of each verb because learners seemed to have more problem with the verbs than with the combination with the particles or prepositions. Therefore, it would be effective when verbs that have a similar meaning are taught together with a comparative view not as a single verb with various forms of other elements.

3. Underspecificity

This category includes errors where the verb meanings are not fully specified so the resultant choices end up with the unacceptable utterances. The produced verb and the target verb share the partly same semantic area, so this partial overlap causes the confusion even for the advanced students when they do not understand the boundaries. It is different from the above category *overgeneralization* in the fact that the chosen verb is not a neutral verb but an assumed synonym of the target verb. Within this category, examples looking slightly different in the degree of underspecificity will be dealt with together. In other words, examples using general verbs not mentioned in the second category, examples using verbs sharing the partial meaning with the target verbs and examples showing the students' lack of collocational restriction will be

described under the same title because all of them resulted from a unspecific knowledge of verbs. In some cases, verbs that carry more general or ambiguous meaning than that of the target verbs were used as follows.

(27) throw out the water (2, spit water into the sink)
(28) he's done his shoes string (1, puts on his shoes and ties them)

Example (27) shows that the students have a difficulty in adequately describing the action forcing the liquid out of the mouth not out of a cup or any container. Therefore, they used the general phrase *throw out*. Example (28) needs some co-text[1] where the action of tying the shoes string should be mentioned. Without this discoursal device, the utterance cannot be properly interpreted. The student might draw an analogy between the colloquial expression "I'm done" and example (28) without consideration of context.

The following display the students' confusion between two related verbs.

(29) drink water for washing your mouth (3, takes some water to rinse her mouth)
(30) switch on the knob/ switch on the water (3, turn the water on)
(31) measure how much killo apples weigh (2, weigh the fruit)
(32) wash the bubble with water (4, rinse off with water)

In (29) *drink* was used for *take* and it is totally unacceptable in context. Verb *drink* denotes the action of swallowing the liquid, so it does not fit in this context. The student might know the difference between these two verbs, but in the time of producing the utterance, *take* was not available to him. Some students overlooked the difference between *switch on* and *turn on* as shown in (30). We *switch on* or *turn on the light* but we don't say *switch on the water*. The students did not recognize the specific property of the verb *switch*, which is confined to the electrical devices. In 31) *measure* was used for *weigh.* In this case students did not know *measure* is for quantity or size not for weight. The use of *wash* to mean *use water to get the soap off something* as in examples (29) and (32) is unacceptable and somewhat humorous because it is not possible to wash the bubble. It may be influenced by the students' L1

1) Halliday & Hasan (1976) called the previous discourse co-ordinate which constrains the interpretation of the text by co-text.

since the word *rinse* is very commonly used as a hair product in Korean. Thus, the use of *rinse* could be confined to hair for these students.

The following demonstrate that collocation may be viewed as a part of the meaning of a word and the use of wrong collocation marks the sentence as unacceptable although understandable.

(33) pack the present with beautiful paper (4, wrap a present)
(34) unpacked all the present (2, opened his present)
(35) play with puzzle/ play puzzle (5, put a puzzle together)
(36) shakes its tail (3, wag its tail)
(37) makes the bed (2, pull back the covers)
(38) go into bed (3, get into bed)
(39) adjust the alarm clock (2, set the alarm clock)
(40) close the jumper (1, zip it up)

Presents are wrapped and later unwrapped or opened in English. In Korean, there is no distinctive use of verb by its object. Examples (33) and (34) are results of this incongruent mapping of two language systems.

Example (35) may be another case of L1 influence. In Korean, both expressions are acceptable; *put a puzzle together* and *play a puzzle*. That is, *play* generally means spending time doing something unimportant in Korean. On the other hand, in English it is usually used with the objects like games, sports or musical instruments but not with a puzzle. According to Prator's (1967) hierarchy of difficulty, it belongs to level 3, *reinterpretation* in which learners should learn a new distribution of some aspects of target language.

Example (36) shows the lack of collocational possibilities of common verbs. Example (37) was used in describing the action of pulling back the covers before getting into bed. The students might know that the action needed a specific verb phrase instead of *make the bed* because *making a bed* is a frequently introduced everyday activity in the classroom. There is no alternative way of describing the action. It is a characteristic of collocation. Native speakers just say in a certain way, so collocational knowledge is not easy to acquire. Therefore, use of collocation highlights a major difference between the advanced learner and the native speaker.

In example (38), *go* was used for *get*. In fact, use of *go into* to mean *get into* is not acceptable here because of the noun *bed*. It might be the overextension of *go to bed.* Presenting similar looking verb phrases such as *go to bed*, *go to sleep* or *get into bed*

in the same context would benefit the advanced learners to have them develop the collocational schemata.

Examples (39) and (40) seemed to be made up instantly by the students. These errors are easily overcome when they try to retain the verb phrases from any learning materials for the future use.

4. L1 Translation Influence

Some errors were induced from Korean translation equivalents, or Koreanized English loan words. This category includes noun choices as objects of verbs as well as verbs choices. In either case a selected verb or a noun are translation equivalent of Korean words on the literal level, consequently, the phrases have different senses from the target words. These utterances sound odd and funny. Following are examples from the data.

Examples (41) to (49) are the cases of mistakenly selected nouns motivated by L1 translation equivalents. *Wipe* does not take *body* as an object. In (42) *dry* does not take *water* as an object because it denotes the removal of water itself. In Korean, both cases are possible. As seen (43) the students used *memorandum* or abbreviated form of it, *memo* to mean *list*. The problem is more complex when the other Koreanized English words are considered. In Korean *memo* is mostly used for *note*, and the word *note* is used for *notebook,* and *notebook* is used for a laptop computer. The use of these nouns is a source of common mistakes of Korean English learners.

(41) wipe your body (2, dry yourself off)
(42) dry water on your body (3, dry yourself off)
(43) prepare a memo/ check the memorandum/ look at the memo (3, check the list)
(44) start the party with lighting the cake (1, light the candles)
(45) blow the light (1, blow out the candles)
(46) blow and turn off the fire (2, blow out the candles)
(47) extinguish the fire of candles (1, blow out the candles)
(48) wash your head (2, wash your hair)
(49) remove your fur (1, remove your hair)

In example (44), *light the cake* is used to mean *light the candles*. In a party situation, both expressions are used in Korean. The phrase *light the cake* is a shortened form of *light the candles on the cake.* Compared to English, Korean tends to allow ellipsis and

ambiguous expressions. This characteristic of Korean might influence the choice of imprecise object, *the cake*. Examples (45), (46) and (47) can be explained by the same logic. The words *fire* and *light* are translated in the same Korean word in many situations without confusion. However, it is impossible in English. The students probably recognize this difference but the distinctive use was not easy for them in the real-time production.

The verb forms of these examples should be noted here, too, although these errors were not directly attributable to the influence of translation equivalents. They rather reflect learner problems in mastering the verb phrase system in English. In (45) and (46) the students chose the correct verb, but it was not perfect. *Turn off the fire* in (46) is not acceptable because the *fire* means flame not the fuel for cooking or heating. In fact, these errors resulted from the lack of collocational knowledge. If these verb noun combinations had been presented as chunks like *blow out / light candles* from the beginning, they would have been produced properly.

Example (48) and (49) provide complicated process of literal translation. Translation equivalent of *hair* in *wash your hair* is */məri/* in Korean. The noun */məri/* can be translated as *head* in English. *Hair* in *remove your hair* can be translated as */təl/* in Korean, which can be translated as *hair* or *fur* in English. The partial overlap between the nouns and the students' imperfect grasp of semantic distinctions caused the errors.

The following are examples of mistakenly chosen verbs in verb noun combinations.

(50) hide your body with the towel (1, wrap a towel around himself)
(51) preparing a present/ prepare some gift (2, wrap a present)
(52) solve the gift (1, open his present)
(53) recommend some cookies and cakes to people (2, treat them to cookies and cakes)
(54) arrange her bed (2, make bed)
(55) moves her brush right to the left/ side by side (9, back and forth)

Example (50) seemed to be used to mean *cover your body with the towel* because there is a fixed expression in Korean by using the verb *hide* to deliver the similar meaning. In English there is an expression that *hide someone's face*, but nothing about the body. Therefore, we can say that the example was motivated by the L1 translation equivalent.

Example (51) shows the strong influence of L1 translation. In Korean the phrase meaning *prepare a present* is generally used to cover both cases in which you buy it or make it. In example (52), *solve* was used to mean *open,* but these two verbs do not look relevant until we take the contrastive view. In Korean, *solve* as in *solve the problem* and *open* as in *open the present* have the same phonetic form, /*pulda*/. This presents evidence that the same phonetic form of translation equivalents may create confusion between those two words. *Recommend* in (53) may well be influenced by a Korean verb /*gωənhada*/, which implies *giving somebody something to eat*. But *recommend* has different range of meaning from /*gωənhada*/ which can be translated as *offer* in English. Example (54) is the direct translation of *make bed*. In example (55), *right to the left* and *side by side* were used instead of binominal *back and forth*. In Korean, *back and forth* was perceived as an adverb phrase used for describing vertical movement not horizontal one. This cultural difference in perception of directionality might lead to errors, thus all students used either *right to the left* or *side by side*.

To sum up, most errors discussed so far in this section arise from the students' application of one of the Korean meanings to the target semantic area that is not covered by the specific word the students chose. Most cases can be avoided by increasing collocational knowledge and providing the chances of using it.

Ⅴ. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the use of common verb phrases by Korean college students. The analysis has shown that even for advanced learners, these high-frequency verb phrases create problems. One third of produced verb phrases were inappropriate for the context and the most frequently occurred errors were overextension of a few general verbs. The students used these general verbs like *get, take, put* representing unmarked features within their respective semantic field instead of specific verbs.

It is not quite clear what induced these students' heavy reliance on the core meaning of general verbs. It would be a deficit of lexical knowledge or word retention problems. If it is lack of knowledge problem, the students need detailed classroom vocabulary work on *simpler* looking verbs by using dictionaries. They need to explore sub-meaning of verbs, collocation possibilities and restrictions. In addition, use of specific words needs to be encouraged in the classroom. For advanced learners, as Lennon (1996) stated, qualitative approach is required rather than quantitative.

When the problem is concerned with word retention, the problem becomes complicated because many psychological factors get involved in the process. In terms of classroom instruction, focus should be given on the method of word presentation. A verb phrase should be presented as an inseparable unit not as a collection of separate words. Pedagogic value of vocabulary consisting of a sequence of two or more words has been recognized by many studies (Moon, 1997: 43). When a lexical phrase stored as a chunk in the lexicon, it may be easily retrieved as a unit in the time of use.

L1 influence was not the major source of inappropriate use of verbs although it was not insignificant, either. L1 semantic mediation in L2 word acquisition will continue when a L2 word is integrated in its entry and L1 information is discarded (Jiang, 2004). However, many words may stop before they reach the final stage and L1 lemma mediation may become a steady state of lexical processing in advanced L2 learners. To help the students overcome L1 semantic involvement in L2 word learning, deliberate instructional intervention may be needed. Specially, when learners need to understand the differences between a L2 word and its L1 translation, or two L2 words share the same L1 translation, contrastive analysis approach may play a major role.

Considering the central role of verbs in the acquisition of grammar, and the close relationship between the number of verbs and a general increase in lexical richness (Viberg, 1993), teaching verbs should be conducted on the grammar-vocabulary interface. If the use of high-frequency verbs displays inaccuracy even at an advanced level, there should be some pedagogic argument for the progress of situation. The development of semantic criteria is required to make learners aware the semantic differences between one verb class from a semantically related one. While it would be neither possible nor pedagogically sound to make the students aware the every detail of all verbs, selective instructional intervention and learning strategies might optimize the acquisition of verbs.

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Examples in : English
Applicable languages: English
Applicable level: college, secondary

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