Errors in Korean Descriptive Compositions Written by Learners from a Different Language Family and the Directions of Teaching Improvement

Jiraporn Janjula

Abstract

This research aimed to study errors in Korean descriptive compositions written by Thai learners whose language belongs to a different family from that of Korean, causes of such errors and ways to improve the teaching of Korean. The instruments used to collect the data were a test, an open-ended questionnaire, and an in-depth interview form.

The results showed that Thai learners of Korean made errors in grammar the most (42.73%), followed by errors in vocabulary (36.75%), with errors in orthography as the least frequent (20.52%). The four main causes of errors were the learners’ problem (88.9%), difficulty and complexity of the Korean language (44.4%), mother tongue interference (22.2%) and time limitation (11.1%). The teaching methods that should be employed to solve the learners’ problem in Korean writing include the employment of eclectic methods suitable for the teaching of different content and students’ individuality and avoiding the comparison between Korean and Thai or other languages.

Keywords: error, Korean education, Korean as a foreign language, Korean descriptive writing

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของบทความวิจัยนี้คือ เพื่อศึกษาข้อผิดพลาดในงานเขียนภาษาเกาหลีแบบพรรณนาของผู้เรียนชาวไทยซึ่งเป็นผู้เรียนจากภาษาต่างตระกูล สาเหตุของข้อผิดพลาดเหล่านั้นและแนวทางการพัฒนาการสอน เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้คือ แบบทดสอบ แบบสอบถามปลายเปิดและแบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก
ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้เรียนชาวไทยมีข้อผิดพลาดด้านไวยากรณ์มากที่สุดเป็นอันดับแรก (42.73%) ด้านคำศัพท์เป็นอันดับที่สอง (36.75%) และด้านอักษรชื่อว่าเป็นอันดับที่สาม (20.52%) โดยมีสาเหตุหลัก 4 ประการ ได้แก่ ปัญหานี้จากตัวผู้เรียน (88.9%) ความยากและซับซ้อนของภาษาเกาหลี (44.4%) อิทธิพลของภาษาแม่ (22.2%) และอื่นๆได้แก่ข้อจำกัดเรื่องเวลา (11.1%) และวิชาที่สอนที่ฟังประสงค์เพื่อแก้ปัญหาเรื่องข้อผิดพลาดในการเขียนภาษาเกาหลีได้แก่ ผู้สอนควรเป็นผู้สอนที่ดีสม่ำเสมอ หลากหลายวิธี และแตกต่างกันไปตามเนื้อหาและลักษณะเฉพาะของผู้เรียน และไม่ควรเป็นผู้สอนที่สอนซ้ำๆเหมือนกันภาษาไทยหรือภาษาอื่น

คำสำคัญ: ข้อผิดพลาด การเรียนการสอนภาษาเกาหลี ภาษาเกาหลีในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ การเขียนภาษาเกาหลีแบบพรรณนา

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Introduction

Korean is a significant language in terms of world economy nowadays since Korea has the strongest economy among the Asian countries in this century and hence, has influence upon world economy. It is an important language in business, especially trade and tourism. Thai people are also aware of the importance of the Korean language and are interested in it since there are many Korean companies investing in Thailand. The trade between the two countries has continually increased in volume, resulting in Korean having become even more important. This, together with the Korean Wave which widely spreads and becomes popular all over Asia and Europe, has made Thai people interested in the Korean language and culture, resulting in apparently increasing number of people taking up Korean language in schools. This, in turn, prompts educational institutions both public and private to try to offer courses in the Korean language to serve the needs of the society and to produce the workforce for Thailand and Korea. At present, there are around 11 universities offering Korean as a major subject: Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), Burapha University, Silapakorn University, Mahasarakham University, Srinakharinwirot University, Rajabhat Chiangmai University, Naraesuan University, Prince of Songkla University (Phuket Campus), University of Thai Chamber of Commerce, Uttaradit Rajabhat University and Rajabhat Chiangrai University. There are about 3 universities offering Korean as a minor one and many more as foreign language electives in Thailand. (An, 2016)

In learning Korean or any foreign language, learners need to practice all four macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Though the four skills are intertwined, both students and teachers have the same opinion that writing skill is the last skill that students can master since it is the most difficult and complex. This is in line with To-wong (2005) who suggested that “A good writer needs to have the other three skills as a basis to be able to write and carry the message across correctly, appropriately and accurately”.

Writing skill, especially in Korean, is the most difficult one for Thai learners to master since the language is from a different language family from that of Thai\(^2\). It has different language structures and thus could cause errors in Thai learners’ Korean writing. This is in concordance with Lee’s research (2008) which studied errors made by 95 beginner learners of Korean from 23 countries and found that errors in writing were the most frequent errors made. The types of errors made arranged by the frequency of occurrences were inflections showing parts of speech (36.62%), vocabulary (21.36%) and pronunciation (9.05%) Moreover, the correct and appropriate choice of words and expressions is also one of the problems Thai learners always face.

\(^2\) Korean is a language in Ural-Altaic Family. It is an agglutinative language with inflections (Jung, 1993) whereas Thai is in Sino-Tibetian Family and an isolating language like Chinese and Burmese (Khanitthanan, 1983).
Korean writing is crucial for all taking the TOPIK II\textsuperscript{3} Test since it requires the test takers to write an essay and they usually gain lower marks than other sections of the test. The researcher as a teacher of Korean with almost 20 years of experience, thus, is interested in studying errors made by Thai learners in their Korean writing, causes of those errors and ways to improve the teaching of Korean. This information should be beneficial in the improvement and development of Korean language teaching in Thailand, especially in terms of writing skills.

Study

Objectives

1) To study errors in Korean descriptive writing made by Thai learners studying Korean in Thailand
2) To study the causes of errors made
3) To find ways to improve the teaching of Korean writing

Definition of terms

“Errors” means incorrect patterns or structures in Korean which occur repeatedly despite the fact that the learner have already been taught.

Scope of the study

1) Grammar: In this study, five areas of structures or rules in Korean are studied.
   1.1) Particles showing part of speech
       These are words showing the functions of each part of a sentence to emphasize the function of the sentence and make the sentence meaning clearer. The following twenty words are studied.
       1.1.1) Twelve case particles showing the function of function words: 이/가, -을/를, -에(도착점), -에(장소), -에(시간), -에서(장소), -에서(출발점), -으로(to), -으로(by), -한테/에게, -의, -에(단체)
       1.1.2) Six auxiliary particles showing the functions of helping words: -도, -은/는, -에서, -부터, -까지, -만
       1.1.3) Two connective particles showing the functions of connectors: -하고(같이), -와/과(같이)
   1.2) Conjunctive endings at the end of the connectors are endings which join one sentence to another. Fourteen endings of this type were studied: -고, -아/어/여서, -(으)면, -지만, -(으)니까, -ㄴ/은/는데, -(으)려고, -(으)면서, -다가, -아/어/여 도, -자마자, -(으)려면

\textsuperscript{3} TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) is the test of Korean as a Foreign Language for foreigners in Korea and learners of the Korean language in other countries all over the world.
1.3) Tenses means the time of the event as related to the time the speaker speaks: present tense, past tense and future tense.

1.4) Politeness means words showing the speaker’s and listener’s social status: politeness affixes, and polite words.

1.5) Word order means Korean word order according to Korean structure and grammar.

2) Vocabulary means words or phrases used in Korean which must be correct according to Korean grammar, context and culture. It does not include slangs.

3) Orthography means writing method and the use of writing system according to Korean grammar. This study concentrated only on spelling and punctuation and excluded space-leaving.

Research methods

This study was both qualitative and quantitative, using 3 tests, a test, an open-ended questionnaire and an in-depth interview form to collect the data. The details are as follows

1) Subjects

Eighteen Thai students aged 18-22 years who have studied Korean for 100 hours and are learning Korean offered in a university in Thailand. They are beginners and studying Korean as a foreign language.

2) Data collection

The subjects took 2 tests, one after the completion of 4th and another after the 8th week teaching and responded to an open-ended questionnaire and attended an in-depth interview after the second test.

3) Data analysis

The tests were marked by 2 Korean experts and then the errors were collected, categorized and calculated in terms of percentage. The information from the open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interviews were analyzed and calculated also in terms of percentage.

Results

Errors Types

The results showed that errors in the two assignments written by Thai learners consisted of errors in grammar (42.73%), vocabulary (36.75%) and orthography (20.52%). The results were in line with the information gained from the open-ended questionnaire and the in-depth interview. Concerning the inquiries about the most difficult skill in their opinion, the results were respectively writing (38.9%), listening (33.3%), speaking (27.8%) and reading (0%). The subjects also added
that writing was the most difficult because good writing requires accurate grammar and vocabulary. What is more, Korean grammar is more complicated than Thai grammar, making it difficult to understand, remember and use appropriately. Results concerning each aspects of Korean writing area as follows.

1) Grammar errors

Errors in grammar studied in this research covered 5 areas and the frequencies of errors were as follows: particles showing the part of speech of a word (69.23%), tenses (12.4%), politeness (7.74%), conjunctive endings (5.9%) and word order (4.73%).

The findings revealed that particles showing part of speech are the most problematic to Thai learners. From the in-depth interview, it was revealed that the cause of such errors were the differences between Thai and Korean since there were no particles showing parts of speech in Thai but in Korean, this type of particles is in quite a complex system.

1.1) Particles showing part of speech

Errors found in the study included missing particles and wrong substitution as a result of not adding particles to show part of speech, or putting words in the wrong position. Examples are shown in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>나는 친구 영화를 봐요.</td>
<td>나는 친구와 같이 영화를 봐요.</td>
<td>-Missing particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>저는 그 친구 사랑해요.</td>
<td>저는 그 친구를 사랑해요.</td>
<td>-Missing particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>제 아버지는 아주 좋고 친절하세요.</td>
<td>제 아버지는 아주 좋은 친절하세요.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>언니는 사과와 수박만을 좋아해요.</td>
<td>언니는 사과와 수박만 좋아해요.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2) Conjunctive endings

The subjects' writing assignments suggested that the learners did not try to use conjunctive endings and still made many mistakes despite having been taught. Most sentences were simple, short and lacked appropriate conjunctive endings.
The interview revealed that the problem resulted from the learners’ lack of confidence, familiarity and carelessness in using the conjunctive endings since there are a lot of conjunctive endings in Korean and the conditions of use are quite complicated. Learners, thus, become confused and unconfident in using them. Errors in this category usually resulted from wrong substitution, i.e. putting conjunctive endings in the wrong place. Examples are shown in Table 2 below.

### Table 2  Examples of errors in conjunctive endings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>저는 한국 회사에서 일할 수 있으면 노력하겠습니다.</td>
<td>저는 한국 회사에서 일할 수 있도록 노력하겠습니다.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구는 공부를 잘 해서 저를 자주 가르쳤어요.</td>
<td>그 친구는 공부를 잘 하니까 저를 자주 가르쳤어요.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>제 친구는 예쁜 여자와 똑똑합니다.</td>
<td>제 친구는 예쁘고 똑똑합니다.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>말이 없으면 알 수 있습니다.</td>
<td>말이 없어도 알 수 있습니다.</td>
<td>-Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3) Tenses

Errors in this category found in this study were of only one type: the wrong use of tenses. The subjects usually used past tense instead of present tense or vice versa. The errors occurred in both phrase and sentence levels. This is influenced by their mother tongue as can be seen in Table 3 below.

### Table 3  Examples of errors in tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence/phrases with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence/phrases</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>지금 제 언니는 예뻤어요.</td>
<td>지금 제 언니는 예뻐요. My sister is beautiful.</td>
<td>-Using past tense instead of present tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>지금 여동생은 잠이야.</td>
<td>지금 여동생은 자요 My little sister is sleeping.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>지금 한국어를 공부하고 있어요</td>
<td>지금 한국어를 공부하고 있어요 I am studying Korean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구는 재미있었어요.</td>
<td>그 친구는 재미있는 사람이에요 That friend of mine is fun.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>여동생은 요리한 것을 좋아해요.</td>
<td>여동생은 요리하는 것을 좋아해요 My little sister likes cooking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구는 정말 잘 생겼어요.</td>
<td>그 친구는 정말 잘 생겼어요 That friend of mine is handsome.</td>
<td>-Using present simple tense instead of past simple tense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4) Politeness

Korean attaches importance to politeness rather a lot; hence, it is necessary for the learners of Korean to be very careful in using politeness affixes and polite words to use. Errors in this category were found to be of 3 types: missing words, wrong substitution and inappropriate use of words. The data from the interview indicated that the main reason for these errors was learners’ problem such as carelessness, forgetfulness, temporary confusion, etc. Examples are given below.

Table 4  Examples of errors in politeness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence/phrases with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence/phrases</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>저와 너는 라면을 아주 좋아하세요.</td>
<td>저와 그 친구는 라면을 아주 좋아하세요. That friend of mine and I like instant noodles very much.</td>
<td>-Inappropriate use of words -Wrong substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>저는 기숙사에 있고 아버님은 독에 있어요.</td>
<td>저는 기숙사에 있고 아버님은 독에 계세요. I am at my dorm and my dad is at home.</td>
<td>-Inappropriate use of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>어머님이 한국 음식을 자주 먹어요.</td>
<td>어머님이 한국 음식을 자주 드세요. Mom often has Korean food.</td>
<td>-Inappropriate use of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>내년쯤 아버님께 한국에 가겠어요.</td>
<td>내년쯤 아버님께 한국에 가시겠어요. Dad will go to Korea around next year.</td>
<td>-Missing words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5) Word order

In the in-depth interviews, all subjects indicated that Korean has both fixed and free word order so they could make mistakes if they were careless. With the influence of their mother tongue, the subjects in this study continuously made mistakes in word order. Examples are given below.

Table 5  Examples of errors in word order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence/phrases with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence/phrases</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>우리 가까이 집에 있었습니.</td>
<td>우리 집에 가까이 있었습니. Our houses were near each other's.</td>
<td>-Wrong order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구를 만나 자주 같이 영화를 봐요.</td>
<td>그 친구를 만나 자주 같이 영화를 봐요. I meet and go to the movie with that friend of mine often.</td>
<td>-Wrong order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>저는 아주 친구가 1명 좋아 있어요.</td>
<td>저는 아주 좋은 친구가 1명 있어요. I have one really good friend.</td>
<td>-Wrong order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Vocabulary errors

Vocabulary is the second most serious problem to Thai learners. The analysis of their writing revealed that there are three types of errors in vocabulary: wrong choice of word, wrong
word addition, and missing words. The two main causes of these errors, as revealed by the interview, were the learners’ problem, i.e. they lacked understanding in the use of vocabulary and their mother tongue influence. Examples are presented in Table 6.

Table 6  Examples of errors in vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence/phrases with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence/phrases</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>우리 가족은 언제 행복이 있어요.</td>
<td>우리 가족은 언제나 행복해요.</td>
<td>-Missing words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구는 이유가 있는 사람에요.</td>
<td>그 친구는 합리적인 사람에요.</td>
<td>-Wrong words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>여동생은 학교 때에 양말을 안 입어요.</td>
<td>여동생은 학교에 갈 때 양말을 안 싶어요.</td>
<td>-Wrong words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>누나는 쇼핑을 잘 하고 있어요.</td>
<td>누나는 쇼핑을 잘 해요.</td>
<td>-Wrong addition of words -Wrong words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Orthography errors

Errors in orthography are ranked last among errors frequently made by Thai learners. Errors in this category were of 2 types: misspelling and wrong conjugation. From the interview, it was found that these errors stemmed from carelessness or wrong memorization and the insufficient time available to practice and remember the language learned. Examples of these are shown in the table below.

Table 7  Examples of errors in orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence/phrases with errors</th>
<th>Correct sentence/phrases</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>저는 공항에 가고 싶어요.</td>
<td>저는 공항에 가고 싶어요. I want to visit my hometown.</td>
<td>-Misspelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>제 아버지는 친절한 사람입니다.</td>
<td>제 아버지는 친절한 사람입니다. My father is a kind person.</td>
<td>-Misspelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>할아버님은 집에 계세요.</td>
<td>할아버지님은 집에 계세요. My grandfather is at home.</td>
<td>-Misspelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>그 친구는 한국 노래를 자주 듣어요.</td>
<td>그 친구는 한국 노래를 자주 듣어요. That friend of mine often listens to Korean songs.</td>
<td>-Wrong conjugation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Causes of errors

The results of the in-depth interview and open-ended questionnaire showed that there were 4 main causes of errors in Korean writing ranging from the most frequent to the least as follows: learners’ problems (88.9%), difficulty and complexities of Korean (44.4%), interference of the mother tongue (22.2%) and other problems (11.1%) which included time limitation. Learners’
problems included carelessness, forgetfulness, and absent-mindedness, etc. As for the difficulties and complexities of the Korean language, the subjects agreed that Korean has specific features which are very different from those of Thai and so difficult to understand, remember and use correctly and appropriately. When inquired about their opinion about their mother tongue interference, they ranked the degree of interference from the highest to the lowest as follows: high (44.4%), medium (38.9%), highest (11.1%), low (5.6%). Apart from these, 72.2% of the learners indicated that their mother tongue interference had both positive and negative influence on their Korean language learning. While only 27.8% thought that there was positive influence, none thought that the influence was only negative. Apart from these, time limitation was the problem the subjects faced in general since in learning Korean a lot of time is needed in comprehending and remembering the language due to its complexities and difficulties. The subjects had to spend much time to prepare for class and revise what have been learned in order to do well so they felt that they did not have enough time.

Desirable teaching methods

The responses to the open-ended questions and the in-depth interview showed that the subjects all agreed that they want to be taught by more than one method when studying different aspects of the language and even an aspect of the language. Eclectic methods should be used to help them to be able to avoid making errors. Moreover, they wanted the teachers to choose different teaching methods to suit the content and their specific characteristics and they also needed encouragement in learning from the teacher by helping them build motivation. In addition to that, most indicated that they would like to see teachers bringing the state-of-the-art media which are interesting and fun such as hit plays or songs to their teaching. This should be able to help them learn with enjoyment and hence, learn better.

The teaching methods that the subjects agreed would be appropriate in teaching different language aspects to make learning effective and prevent them from making errors were as follows.

Table 8 Desirable teaching methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Orthography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Explanation with many example sentences</td>
<td>1) Explanation with many example sentences</td>
<td>1) Explanation with many example sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Giving appropriate feedback</td>
<td>2) Frequent practicum and activities in class</td>
<td>2) Frequent practicum and activities in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Teaching the easier points first and repeating the explanation in the case of difficult grammar points</td>
<td>3) Teaching the easier points first and repeating the explanation in the case of difficult grammar points</td>
<td>3) Frequent testing in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, the subjects added that when teaching, teachers should focus on Korean only because it has specific features. Comparing it to Thai or other languages may even make learners more confused. Unnecessary comparison could sometimes make learners focus on points of difficulty which may not be important. All in all, comparison can result in confusion rather than understanding.

Discussion

Errors in Korean writing

For Thai learners whose mother tongue is from a different family from that of Korean, grammar is the most difficult and problematic, followed by vocabulary and orthography respectively. Errors in these three aspects have different features and causes. Hence, teachers should give these facts priorities when considering which methods to use in teaching them and avoid those that may make the learning even more problematic to the learners.

Grammar

The difficulties and complexities of Korean grammar, coupled with the mother tongue interference make Thai learners hesitate, confused and unconfident in putting Korean grammar into use, resulting in errors and learners’ bad attitude. Errors in grammar, especially particles can be found in many different forms: wrong substitution, missing, wrong order and inappropriate use of words. As particles showing parts of speech seem to be a severe grammatical problem for Thai learners which urgently need to be solved, teachers need to take an active role in solving the problem. Teachers need to lay a solid ground about this grammar point, making certain that learners understand the functions and meanings of these affixes in a sentence. Besides, they need to find the teaching techniques suitable for the specific group of learners so that the learners can acquire the knowledge about it and put it into use correctly and appropriately as this is one of the most important types of particles in Korean (Lee, 2008).

Vocabulary

Since Korean vocabulary has specific features and use that are different from those in Thai, they often result in errors when Thai learners attempt to use them. Errors in vocabulary use include wrong choice of word, missing word and wrong addition of word. To solve this problem, teachers need to use various methods, techniques and processes in making the learners accurately remember words and use them appropriately in different situations. Vocabulary is the basis of all communications. Hence, instilling knowledge and solving problems about it is crucial and cannot be overlooked.
Orthography

Korean orthography system is different from that of Thai and has specific features, making it difficult for Thai learners to learn. Errors in this aspect include misspelling and wrong conjugation. Though errors in this category are the least frequently found which implies that they are not a serious problem for Thai learners, the researcher feels that for beginners, orthography is the most important since it involves the understanding about forms and specific features of the Korean language. If misunderstood, learners usually continue making mistakes which are difficult to eliminate since after having become fossilized. As can be seen, errors of this type were still found so the problem cannot be overlooked. Teachers, thus, should emphasize constant practice both inside and outside of class so that learners become familiar with correct and appropriate use of orthography which will eventually become a solid ground for effective Korean learning.

Causes of errors

Difficulties and complexities of Korean make it difficult for learners to learn; it requires high level of understanding and efficient memory for effective learning. Moreover, interference of the mother tongue which results from the differences between Korean and Thai which are from different language families can result in the learners being likely to forget the structures of Korean and use Thai ones instead. As Carroll (1963) suggested, language habits of the learners will interfere when the learners learn a new language. Similarities in the languages will facilitate learning and vice versa. Furthermore, Spratt, Pulvemess & Williams (2005) claimed that causes of errors second language learners made are of 2 types: L1 interference—possible use of L1 sounds, words and grammar—and developmental errors—errors made by all L2 learners which is part of language development process and will disappear as the learners become more competent in the language. Lee (2008) summarized the situation well that mother tongue interference has both positive and negative influence. Thus, teachers should pay attention to the causes of errors learners make. They should observe the errors, try to understand why they occur, analyze them for possible causes and assess how serious they are. All that information can help teachers design their teaching procedures, giving importance to each and everything—teaching methods, teaching media, content, activities, assessment, classroom atmosphere and learners’ motivation, with learners’ individuality in mind, i.e., their personal characteristics and attitudes. All these need to be considered since effective teaching and learning cannot result without incorporating learner factors into the process.

Desirable teaching methods

The results of the interview and open-ended questionnaire were in concordance with the results found by Spratt et al., (2005) who indicated that, in teaching and learning, teachers
are the managers of activities and learners. Teachers need to act differently in different stages of a lesson. They change their role to suit different classes they teach. The roles they take need to be appropriate for the type of lesson, activity, level and age of the learners. The results of this study suggested that it was not possible to use any one method in teaching; only eclectic methods would be able to solve the problems of errors made. Another finding suggests that to help learners with a mother tongue from a different language family from that of Korean learn effectively, teachers should avoid comparing the two languages or comparing Korean with other languages since specific features of the Korean language may cause confusion in the learners. This is in concordance with George (1972) who suggested that analysis using comparison can make learning more problematic since it may lead them to the insignificant points of difficulty. Thus, teachers should assess the content to be taught and use comparison analysis only as necessary and only when they are confident that the comparison is useful for the teaching and learning.

Apart from that, the subjects of the study also gave importance to motivation building. This is in line with Spratt et al. (2005) who defined motivation as thoughts and feelings which make us want to always do something continuously and to put those thoughts into action. Motivation is crucial in language learning and is a factor in learning success.

**Suggestions for more effective teaching of Korean**

1) Teachers should observe and try to understand errors found in learners’ written work in terms of causes and types of errors. That will help teachers to understand and predict the learners’ problems and hence, be able to choose teaching methods and activities to facilitate their learning process with concerns on individual differences.

2) When teaching Korean grammar, teachers should emphasize understanding, not just memorizing. They should also boost the learners’ motivation by using sentences or phrases that are popular among Korean teens which will make the lesson more attractive to the learners. Giving a lot of examples in various situations can help learners understand better and use the language more correctly and appropriately.

3) In teaching Korean vocabulary, teachers should use various techniques which will help learners learn them more effectively such as word category, synonym and antonym, expanding vocabulary based on those learnt, using antonyms to construct new and interesting sentences, memorizing whole sentences, using rhythm and rhyme to facilitate memorization, etc.
4) To teach orthography, teachers should have learners practice writing by hand regularly and continuously, avoiding the use of computer in the beginning stage since computers have the automatic spelling correction and so learners have no chance to do it on their own. Special verb conjugation should be emphasized by having them consistently generate sentences both inside and outside of class in order to instill familiarity with correct forms in them.

Conclusion

This research suggested that learners whose mother tongue is from a different language family naturally will make errors in Korean writing in all three aspects: grammar, vocabulary and orthography. This is especially true with grammar which can be considered the most important problem to Thai learners. The most crucial factors in eliminating or reducing errors are teachers and their role in teaching. They need to observe and analyze errors made by their learners and choose appropriate methods for the content and the characteristics of the learners. They should focus on Korean and avoid comparing it to the learners’ mother tongue or other languages so as not to cause confusion to them. All these will lead to more effective teaching of Korean.

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