The Impact of Cognitive Style on Errors in English Writing Through Extensive Reading: A Case Study

Jin-In Seo

(International Graduate School of English)


This case study investigates the impact of cognitive style (field in/dependence) on errors in English writing through extensive reading (ER). It explores different possibilities between two field-independent (FI) and field-dependent (FD) learners through ER, and it considers the types of errors (interlanguage or intralingual) that they are more likely to commit. The participants were two Korean female high school students with different cognitive styles. To ascertain their respective cognitive styles, the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) was conducted. The participants were asked to write a reading log once a week for six months. Data analyses were performed by two raters, and for further qualitative analysis, Nvivo 10 was used. The results showed that ER was more beneficial to the FI learner with regard to writing proficiency, and both the FI and FD learners committed considerable interlanguage errors. Furthermore, there were similarities and discrepancies between the FI and FD learners as a result of the ER treatment in interlanguage error change.

**Key words:** classification of errors, cognitive style of field independence and dependence, extensive reading, L2 writing

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing errors can be very significant in that they may play a crucial role in assessing how far learners have progressed in language learning. As a result, researchers have studied learner errors in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (e.g., Bhela, 1999; Chan, 2004; Kang, 2008; Thep-Ackrapong, 2005; White, 1977). Nevertheless, additional error analysis studies are required. In particular, apropos to Korean learners of English, more detailed research on mother tongue related errors is needed as Korean learners study English in an EFL context. This context results in Korean learners having less exposure to
English than their first language (L1), which creates hindrances for Korean learners in trying to achieve native-like speaking fluency.

Furthermore, Korean high school students have few opportunities to assess their writing ability. This is probably because they receptively learn English through grammar-focused writing instruction in preparation for the college scholastic ability test (CSAT), which consists of listening and reading comprehension questions. In other words, English teachers in Korea spend much time teaching English grammar in class, assuming that such grammar instruction would help their students understand the given contexts well. As a result, high school students in Korea have more opportunities to learn English receptively than productively.

In order for learners to reduce their errors in English, learners should explore authentic materials through methods such as extensive reading (ER). ER, a representative implicit learning activity, can supply comprehensive input; thus, researchers have corroborated the effectiveness of ER pertaining to English writing ability (e.g., Bang, 2012; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Kim, 2002; H.-Y. Lee, 2013; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Seo, 2011).

There is, however, an issue with the aforementioned studies that the present study has attempted to remedy. Studies regarding ER, such as those cited above, have neglected the different cognitive styles of various learners and the fact that such differences may have an effect on the results of learning. Thus, a study to correct this deficiency is needed.

Since the nineteenth century, studies on field independent-dependent (FI/D) cognitive styles have been widely conducted. Such cognitive styles have been incorporated into various fields such as SLA (e.g., Abraham, 1985; Ahmady & Yamini, 1992; Alptekin & Atakan, 1990; Mahvelati & Mukundan, 2012; Sabet & Mohammedi, 2013; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006; Suh, 2009; Tinajero & Páramo, 1998; Yousefi, 2011). FD style learners take a holistic approach to input, whereas FI learners perceive embedded information in distracting situations (Brown, 2007).

Hence, learners’ cognitive style should be taken into account when the efficacy of a certain treatment of errors is concerned. ER does not explicitly offer information to learners; therefore, although learners are extensively exposed to the target language (TL), they may not give attention to the specific features of the TL. Often they are asked to read and understand books they have chosen by themselves. Consequently, the key to successful language learning may be how learners process information. Thus, a pedagogical study addressing this issue is needed in order to recommend effective means of reducing English errors generated by Korean learners.

The present study aims to investigate the impact of cognitive style on errors in English writing through ER. The research questions are as follows:
1) Is there any difference in writing proficiency as a result of ER between field-independent and field-dependent learners?
2) Which errors between interlanguage and intralingual do FI and FD learners, respectively, commit more often?
3) Are there any similarities and/or differences in the changes in error patterns between field-independent and field-dependent learners’ interlanguage as a result of ER?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In learning a language, errors inevitably occur; thus, reducing errors may be very important. To reduce errors, ER may be an effective method, yet depending on the learners’ cognitive styles, the results can vary. In this chapter, a review of literature regarding errors, ER, and cognitive styles will be addressed.

2.1. Errors and L2 Writing

According to Corder (1967), there are methodologically two schools of thought with regard to learner errors. One claim is that if students learned in a perfect manner, the occurrence of errors would be eliminated from the start. The other school maintains that learners unwillingly commit errors as a consequence of living in an incomplete world. For this reason, students need to pay attention to methods that treat errors after they commit errors. Regardless of whichever school of thought is correct, the occurrence of errors should be taken seriously. Moreover, in terms of examining learners’ errors, speaking and writing, as productive skills, can be useful in identifying the errors learners generate.

2.1.1. Significance of errors in writing

James (1998) stated that an error is the form planned in use by a learner who is unable to correct his or her fault. Corder (1967) noted that the difference between “systematic” (errors) and “non-systematic errors” (mistakes) is significant; linguistic performance errors are referred to as “unsystematic,” and linguistic competence errors as “systematic” (pp. 24-25). He further claimed that errors offer information on the language system that learners are using at a specific stage of their language development. Thus, it seems vital for teachers, researchers, publishers, materials developers, and learners themselves, to know what follow-up actions they can take after errors occur, because as Corder (1967) stated, learners’ learning processes can be expressly revealed through errors.
In other words, errors serve the role of signposting the learning process, showing how far learners have progressed in learning, and which direction students should take to arrive their destination of becoming successful language learners. Corder’s (1967) statement (as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) has shown the significance of learners’ errors in three ways:

1. They serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not yet mastered;
2. They serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned;
3. They serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language (i.e., by obtaining feedback on their errors).

For those reasons, a number of studies on learners’ errors have been conducted (e.g., Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Maros, Hua, & Salehuddin, 2007; Sattayatham & Ratanapinyawong, 2008; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Zheng & Park, 2013). The causes for and types of errors each individual reveals, however, vary, and, therefore, to solve these conundrums, more varied research regarding errors is needed.

2.1.2. Classification of errors

As noted above, the types of errors learners make are not exactly congruent; therefore, different taxonomies of errors have been proposed by researchers. Richards (1971) proposed three error types: 1) interlanguage errors, 2) intralingual errors, and 3) developmental errors. Interlanguage errors are generated by the interruption of the learner’s native language, whereas intralingual errors are “those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply” (p. 174). Developmental errors are caused in the process of learners’ acquisition of the TL. Such errors are generated due to a lack of exposure to the TL when learners try to formulate hypotheses about it (Richards, 1971). The differences between intralingual and developmental errors are, however, sometimes ambiguous (Schachter & Celce-Murcia, 1977), and thus in this study, they are treated as one category.

James (1998) specified four types of errors by linguistic category: level, class, rank, and system. Level indicates where the error is situated among “phonology, graphology, grammar, lexis, text or discourse,” and provided that something is designated as a grammar error, it includes “the class of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, proposition, conjunction, determiner” (p. 105). Rank indicates “the hierarchy of units that constitute its level,” and the error impact on the grammatical system can be divided several ways: “tense, number,
voice, countability, transitivity” (p. 105).

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) divided errors into four types. They are as follows: omission, additions (addition, double markings, regularization, and simple addition), misformations (misformation, regularization errors, archi-forms, and alternating forms), and misordering, all of which are included in the surface strategy taxonomy.

2.2. ER and Writing in L2

Reading is an effective means of language learning, while writing is a useful measure of how well a learner has progressed. Therefore, in order to succeed in language learning, learners require not only much reading, but also attempting to write about what they have learned. According to Krashen (1985), success in acquiring a language is ascribed to comprehensible input. Thus, learners should choose reading materials which are appropriate to their levels. Swain (2005) maintained that learners may recognize their linguistic shortcomings when they fail to deliver messages in the TL clearly, and, as a result, this recognition might draw their attention to related input they need about language. That is, while writing, learners recognize their lack of knowledge about the TL, and this recognition might lead learners to try to expose themselves to more TL input.

2.2.1. Benefits of ER

Extensive reading can be considered a self-customized learning method. This is because learners are able to choose individual material appropriate for their language levels to improve language fluency, and, depending on their personal interests which might result in further study.

As for language proficiency, several researchers have discussed the positive impact of ER on reading comprehension (e.g., Arnold, 2009; Kargar, 2012), on vocabulary learning (e.g., Guo, 2012; Horst, 2005), and on writing (e.g., S.-Y. Lee, 2005; Nation, 1997); further, researchers have confirmed that ER affects reading, vocabulary learning, and writing in a positive way. Thus, ER facilitates learners’ success in language learning.

Mason and Krashen (1997) investigated whether ER could help reluctant EFL learners. The result showed that ER leads to significant improvements in learners’ viewpoints on reading. Nation (1997) also pointed out that ER benefits learners with respect to enhancing pleasurable language learning. Hence, through ER, learners become motivated to read more and discover the joy of studying.
2.2.2. Relevance of ER to L2 writing

In the past, reading and writing researchers studied these domains separately, and they did not interact with each other’s findings. This paradigm has, however, changed, and an increasing number of researchers have argued that reading is foundational to writing.

Several researchers have maintained that ER affects children’s writing ability. The period of each study varied from two months to twenty months, yet every research study has found that ER positively influences young learners’ writing ability (Bang, 2012; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Kim, 2002).

Seo (2011) studied whether ER programs would improve middle school students’ writing proficiency. The study was conducted during one semester, and ER proved to positively affect the participants’ writing skills. Likewise, H.-Y. Lee (2013) studied the influence of ER on secondary students’ writing ability, and his research showed that ER improves writing proficiency.

Based on a study conducted by Mason and Krashen (1997), previously reluctant Japanese university writing students who wrote summaries surpassed earlier gains on a cloze test and achieved greater writing speed after a semester of ER. In addition, Mason’s (2003) study found that gains were made in grammar accuracy through ER. He concluded that error correction does not relate to improved language proficiency, but ER alone leads to enhanced grammar precision. Through the literature review, it appears important to integrate ER and L2 writing regardless of learner age.

2.3. Cognitive Style and SLA

Individuals are multifaceted and have unique and diverse characteristics. Likewise, each learner has a different cognitive style. Many cognitive psychologists have studied the intelligence of learners and how they perceive information when learning.

2.3.1. Definitions of cognitive style and field in/dependence

The study of cognitive styles emerged in the 19th century, and many researchers have since defined them variously. According to Dörnyei (2005), “cognitive styles are usually defined as an individual’s preferred and habitual modes of perceiving, remembering, organizing, processing, and representing information” (p. 124). Moreover, Ausburn and Ausburn (1978) formulated cognitive style as a term to describe how learners perceive and handle information.

Brown (2007) has defined field dependence and independence (FD/I) cognitive styles as follows: FD, or “field sensitivity,” means that individuals need to concentrate on the whole
picture of information, and, therefore, it is not easy for them to recognize items embedded in the surrounding situation. On the other hand, FI learners can perceive specific, related information from within a distracting situation. However, it may lead to “cognitive tunnel vision” (p. 121). FI learners may not recognize the whole because they merely perceive the parts. In addition, Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) stated that FD/I are the most broadly studied “cognitive controls” (p. 87). Therefore, many researchers have attempted to study correlations between FD/I and language teaching and learning in the field of education.

2.3.2. Relation between field in/dependence and SLA

Two differing perspectives exist on the relationship between field in/dependence (FI/D) and SLA. Scholars such as Ellis (1994) and Griffiths and Sheen (1992) have maintained that no relation exists between FI/D and L2 learning. Park and Min (2012) have also concluded that no significant difference exists between field independent and dependent learners in English writing ability. Dörnyei (2005) has, however, stated that the concept of field dependence and independence initially accelerated second language type research, and such style research has received the most attention in the SLA field. Many researchers have since conducted studies to ascertain the relevance of FI/D to L2 learning.

Mahvelati and Mukundan (2012) conducted a study of the relevance of FI/D cognitive style to acquisition of English collocations using the input flood treatment. The result showed that while input flood treatment does not improve knowledge of target collocations in field dependents, for field independent participants, collocation learning improved on both short and long term tests. Suh (2009) confirmed the relation between FI/D cognitive style and the English reading ability of Korean college students. He concluded that field independent learners achieve better than the less field independent students on reading tests.

Research by Sabet and Mohammadi (2013), however, did not concur with Suh’s (2009) results. They stated that, in reading ability, FD students understand topic sentences and comprehensive contexts better than FI readers. Yousefi (2011) studied the interrelationship between FI/D cognitive style and listening skills. The result showed that there is clear relevance of FD cognitive style to listening ability, showing that FI is not related with listening skills.

Thus far, empirical studies on the correlations between errors and L2 writing, the relationships between ER and L2 writing, and the connections between FI/D cognitive style and SLA have been discussed. To the best of our knowledge, however, no research has examined the triangular relationship between errors in writings, ER, and FI/D cognitive style. Therefore, the present study focuses on investigating the relationships among these variables.
3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Participants

The participants for the study were two Korean female high school second graders. Both share the same Korean culture and language background, and neither have experience studying abroad. Further, both students were taught English for a year by the same private teacher twice a week. Through regular lectures, they read English novels for a year and also learned English grammar for six months. Of six students initially selected, the two who showed the most extremely polarized tendencies in FI/D cognitive style were chosen.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Group Embedded Figures Test

To examine the participants’ cognitive styles, a modified version of the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) was administered. Oltman, Raskin, and Witkin (1971) developed the GEFT, which is the most widely used measure of learners’ cognitive styles of field independence or dependence. The revised Korean version of the test consists of three sections. The first section allows learners to become accustomed to the measurement, and the following two sections form the main components of the GEFT. Each main component contains 16 questions, and in each question, simple figures are embedded in more complicated ones. Learners are asked to locate the hidden simple figures within the more complicated forms, and 10 minutes are allocated for each section. According to Jeon and Jang (as cited in Lee & Hwang, 2001), its validity and reliability have been established with a correlation coefficient between the revised test and the Rod and Frame Test (RFT) at .65. According to Jeon and Jang (1979), if learners attain 75% or more on the test, they are regarded as field independent, whereas those at 25% or less are considered field dependent. Participants who can locate simple figures hidden in complex ones comparatively well have a field independent cognitive style, while those who experience difficulty have a field dependent cognitive style.

3.2.2. Reading materials

The participants had been engaged in ER for six months before the study; thus, they were accustomed to choosing English novels according to their preferences as well as language levels. Both had read three unmodified English novels each during the period of the study. Except for one unique book per student, the participants chose the same books.
The researcher asked them their reasons for selecting the same books, and the participants responded that it was because the other’s book looked intriguing. The participants' reading abilities were both at the average second rank\(^1\) on the English practice CSAT tests. The participants thus had a similar reading ability. Their reading list is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>List of Books Read</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| InJu (FI) | Book 1: *The Magician's Nephew* by C. S. Lewis (208 pages, 1994 reprint edition)  
Book 2: *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg (176 pages, 2007 reprint edition)  
| DoHee (FD) | Book 1: *Crazy Lady!* by Jane Leslie Conly (192 pages, 1995 published)  

3.2.3. A reading log

The students were asked to keep a reading log of approximately 60 words in MS Word after reading 20 pages or so once a week for six months. Once completed, the logs were emailed to the researcher each week. Each log comprised a book report and/or a summary. The participants were able to refer neither to the books they read nor dictionaries. The researcher, however, allowed the participants to write reading logs as an assignment to provide a comfortable writing setting because, as Brown (2007) stated, “the construct of anxiety plays a major affective role in second language acquisition” (p. 161). Table 2 shows the sample format of the reading log. The sample participant log is in its original form (i.e., errors have not been corrected).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Format of a Reading Log</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) CSAT has a total of nine ranks, and the lower the rank, the higher the score. The cumulative percentage of the second rank is 11.
3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Two types of data were gathered for this study. First, the participants took the revised GEFT to determine their cognitive style of field dependence or independence. Second, a total of 52 participant reading logs were gathered, and the logs were scored by two raters, one of whom was a native-speaking English teacher, and the other rater was the researcher. The researcher had seven years’ teaching experience and three years’ experience correcting the English writings of Korean high school students. The native teacher, though he had less correcting experience than the researcher, had taught Korean students for approximately four years, and the researcher explained precisely in person the process of error correction. The total number of correct items was counted only when both raters agreed, and the errors were further analyzed with Nvivo 10.

3.4. Error Taxonomy

The errors found in the data of the participants fell into three categories of omission, addition, and misformation, according to the taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). Omission errors “are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance” (p. 154). Addition errors indicate “the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance” and are very different from omission errors (p. 156). Misformation errors, in which students provide something unlike an omission error, even though it might not be correct, can be explained by “the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure” (p. 158).

4. RESULTS

4.1. FI/D Cognitive Styles

The two participants were found to have very different cognitive styles. InJu attained 32 out of 32 questions (100%), and is field independent, while DoHee attained 6 out of 32 (18.75%), and is thus field dependent.

4.2. Impact of ER on Writing Proficiency

In total, 375 errors were identified during the six-month period after either ambiguous or un-interpretable sentences were eliminated. In InJu’s (FI) logs, 231 errors (61.6%) were identified, whereas 144 errors (38.4%) were found in DoHee’s (FD).
4.2.1. Errors identified in writings

The errors identified in the data of each student participant were monitored tri-monthly for six months. Figure 1, Table 3, and Table 4 below show the changes in errors for each participant.

**FIGURE 1**
Changes in the Total Number of Errors

![Graph showing changes in total number of errors over months]

**TABLE 3**
The Number of Errors from March to May (3–5), Adapted from James (1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Errors:</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Errors:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>InJu (FI)</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb Tense</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrong Verb Form</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb Omission</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Object Omission</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S-V Agreement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Possessive Adj./Noun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive Case</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoHee (FD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

132 Total 67
The Number of Errors from June to August (6–8), Adapted from James (1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Errors: InJu (FI) (variation)</th>
<th>Number of Errors: DoHee (FD) (variation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>45 (-14)</td>
<td>23 (+9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Tense</td>
<td>20 (-11)</td>
<td>11 (-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>0 (-4)</td>
<td>0 (-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Verb Form</td>
<td>0 (-4)</td>
<td>5 (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Omission</td>
<td>2 (-1)</td>
<td>6 (+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object Omission</td>
<td>5 (-3)</td>
<td>0 (-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-V Agreement</td>
<td>1 (-)</td>
<td>5 (+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>12 (-2)</td>
<td>15 (+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>9 (+5)</td>
<td>6 (+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>4 (+1)</td>
<td>6 (+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive Case</td>
<td>1 (-)</td>
<td>0 (-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99 (-33)</strong></td>
<td><strong>77 (+10)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

InJu (FI) committed 231 errors in total in the logs from March to August. The identified errors are as follows. A total of 132 errors (57%) in the first three months and 99 errors (43%) in the final three months, respectively, occurred. As shown above, the total number of InJu’s (FI) errors during the first three months sharply decreased, by 14%, compared to that of errors in the final three months. On the other hand, DoHee (FD) had a total number of 144 errors in her logs over the same period. She committed a total of 67 errors (47%) from March to May and 77 errors (53%) from June to August. The number of DoHee’s (FD) errors increased by as much as 6%. Thus, it is noteworthy that ER may not be useful to both types of the learners. More precisely, ER was more beneficial to InJu (FI) than DoHee (FD). While the total number of errors committed by InJu (FI) was reduced, the number of errors by DoHee (FD) increased.

4.3. Interlanguage Errors vs. Intralingual Errors

As noted, interlanguage errors are caused by learners’ L1 influence, and intralingual errors are produced by learners in the process of learning the TL (Richards, 1971). The errors identified in the data can be broadly categorized as interlanguage and intralingual errors, and these can be classified into nine types of interlanguage errors: the omission of articles, objects, and possessive case forms; additional prepositions; and the misformation of prepositions, verb tenses ($A^2$/$B^3$), word choice, and singular/plural (possessive

---

2 Tense misformation (A) indicates the misuse of the present simple tense instead of the past simple tense.

3 Tense misformation (B) indicates the misuse of the past simple tense instead of the past perfect tense.
adj./noun); and 10 types of intralingual errors: omission of verbs and prepositions; additional articles; and the misformation of articles, voice, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses (C⁴/D⁵), and possessive case forms.

InJu (FI) generated 182 interlanguage errors (79%) and 49 intralingual errors (21%). Interlanguage errors occurred approximately four times more than intralingual errors, meaning that InJu (FI) had more difficulty with L1 related errors. On the other hand, with DoHee (FD), 81 interlanguage errors (56%) and 63 intralingual errors (44%), respectively, occurred during the study period. For DoHee (FD), the gap between interlanguage and intralingual errors was not as great as for InJu (FI), yet, analogous to InJu (FI), the number of interlanguage errors was more than for intralingual errors. Such findings imply that regardless of cognitive style, the two Korean learners of English have more interlanguage errors. Thus, since interlanguage errors have been committed more often by both InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD), only interlanguage errors will be discussed in greater detail in 4.4 and 4.5.

4.4. Qualitative Findings on Interlanguage Errors

The interlanguage errors found in the data are shown in the tables below for (a) omission, (b) addition, and (c) misformation, based on the classification suggested by Dulay et al. (1982).

4.4.1. Omission

Omission errors consist of omission of articles, objects, and possessive case forms. Table 5 shows the error frequency for omissions by InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD). The erroneous sentences produced by the participants follow (underlined words represent corrections):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
<th>Frequency of Omission Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Errors: InJu (FI)</td>
<td>Error Typology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Possessive Case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e.g.) She led the two children from the palace to a long corridor.
(InJu, article omission)

4 Tense misformation (C) indicates the misuse of the present perfect tense instead of the past perfect tense.
5 Tense misformation (D) indicates the misuse of the present perfect progressive tense instead of the past simple tense.
Vernon met Mrs. Robinson who was a guidance counselor.

(DoHee, article omission)

The Korean language does not have articles; thus, when Koreans write in English, the omission of articles is quite frequent. In fact, the omission error of articles was identified to be most common in all the error categories for each of the participants.

(e.g.) She saved her small allowance and planned an escape with one of her brother, Jamie.                       (InJu, article and object omissions)

Vernon helped Maxine, and Ronald planted flowers in the garden.

(DoHee, object omission)

For object omissions, Yang (as cited in Woo, 2004) has maintained that if a subject and/or an object are/is known information to the listener, they can be omitted in Korean. For example, A: Did you buy this picture in Paris? B: Yes, (I) bought (it) in Paris. After analyzing the data of the participants, such phenomena were readily found. In another example sentence from InJu (FI), she wrote:

(e.g.) Claudia had an enormous ambition to learn everything in the museum. Jamie knew that was impossible, but they tried to learn it. (object omission)

Omission of the possessive case is labeled an interlanguage error because in Korean it is common not to use the possessive case when the subject of a sentence and the owner of something are the same (e.g., Ga-young lost (her) wallet). The number of its occurrence in this study, however, was only once for each participant; therefore, it cannot be considered “systematic” (Corder, 1967, p. 25), and thus it has not been regarded as an error.6

4.4.2. Addition

Table 6 presents the frequency of addition errors by InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD). Examples of erroneous sentences by the learners are as follows (underlined words are superfluous):

---

6 In the present study, an error is noted if it occurs more than twice.
TABLE 6
Frequency of Addition Error

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Errors: InJu (Fl)</th>
<th>Error Typology</th>
<th>Number of Errors: DoHee (FD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e.g.) (InJu, preposition addition)
When looking around, they found out a statue.
Mrs. Frankwelker contacted with the children’s parents.

(DoHee, preposition addition)
Mike Teavee entered into a television.
Justine was the first person who kissed with Hannah Baker.

In summary, preposition addition errors occur:
(a) if English verbs have the same Korean sense (e.g., find vs. find out)
(b) if English transitive verbs are used as intransitive ones in Korean.
InJu (Fl) wrote that “Mrs. Frankwelker contacted with the children’s parents.” In English, however, with is not used because contact is transitive. Similarly, DoHee (FD) wrote “Mike Teavee entered into a television”; here, into is superfluous because enter is transitive.

In fact, in Korean, postpositions are developed rather than prepositions, unlike in English, and instead of prepositions in English, postpositions are used in Korean. The verbs contact and enter in Korean are usually intransitive, and thus they require the postpositions with and into or other corresponding postpositions such as to, at or on. Many Korean verbs are used differently than in English. Hence, errors of superfluous prepositions in conjunction with verbs are frequently found in Koreans’ English writings.

4.4.3. Misformation

The misformations of verb tense (A/B), prepositions, word choice, and singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) form are labeled interlanguage errors. Table 7 shows the error frequency of the participants’ misformations and sample error sentences (with corrections in parentheses).
TABLE 7

Frequency of Misformation Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Errors: InJu (FI)</th>
<th>Error Typology</th>
<th>Number of Errors: DoHee (FD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Verb Tense (A)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Verb Tense (B)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e.g.) At one o’clock, they reached their destination. There are (were) so many people.

(InJu, verb tense (a) misformation)

Ronald needs (needed) shoes, so Vernon and his family earned money for Ronald.

(DoHee, verb tense (a) misformation)

They found out the statue is (was) an angel and was (had been) moved to another place.

(InJu, preposition omission, verb tense (a) misformation, article omission, verb tense (b) misformation)

They only kissed (had only kissed) with each other, but Justine started a rumor.

(DoHee, verb tense (b) misformation, preposition addition)

In this paper, verb tense includes both tense and aspect. Two types of interlanguage errors have been found in the data: (a) the use of the present simple tense in place of the past simple tense, and (b) the use of the past simple tense instead of the past perfect tense.

The salient feature concerns the overuse of the present simple tense as a substitute for the past simple tense. For InJu (FI), the ratio of overuse was around 78%, and approximately 56% for DoHee (FD), out of all the verb tense errors, including intralingual errors.

(e.g.) The reason why he does (did) it was that Mrs. Lefay was Andrew’s grandmother.

(InJu, verb tense (a) misformation)

The main sentence tense is past simple, but she used the present simple tense despite the action not being regularly repeated. In English, such use is considered ungrammatical.

According to J.-H. Lee (2004), however, tenses in Korean are usually neutralized in a
clause. In other words, Korean allows for using different tenses simultaneously in a sentence.

(e.g.) 내가 준서에게 사탕을 한 상자 주니가 그는 기뻐했다. Because I gave Jun-Seo a box of candy, he was pleased.

While 기뻐했다 is in past simple tense, 주니 is in present simple tense in Korean, unlike English. Such tense neutralization is a distinct feature of the Korean language. Thus, this error can be presupposed to have occurred due to negative L1 influence.

In addition, the ratios for overuse of past simple instead of past perfect for both participants were approximately 6% and 12% each. As for the misuse of the past simple tense, Im (as cited in Park, 2011) noted that unlike the past simple tense in English, the prefinal ending “-었” used to form the Korean past simple tense is also used to express the English past perfect and present perfect tenses. Therefore, the linguistic difference between Korean and English can result in learners substituting the past simple tense for the past perfect tense.

(e.g.) He got out from (of) the water.

(InJu, Preposition misformation, article omission)
Claudia realized that her brother Jamie was very important for (to) her during the trip.

(DoHee, preposition misformation)

Most of the preposition misformation errors are likely to have been caused by L1 interference because the errors occurred between the prepositions with similar Korean meanings. For example, from and of convey the same Korean sense of “-로 부터.” Thus, Korean learners readily confuse these prepositions, especially when they are used in the same meaning.

(e.g.) With strong (great) force, she led the two children from the palace to a long corridor.

(InJu, word choice misformation, article omission, article omission)
People gathered to watch (look at) his gold ticket.

(DoHee, word choice misformation)

In word choice misformation, the participants appeared to commit such errors mainly due to their L1 interference. This is because the adjectives strong and great, the verbs watch and look at, and the prepositions for and to have similar Korean senses, respectively.
(e.g.) Each of them dried their coat (coats) with ten cents.

They went to the library to study that (those) things.

H.-J. Lee (2009) noted that Korean does not always distinguish the singular and plural forms unless absolutely necessary, but English does. Thus, linguistic differences are likely the primary reason why Korean learners of English face hindrances in learning English. Thus far, the author has discussed the qualitative findings on interlanguage errors generated by InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD). Next, a detailed study of how ER affects interlanguage errors will be presented.

4.5. Impact of ER on Interlanguage Errors

This section addresses the effects of ER on the participants’ L1 related errors, i.e., similarities and discrepancies between the participants in terms of interlanguage errors as a result of ER will be discussed.

4.5.1. InJu (FI) vs. DoHee (FD)

A total of eight error types can be classified as interlanguage errors: omissions of articles and objects, superfluous prepositions, and the misformation of verb tenses (A/B), prepositions, word choice, and singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) forms. Table 8 shows the effect of ER on the participants’ interlanguage errors (data are shown as percentage of errors).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Taxonomy</th>
<th>InJu (FI)</th>
<th>DoHee (FD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>6–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Tense (A)</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Tense (B)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misformation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8

Results of ER on Interlanguage Errors by InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD)
1) Similarities between InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD)

Both InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD) have been identified as having commonalities in the following three categories: omission of objects, misformation of word choice, and misformation of singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) forms. Both have experienced error reductions in the omissions of objects. Furthermore, they have experienced error increases in the misformation of word choice as well as the misformation of singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) forms. Thus, ER is likely to be effective for both types of learners in reducing object omission errors, but ER appears to have a negative impact on the FI and FD learners’ word choice misformation errors and singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) misformation errors.

2) Disparities between InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD)

In their performance differences, InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD) exhibit the most dramatic discrepancies in verb tense misformation errors (B). That is, while ER tended to be most helpful for InJu (FI) for verb tense misformation errors (B), ER appears to have been unhelpful for DoHee (FD) in this category. Moreover, for preposition addition errors, InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD) have shown a greater difference. For InJu (FI), ER was helpful in reducing these errors, whereas for DoHee (FD), ER appears to have dramatically reduced DoHee’s (FD) writing proficiency in this category. Furthermore, other than these two categories, InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD) showed differences in preposition misformation, article omissions, and verb tense misformation (A). In other words, ER appears to have benefited InJu (FI), but not DoHee (FD), in these three categories.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the impact of the field independence-dependence cognitive style on the ER logs written by two Korean female high school students over a six-month period. The main findings of the study are as follows: 1) ER does not appear to benefit both FI and FD learners, because the FI learner showed a sharp decrease in the number of errors, whereas the total number of errors of the FD learner increased. This suggests that ER can be more beneficial to FI learners in improving writing proficiency. Therefore, if teachers are aware of the learners’ cognitive style and learn more about useful ways to encourage each type of learner to achieve his or her learning goals, learner needs can be fulfilled more expeditiously. Furthermore, 2) it turns out that both the FI and FD learners committed more interlanguage errors than intralingual errors. This implies that although teachers should
treat student errors in a thorough manner, they need to consider which errors should be given priority and guide learners to focus on reducing the prioritized errors first during class. Finally, 3) there were similarities and differences between the FI and the FD participants regarding interlanguage errors. In terms of similarities, ER appears to be effective in reducing object omission errors, yet it may be unhelpful in reducing word choice misformation errors and singular/plural (possessive adj./noun) misformation errors for both types of learners. On the other hand, InJu (FI) and DoHee (FD) have shown clear disparities in article omissions, adding preposition, preposition misformation, and verb tense misformation (A/B). In short, ER tended to benefit InJu (FI), whereas ER may have disadvantaged DoHee (FD) in decreasing interlanguage errors in the five error categories. The results of this study may help learners recognize the necessity of becoming aware of their personal cognitive style; hence, they can find more appropriate methods to bolster their language learning.

Although the present study has shed light on the major differences in improving writing skills between FI and FD learners through ER, there are limitations to this study. First, the number of participants in the present study is two; hence, the results cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the period of the study was six months; therefore, a longer treatment may give rise to alternative conclusions. Third, the validity and reliability of the modified GEFT referred to in the study were verified by Jeon and Jang (as cited in Lee & Hwang, 2001), albeit in different situations and with different participants; thus, it is recommended that replications of this study be implemented with researchers validating the validity and reliability of the revised GEFT in their own research settings and with their participants. Accordingly, to address such limitations, a further case study may be conducted with more participants and a longer treatment period. In addition, the validity and reliability of the modified GEFT might be substantiated in its own test settings.

REFERENCES


The Impact of Cognitive Style on Errors in English Writing Through Extensive Reading


Applicable levels: All

Jin-In Seo
Department of ELT Materials Development
International Graduate School of English
17 Yangjae-daero, 81-gil, Gangdong-gu
Seoul 134-847, Korea
Cell: 010-3517-2670
Email: jade1217@igse.ac.kr

Received in March 2014
Reviewed in April 2014
Revised version received in May 2014