

Avoidance Phenomena of Phrasal Verbs by Korean Learners of English

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This study investigates the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Korean L2 learners of English. Specifically, Korean L2 learners of English seem to avoid using phrasal verbs in their English. The avoidance of phrasal verbs by L2 learners of English is often explained either in terms of structural differences between L1 and L2 (Dagut & Laufer, 1985) or semantic consideration (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989). The basic assumption underlying this study is that Korean L2 learners of English resort to an avoidance strategy to cope with the difficulties they encounter when they express themselves in English. The following questions are addressed in this study: (1) To what extent do Korean L2 learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs?; and (2) If they tend to avoid using phrasal verbs, how can these phenomena be explained? To answer the above questions, this study has analyzed and compared the performance of three different groups of Korean subjects and a group of native speakers of English with regard to their usage of phrasal verbs. It suggests the relevance of avoidance behavior not only to theory construction, but also to applications in the field of SLA.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fundamental question in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) is how learners acquire a second language (L2). A tremendous amount of research has been devoted to the area of learner language. Moreover, researchers have not been satisfied with mere descriptions of learner languages, but instead have sought to systematically account for their structure and variability. Some of the SLA

phenomena that they have tried to account for include: why learners make errors, why their language displays some regularities in its usage, and why learner language changes systematically over time. The search for answers to these questions has focused on what contributions learner external and learner internal factors make in the process of L2 acquisition. In addition, it has been thought that the errors L2 learners make can provide a window to the understanding of the internal processes of SLA.

Schachter (1974) emphasizes the importance of examining the L2 forms that L2 learners consistently avoid, as well as those that they produce or use incorrectly. She claims that such avoidance is the reverse side of negative transfer, since learners tend to avoid using L2 forms that have no parallel in the L1 and therefore provide them with no pattern for transfer. Her study represents a milestone in the study of avoidance phenomena in SLA. Since then, a considerable amount of research has been devoted to the phenomenon of avoidance in L2 acquisition (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Kleinman, 1977; Seliger, 1989). In order to explain the avoidance behavior by L2 learners, two important claims have been made. One is that avoidance takes place when there are structural differences between L1 and L2. Within this view, avoidance is predictable by contrastive analysis (Dagut & Laufer, 1985). The other maintains that avoidance is governed by universal principles. Within this view, avoidance is predictable not on the basis of language-specific properties, but on the basis of universal properties of avoided structures, i.e. semantic difficulty of L2 forms in question (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989).

The purpose of this study is to examine the avoidance phenomena of English phrasal verbs by Korean learners of English. The study of avoidance in phrasal verbs claims that the causes of avoidance should be explained from various perspectives, since overt avoidance behavior can be caused not only by L1-L2 difference, but also by naturalness and markedness factors within the L2. The theoretical basis for this explanation will, to a large extent, rely on "universal" rules such as the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH) and Rule Simplification by Korean L2 learner of English. Consequently, this study will concentrate its efforts on providing an explanation for the causes of phrasal verb avoidance by Korean L2 learners of English. Furthermore, in order to explain causes and pattern differences in the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Korean L2 learners of English, other factors such as semantic complexity, psychological distance, motivation, L2

learning environments, age, major area of study will be discussed.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON AVOIDANCE PHENOMENA

1. Avoidance of English Phrasal Verbs

Research on the avoidance of English phrasal verbs was first conducted by Dagut and Laufer (1985).¹⁾ Hebrew speaking learners of English seemed to avoid using phrasal verbs, even though they were passively familiar with them. They tried to determine whether these learners did in fact comprehend English phrasal verbs and then to what extent they avoided using them. They argue that such avoidance can be properly understood only by an interlingual approach, and that this fact provides, if only indirectly, corroboration of the dominant role of the L1 in the L2 learning process. In addition, their study also shows that within the category of phrasal verbs, semantically transparent phrasal verbs (i.e. *get up*) are preferred over non-transparent ones (i.e. *let down*). They claim that the main cause of learners' avoidance is the difficulty they have with the particle. This difficulty arises from the fact that Hebrew does not have corresponding counterparts to phrasal verbs in English. In short, they claim that the structural differences between L1 and L2 play the critical role in explaining the avoidance phenomena of phrasal verbs.

Subsequently, another important study of the avoidance of phrasal verbs was conducted by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989). As discussed previously, Dagut and Laufer (1985) claimed that Hebrew learners of English avoid phrasal verbs (e.g. *let down*), while preferring one-word verbs (e.g. *disappoint*), since Hebrew does not have phrasal verbs. Dagut and Laufer's study therefore implied that Dutch learners

1) Tarone, Cohen, and Dumas (1976), Tarone (1977), and Varadi (1980) postulate three types of avoidance: (a) meaning replacement, (b) message abandonment, and (c) topic avoidance. This paper deals with another type of avoidance-formal avoidance, that is, using one form rather than another to express the intended meaning. Linguistics items can, of course, be avoided for other than semantic reasons-for example, for syntactic, morphological, and even phonological ones. Besides, structural-lexical avoidance may also arise from factors that have nothing to do with difficulty, as when L2 words are occasionally eschewed because they resemble taboo words in the L1. Avoidance is a strategy in L1 use as well.

of English would not avoid phrasal verbs since Dutch has similar structures. However, this was challenged by Hulstijn and Marchena. They hypothesized that Dutch learners of English would avoid phrasal verbs, not because of structural differences between L1 and L2, but because of the semantic difficulty inherent in phrasal verbs. Their reasoning is that if Dutch ESL learners would avoid phrasal verbs on the basis of perceived semantic difficulties, Hebrew ESL learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs might as well be caused by semantic difficulties rather than structural differences. Hulstijn and Marchena also gave the three types of tests used by Dagut and Laufer to Dutch learners of English.

Their findings showed that Dutch learners of English also avoided using phrasal verbs despite the fact that Dutch also has phrasal verbs which structurally correspond closely to the English ones. Since their findings show that non-transparent phrasal verbs are avoided more than transparent ones by Dutch learners of English, they claim that the L2 learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs mostly out of semantic considerations.²⁾ In addition, their study showed that Dutch learners of English did not even prefer phrasal verbs when there were close similarities between Dutch and English versions, probably due to the fact that the learners did not believe that the similarities were real.

2. The Role of L1 and L2 in Avoidance

In general, there are two conflicting assumptions with respect to the role of the L1 in explaining avoidance. One is that acquisition of L2 consists of the construction of a system based on L2 data alone, without any major influence from the L1. Within this view, learning difficulties, including avoidance, arise from the complexity of the language being acquired. The other is that learners are heavily influenced by the structure of their L1, and that most of the difficulties encountered in learning L2 are the result of cross-linguistic interference. Those researchers who stress the role of cross-linguistic influence in SLA, claim that

2) They believe that semantic considerations may have also played a role in the avoidance behavior of Dagut and Laufer's subjects, too. That is, avoidance of phrasal verbs was highest for the figurative and lowest for the literal phrasal verbs. Therefore, Hulstijn and Marchena believe that this suggests that for phrasal verbs with specific meanings, avoidance need not necessarily be explained in terms of a structural contrast between English and Hebrew, but rather can be explained better in terms of semantic considerations.

avoidance takes place in those areas where L1 and L2 differ (Kleinmann, 1977, 1978; Levenston, 1971; Schachter, 1974). However, as discussed before, some researchers have also observed that avoidance of L2 form may take place when there are some similarities between L1 and L2 with respect to the form in question (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Jordens, 1977; Kellerman, 1977). Taking a multi-perspective approach, Laufer and Eliasson(1993) suggest that avoidance in SLA can be attributed to one or more of the following: (a) differences between L1 and L2; (b) a similarity between L1 and L2, which is looked upon by the learner as a difference, or (c) the inherent complexity of the item or construction.

III. METHOD

1. Research Questions

One of the major shortcomings of the previous studies on avoidance has been their lack of variable control. Each learner comes to the task of learning a language with a variable of personality traits and life experience which must inevitably filter and shape the acquisition process. Indeed the theoretical SLA literature is full of hypotheses about the effect of such variables such as age, natural vs. tutored setting, and personality. Yet, most empirical studies of avoidance have failed to control even a few of these variables. This study will seek to compare the performance of learners who differ along several continua including age, L2 learning environments, and major area of study. This study of phrasal verbs will also address the following three core questions:

- 1) If Korean learners of English in fact do show a strong tendency to avoid using phrasal verbs, to what extent do they do so? Given a choice, to what extent do they prefer using one-word verbs over phrasal verbs?
- 2) How can the avoidance behavior, if found, be explained?
- 3) If there are pattern differences in the avoidance behavior between the various experimental groups, how can these differences be explained?

2. Subjects

The subjects for the study of avoidance phenomena of phrasal verbs are divided into four groups (group A, B, C, and X) in order to examine the effect of different variables on the pattern differences in their use of phrasal verbs.³⁾ The subjects in group A graduated from university or/and graduate school in Korea. In the USA they often interacted with Koreans via church meeting, Korean hometown groups, their major teams, and children's leisure meetings. In addition, the subjects of group C are children of the graduate students in group A. The subjects of group B are university students in Korea. The variables include: (a) whether they were exposed to natural input (group A vs. group B), (b) the length of exposure to natural input (group A-1 vs. group A-2), (c) subjects' major field of study (group B-1 vs. group B-2), and (d) age (group A vs. group C and group B vs. group C). The characteristics of each group are shown in Table 1.⁴⁾

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Each Group

<i>Group</i>	<i>Sub-Group Number</i>		<i>Characteristics</i>
A(42)	A-1	22	Korean students of less than 3 years residence in the US
	A-2	20	Korean students of more than 3 years residence in the US
B(130)	B-1	70	Korean students in Korea (English majors)
	B-2	60	Korean students in Korea (non-English majors)
C(15)		15	Korean children in the US (aged 8-12)
X(30)		30	Native speakers of English (college students)

- 3) We can assume that the English proficiency of group A-1 is very high since they are teacher's assistants at the University of Florida. For a teacher's assistantship, L2 learners of English have to get at least 220 on the TSE (Test of Spoken English). Group X is a baseline in order to analyze and compare the avoidance behavior by Korean subjects (group A, B, and C). Also, they are college students of Florida university as a native speakers of English.
- 4) After the collecting subjects, I found that the division between less than 3 years residence and more than 3 years residence in the US showed the most prominent differences of meaning by analysing data of subjects. For example, group A-1 and group A-2 differentiated on pattern use of phrasal verbs, and they also had many frequent and stable differences. Therefore, this study divided group A into group A-1 and group A-2 as a 3 years unit.

3. Materials and Data Collection

Ten phrasal verbs and the corresponding one-word verbs were used in the study. Six of the pairs were from the research of Dagut and Laufer (1985), and Hulstijn and Marchena (1989). The remaining four pairs were chosen based on frequent occurrence in everyday English. Another important criterion for the selection of the phrasal verbs was familiarity to average Korean college students. The 10 phrasal verbs consist of three literal, three completive and four figurative verbs.⁵⁾ Three types of test were given in this study: (a) a verb elicitation test (VET), (b) a verb translation test (VTT), and (c) a verb multiple choice test (VMT).

1) Verb Elicitation Test

In this test, pictures which depicted some action or event were presented to the subjects.⁶⁾ The pictures were accompanied by an incomplete sentence, which the subjects were asked to complete. For example, a picture of a man using a fire extinguisher in his room was shown to the subjects, and a question was given: look at the picture and complete the given sentence with an appropriate verb. When necessary, additional explanations for each picture were provided to help the subjects understand what action is taking place. The verb elicitation test was given to group A (both A-1 and A-2), group B-1, group C and group X.⁷⁾

5) Phrasal verbs are sub-categorized into 3 different verbs by Fraser (1976): (a) literal -phrasal verbs whose meaning can be directly guessed from its semantic components: *go out, take away, come in*, etc.; (b) completive-phrasal verbs in which the particle describes the result of the action: *drink up, clean up, burn down*, etc.; and (c) figurative-phrasal verbs in which a new meaning has resulted from a metaphorical shift of meaning and the semantic fusion of the individual components: *turn up, let down, give in*, etc.

6) I made up 10 pictures for myself for the verb elicitation test (VET) from "COREL DRAW" on computer graphics. Consequently, no part of this picture may be reproduced and be copied for public or private use without the written permission of the publisher. Also, for the purposes of harmony and the correlation between each English sentence and the given pictures, I asked their opinions of five native speakers. I appreciate their kindness.

7) Group B-2 was not involved in VET, and VTT. Because the difference of avoidance phenomena between group B-1 and B-2 was a need for VMT.

2) Verb Translation Test

The verb translation test used the same sentences as the verb elicitation test.⁸⁾ However, this task featured a closed-set response where the Korean translations of the target English responses were provided in parentheses. The subjects were asked to simply translate the Korean verbs into their English counterparts. The verb translation test was administered to group A (both A-1 and A-2), group B-1 and group C.

3) Verb Multiple Choice Test

This test utilizes the same sentences as the above tests. This also featured a closed-set response, but instead of one choice, the respondents were offered four: (a) a phrasal verb, (b) a semantically-equivalent one-word verb, and (c) two distracters. The phrasal verbs were those preferred by native speakers in spoken English. The one-word verbs express the same semantic content but are not preferred by native speakers.⁹⁾ The verb multiple choice test was given to all groups in the Table 1 :group A, group B, group C, and group X.

IV. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

First, the actual frequencies of phrasal verb usage by each group were collected for the three tests. Then, the pattern differences in the average frequency percentage of phrasal verbs between groups were examined. A Chi-Square test was performed on the data to determine whether there was a significant difference between groups. In addition, based on the data, group commonality and group differences were analyzed.

8) Although the same sentences used on the three tests, in order to keep the independence of the test, first, there was an order of the three types of test : (1) VET, (2) VTT, and (3) VMT, second, the subjects took the questionnaire of the three tests in the same place, time.

9) One of the characteristics of spoken English is the use of periphrastic construction. We can find such periphrastic phrases in spoken English: *be going to* (instead of *will*), *a couple of* (instead of *a few*), *make up one's mind* (instead of *decide*), etc. Phrasal Verbs are also one of the examples of periphrastic construction in English.

1. Verb Elicitation Test

The differences in the average frequency percentage of phrasal verb usage between groups (e.g., group A, group B-1, group C, and group X) are summarized in Table 2 (differences between native speakers [NSs] and Korean non-native speakers of English [KNNSs]), Table 3 (differences between KNNSs), and Table 4 (differences between group A-1 and A-2), respectively.

TABLE 2
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VET: NSs vs. KNNSs

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total.			
NSs(N=30)	74.4	65.6	80.8	74.3	24.3	0.7	0.7
KNNSs(N=127)	58.3	40.9	19.3	38.0	43.3	17.0	1.7

(Chi-Square=58.04 df=3 P=0.01)

TABLE 3
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VET: Group All

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total.			
X(N=30)	74.4	65.6	80.8	74.3	24.3	0.7	0.7
A(N=42)	64.3	48.4	32.7	46.9	40.2	12.2	0.7
B-1(N=70)	53.8	37.1	13.6	32.7	47.1	17.9	2.3
C(N=15)	66.7	37.8	15.0	37.3	34.0	26.7	2.0

(Chi-Square=182.59 df=9 P=0.01)

TABLE 4
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VET: Group A

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total.			
A(N=42)	64.3	48.4	32.7	46.9	40.2	12.2	0.7
A-1(N=22)	53.0	39.4	15.9	34.1	49.1	15.4	1.4
A-2(N=20)	76.7	53.8	51.3	61.0	30.5	8.5	0

(Chi-Square=32.07 df=3 P=0.01)

1) Group Commonalty

- (1) Verbs by native speakers of English and those by Korean L2 learners of English were statistically significant difference ($P=0.01$). In general, the difference between the frequency of phrasal verbs suggests that Korean L2 learners of English do, in fact, avoid using phrasal verbs in their English (cf. Table 2).
- (2) In the case of Korean L2 learners of English, the literal verbs are preferred the most, while the figurative verbs are preferred the least. This applies to all groups of Korean L2 learners (cf. Table 3).
- (3) In general, the average frequency of phrasal verb usage is in inverse proportion to the average frequency of one-word verbs: the more phrasal verbs the subjects use, the less the one-word verb they use (cf. Table 2 and 3).
- (4) Regardless of group characteristics, the average frequency of phrasal verbs is lowest in the Verb Elicitation Test, and highest in the Verb Multiple Choice Test either by native speakers of English and by Korean learners of English (cf. Table 3, 5, 8). This is naturally explained in terms of the nature of the test type administered to the subjects.

2) Group Differences between L2 learners of English

- (1) The average frequency of the use of phrasal verbs for group A is highest and that of group B-1 is lowest (cf. Table 3).
- (2) The average frequency of phrasal verb usage of group C is lower than that of group A. Group C did use slightly more literal phrasal verbs than group A; group A used considerably more figurative phrasal verbs than group C. This suggests that the semantic difficulty of the figurative phrasal verbs seem to make child language learners avoid them. Therefore, we can assert that age is one of the factors affecting the use of phrasal verbs, in particular, the use of figurative phrasal verbs.
- (3) The average frequency of phrasal verb usage for group C is higher than that of group B-1, regardless of type involved (cf. Table 3). This shows that exposure to a natural learning environment plays a meaningful role. The importance of exposure to natural settings in SLA is also supported by the

frequency differences between group A and group B-1 (cf. Table 3) as well as between group A-1 and A-2 (cf. Table 4). Korean L2 learners of English who are exposed to natural settings use more phrasal verbs than those who are not (cf. Table 3: group A vs. group B-1).

- (4) In addition, the longer they are exposed to natural settings, the more they use phrasal verbs (cf. Table 4: group A-1 vs. group A-2).

2. Verb Translation Test

The differences in the average frequency percentage of phrasal verbs between Korean groups are summarized in Table 5 (difference between KNNs: group A, B-1, and C) and Table 6 (difference between group A-1 and A-2), respectively.

1) Group Commonalty

- (1) In general, the frequency pattern of each group in the verb translation test is similar to that in the verb elicitation test.
- (2) As seen in Table 5, regardless of group characteristics, the literal verbs are the most preferred, while the figurative verbs are the least.
- (3) The average frequency of the use of phrasal verbs is in inverse proportion to the average frequency of one-word verbs.

TABLE 5
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VTT: Group A, B-1, & C

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total.			
A(N=42)	84.1	59.5	35.7	57.4	37.4	4.0	1.2
B-1(N=70)	81.4	40.9	16.8	43.4	39.4	15.5	1.7
C(N=15)	68.9	37.8	20.0	40.0	40.7	16.7	2.6

(Chi-Square=46.90 df=6 P=0.01)

TABLE 6
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VTT: Group A

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total.			
A(N=42)	84.1	59.5	35.7	57.4	37.4	4.0	1.2
A-1(N=22)	81.8	50.0	35.2	49.1	44.6	5.0	1.3
A-2(N=20)	86.7	70.0	48.8	66.5	29.5	3.0	1.0

(Chi-Square=13.03 df=3 P=0.01)

2) Group Differences between Korean L2 Learners of English

- (1) There is a significant difference in the average frequency of phrasal verb usage between Korean groups (P=0.01).
- (2) The average frequency of phrasal verb usage by group A is highest, whereas that of group C is lowest (cf. Table 5).
- (3) Table 5 shows that while the average frequency of both literal and completive phrasal verbs in group C is lower than that in group B, the average frequency of the figurative phrasal verbs in group C is higher than that in group B. Therefore, as far as figurative phrasal verbs are concerned, exposure to a natural environment is a more important factor than age: children exposed to natural settings use more figurative phrasal verbs than adults who have not been exposed, despite the semantic difficulty of those verbs.
- (4) The importance of exposure to natural settings in SLA is further supported by the pattern differences between group A and group B-1 (cf. Table 5) as well as between group A-1 and A-2 (cf. Table 6).

3. Verb Multiple Choice Test

The differences in the average frequency percentage of phrasal verb usage between groups are summarized in Table 7 (differences between native speakers [NSs] and Korean non-native speakers of English [KNNSs]), Table 8 (differences between all groups), Table 9 (differences between group A-1 and A-2), and Table 10 (differences between groups B-1 and B-2).

TABLE 7
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VMT: NSs vs KNNs

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total			
NSs(N=30)	83.3	83.3	85.8	84.3	15.3	0.4	0
KNNs(N=187)	81.5	55.6	44.7	59.0	31.5	6.9	2.6

(Chi-Square=60.3 df=3 P=0.01)

TABLE 8
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VMT: Group All

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total			
X(N=30)	83.3	83.3	85.8	84.3	15.3	0.4	0
A(N=42)	94.4	82.5	67.3	80.0	17.9	1.9	0.2
B(N=130)	77.2	45.9	36.9	51.7	35.9	8.8	3.6
C(N=15)	82.2	64.4	48.3	63.3	32.0	4.0	0.7

(Chi-Square=199.06 df=9 P=0.01)

TABLE 9
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VMT: Group A

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total			
A(N=42)	94.4	82.5	67.3	80.0	17.9	1.9	0.2
A-1(N=22)	92.4	74.2	59.1	73.6	23.6	2.3	0.5
A-2(N=20)	96.7	91.7	76.3	87.0	11.5	1.5	0

(Chi-Square=12.22 df=3 P=0.01)

TABLE 10
Average Frequency Percentage of PVs in VMT: Group B

Group	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong-Response	No-Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total			
B(N=130)	77.2	45.9	36.9	51.7	35.9	8.8	3.6
B-1(N=70)	90.5	53.8	51.1	63.7	34.0	2.3	0
B-2(N=60)	61.7	36.7	20.4	37.7	38.0	16.5	7.8

(Chi-Square=172.47 df=3 P=0.01)

1) Group Commonalty

- (1) In general, the similar patterns of usage frequency reported for the preceding test are also found in the verb multiple choice test.
- (2) In the case of Korean L2 learners of English, regardless of group characteristics, the literal verbs are preferred the most, while the figurative verbs are the least.
- (3) The average frequency of phrasal verbs is in inverse proportion to the average frequency of either one-word verbs or inappropriate responses.

2) Group Differences between Korean L2 Learners of English

- (1) There is a significant difference in the average frequency of phrasal verb usage between NSs and KNNSs as shown in Table 7 ($P=0.01$).
- (2) While there is little difference between NSs and KNNSs in the case of the mean frequency of literal phrasal verb usage, there is a significant difference between NSs and KNNSs in the case of both completive and figurative verbs.
- (3) Interestingly, the average frequency of literal phrasal verb usage in group A is higher than that of group X.
- (4) There is a significant difference in the average frequency of phrasal verb usage between KNNSs (cf. Table 8). Within the same group, the mean frequency of phrasal verbs differs significantly: (a) group A-1 vs. A-2 (cf. Table 9) and (b) group B-1 vs. B-2 (cf. Table 10).
- (5) The average frequency of phrasal verb use in group A is the highest and the lowest in group B of all three Korean groups (cf. Table 8).

V. DISCUSSION

The avoidance phenomena of phrasal verbs is explained mainly in terms of either structural differences between L1 and L2 (Dagut & Laufer, 1985) or semantic difficulties (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989). It is true that their analyses have brought us one step closer to an understanding of the causes of avoidance phenomena in SLA. However, their analyses are based on limited data: they do

not sufficiently account for avoidance among all the different groups of L2 learners of English. In what follows, the causes of avoidance phenomena of phrasal verbs by Korean L2 learners of English will be discussed from various perspectives.

1. Structural Considerations and The Markedness Differential Hypothesis

Cross-linguistic structural differences between L1 and L2 seem to be one of the causes of avoidance. Korean does not possess phrasal verbs similar to those in English. Let us hypothesize about the process that Korean learners go through when they produce phrasal verb output in English. First, they will process them in Korean, and then they will translate them into English. Korean has no such phrasal verbs. Consequently, English phrasal verbs are mostly translated into their corresponding one-word verbs in Korean. Therefore, the structure they come up with will be one-word verbs rather than phrasal verbs. In other words, Korean L2 learners of English are likely to avoid phrasal verbs in English since there are structural differences between Korean and English.

On the other hand, Korean has expressions that bear similarity to English phrasal verbs. These are the so-called serial verbs. The serial verbs in Korean can be compared to the literal phrasal verbs in English.¹⁰⁾ These similarities seem to help Korean learners of English in using the literal phrasal verbs. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Korean learners of English use the literal phrasal verbs more often than any other phrasal verbs. Therefore, we can say that there is a positive transfer from L1 to L2 in the case of literal phrasal verbs. However, since Korean has no expressions corresponding to the completive of figurative phrasal verbs, Korean L2 learners of English seem to have more difficulties using those phrasal verbs than the literal phrasal verbs in their English. This suggests that English is more marked than Korean with respect to the syntactic status of phrasal verbs: English has three different types of phrasal verbs such as literal, completive and figurative, while Korean has only one structure similar to that of literal phrasal verbs in English. The Markedness Differential Hypothesis says that those areas that the TL are different from the NL and that the TL is relatively more marked will be difficult to be acquired. The marked linguistic difference

10) For example, the literal phrasal verb *take away/back* in English can be compared to the serial verbs *ga.eo-gada* 'take-go' in Korean.

between Korean and English seems to cause difficulty in the use of phrasal verbs by Korean learners of English, thus making them resort more frequently to avoidance.

2. Semantic Considerations

Semantic complexity of phrasal verbs is one cause of their avoidance among Korean learners of English. There are different degrees of semantic complexity within the three phrasal verbs. The literal verbs are the easiest of all since the meaning is a sum of the component parts. The figurative phrasal verbs are the most difficult since they involve a metaphorical shift and a semantic fusion of the individual components. It is shown in Tables 3, 5, and 8 that, regardless of the types of test or group characteristics, the average frequency of the figurative phrasal verbs is lowest, while the average frequency of the literal phrasal verbs is highest. As discussed in Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), a similar pattern of avoidance is also found in the research of Dagut and Laufer (1985): Table 11 shows that regardless of the types of test, Hebrew speaking L2 learners of English also have the most difficulty using the figurative phrasal verbs and the least difficulty using the literal phrasal verbs. Semantic complexity also explains why the average frequency of the phrasal verbs used by group C is lower than that of group A. Therefore, we might expect that average frequency of the phrasal verb usage in group C would be higher than that of group A. However, Table 3, 5, and 8 show that the average frequency of phrasal verbs used by group C is lower than that of group A. This suggests that the semantic complexity of the phrasal verbs is an important factor in whether a learner chooses to avoid a certain form. In other words, we can say that language learners have to reach a certain age to use semantically difficult structures (e.g. phrasal verbs) in their L2.

TABLE 11
Average Frequency Percentage of Phrasal Verbs by Dagut and Laufer(1985)

Test Type	Frequency of Phrasal Verbs(%)				One-Word	Wrong/No Response
	Lit.	Cmp.	Fig.	Total		
Verb Memorization Test	37	35	13	24	41	35
Verb Translation Test	34	28	16	24	56	20
Verb Multiple choice Test	72	48	27	42	45	13

Subjects: Hebrew Learners of English

3. Educational Methodology in Korea

The philosophy governing language pedagogy is another factor affecting the frequency of phrasal verb usage. In general, Korean L2 learners of English learn the one-word verbs first, and then they learn the corresponding phrasal verbs. The one-word verbs become the basic vocabulary for the concepts which both the one-word verbs and phrasal verbs convey, even though they subsequently learn the phrasal verbs. Therefore, Korean L2 learners of English are led to believe that the one-word verb is just a synonym for the corresponding phrasal verb. This methodology in Korea does not provide Korean L2 learners of English with practical knowledge that there are important usage differences between one-word verbs and phrasal verbs : for example, phrasal verbs are appropriate in spoken language, while one-word verbs are appropriate in written language.

4. Input in Natural Settings.

The avoidance of phrasal verbs can be explained in terms of lack of input in natural contexts. As shown in the data, the average frequency of phrasal verb usage in group B is lower than that of group A and group C but VTT. The only exception to this is that in the verb translation test, the mean frequency of phrasal verbs by group B-1 is higher than that of group C.¹¹⁾ The overall rank of phrasal verb frequency in the three types of test is shown below:

TABLE 12
Overall Ranks of Phrasal Verb Frequency by Korean Learners of English

Group	VET(%)	VTT(%)	VMT(%)
A	1 (46.9)	1 (57.4)	1 (80.0)
B	3 (32.7;B-1)	2 (43.4;B-1)	3 (51.7)
C	2 (37.3)	3 (40.0)	2 (63.3)

In addition, the average frequency of phrasal verb usage by group A-2 is higher than that by group A-1 on all three tests (cf. Table 4, 6, and 9). This explains the important role of natural setting input. Since group A-2 has been exposed to

11) This seems to result from the fact that children are not accustomed to the translation test.

the TL for a much longer period than group A-1, group A-2 has had more opportunities to hear people use the phrasal verbs than group A-1 has. This frequent input in natural contexts seems to affect the frequency of phrasal verb use.

5. Others

In the case of Korean students studying in Korea, major field of study is a factor which affects the frequency of phrasal verb use. Table 10 shows that group B-1 (English majors) use more phrasal verbs than group B-2 (non-English majors). I guess that this can be explained in terms of (a) the degree of motivation they have towards learning English and (b) the input they get from their major.¹²⁾

VI. CONCLUSION

1. Summary

This study has concentrated on examining the avoidance pattern by various groups of Korean learners of English with different backgrounds. The causes of avoidance have been explained in terms of various factors. The process of SLA is very complex and difficult to investigate since we are looking into the internal mechanism of a human being. Therefore, it is difficult to explain the avoidance behaviors in terms of a single perspective. They must be explained not only by linguistic factors, but also by psychological, social, cultural and pedagogical factors. Toward this end, this study has analyzed and compared the performance of three different groups of Korean subjects with the performance of a group of native speakers with regard to their usage of phrasal verbs in English. This study shows that the semantic difficulty of phrasal verbs, natural settings in L2 learning, educational methodology, and major field of study also play a very important role in explaining the pattern differences in the avoidance behavior of phrasal verbs

12) In general, we can say that major students of English are more motivated to learn English than students of other majors since they chose to major in English. In addition, students of English naturally get more input than students of other majors since they would learn more English in their class than others.

between groups of Korean L2 learners of English. The findings in this study suggest that both language-dependent (e.g. cross-linguistic differences) and language-independent linguistic factors (e.g. rule simplification strategy) provide clues to an understanding of the avoidance behaviors by L2 learners. Furthermore, this study suggests that learner's internal and external factors also play a very important part in explaining the pattern differences in the avoidance behavior between subjects with different backgrounds.

2. Suggestions for Further Research

Avoidance is a highly complex phenomenon which is not easily observed simply by looking at the errors L2 learners make. Furthermore, one or two studies are not enough to fully understand the avoidance behavior of L2 learners. To validate the results obtained in this study, this work must be replicated, preferably with a large number of subjects from different language backgrounds. Moreover, it is necessary to extend the area of avoidance study (e.g. order of object and passive voice), since we need to know if the results obtained in this study apply to other areas as well. In short, more extensive research on the topic of avoidance is necessary since it will contribute to our understanding of the principles that underlie the process of L2 learning. In addition, it will help us not only to identify what items or structures are avoided by L2 learners, but also to determine areas of learning difficulty. All findings in the study of avoidance have practical value in the field of L2 teaching. At the very least, they will aid educators in the design of more appropriate language syllabic and tests.

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