Korean EFL Learners’ Acquisition of English Relative Clauses: PFH, PDH, or AHH?*

Jong-Bai Hwang
(Konkuk University)


Three hypotheses have been proposed to predict an order of difficulty for the acquisition of relative clauses in the field of second language acquisition: the parallel function hypothesis (PFH), the perceptual difficulty hypothesis (PDH), and the accessibility hierarchy hypothesis (AHH). This paper examines which hypothesis is the most appropriate for predicting the Korean EFL learners’ acquisition of English restrictive relative clauses. Fifty-nine Korean learners of English from a high class performed a grammaticality judgment task and two production tasks: a sentence combination task and a gap-filling task. Both the grammaticality judgment task and the production tasks included four types of relative clauses which differ in the functions of the head noun and its coreferential relative pronoun: SS-, OO-, SO-, and OS-type relative clauses. The results of the study show that in the grammaticality judgment task, the AHH best explains the Korean EFL learners’ acquisition of English relative clauses, while the PDH is partially correct in predicting the difficulty order in the sentence combination task.

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the issues in which many second language acquisition researchers have been interested is the developmental order or the natural sequences of the acquisition of L2 grammatical structures. Some studies investigated the developmental sequences of grammatical morphemes in the acquisition of English as a second language in a natural environment and showed that the sequences were similar to those of first language acquisition of English (Dulay & Burt, 1974a, 1974b, 1975). Other studies suggested that there existed systematic and predictable sequences in the L2 acquisition of several structures of English such as negatives,

* This work was supported by the Faculty Research Fund of Konkuk University in 2001.
questions, and so on (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Hakuta, 1974a, 1974b; Lakshmanan, 1993, 1995; Ravem, 1974). The exploration of the developmental sequences of L2 grammatical structures is of crucial importance to the development of theories and principles of instructed L2 acquisition, L2 instructional material design, and many other practical areas related to second language learning and teaching.

This study investigates the order of L2 acquisition of English restrictive relative clauses by Korean learners of English. Restrictive relative clauses of English are grouped into four different types depending upon the relationships between a head noun of the matrix clause and a relative pronoun of the embedded clause: subject-subject (SS), subject-object (SO), object-subject (OS), and object-object (OO) types. Several hypotheses have been suggested to predict the relative difficulty of acquiring the four types of English restrictive relative clauses. This study reviews the hypotheses regarding the acquisition order of English relative clauses and investigates which hypothesis is the most appropriate and best predicts the hierarchy of difficulty or the acquisition order of English relative clauses by Korean learners of English.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The three hypotheses which have been suggested to predict the order of acquisition (or the hierarchy of difficulty) of English restrictive relative clauses are the Parallel Function Hypothesis (PFH), the Perceptual Difficulty Hypothesis (PDH), and the Accessibility Hierarchy Hypothesis (AHH). The restrictive relative clause construction of English includes a head noun or an antecedent that belongs to the matrix clause and is restricted or modified by the embedded clause, and a relative pronoun that follows the head noun and heads the embedded clause. The PFH identifies and compares the functions of a head noun and a relative pronoun in their respective clauses, the matrix clause and the embedded clause. The PDH makes reference to the location of the relative clause inside the matrix sentence. Finally, the AHH, which has been most frequently studied, focuses on the function of the relative pronoun only, with no attention to the head noun or the matrix clause.

1. The Parallel Function Hypothesis (PFH)

According to Doughty (1991), the PFH has not been supported by the studies of L2 relativization since it was first suggested by Sheldon (1974), which found the order of difficulty in the comprehension of relative clauses by children learning English as their native language. The PFH tries to explain the acquisition order of relative clauses in terms of the
identification of grammatical functions between a head noun in the matrix clause and a relative pronoun in the embedded clause. It predicts difficulty when the grammatical function of the head noun is not identical with that of the relative pronoun, while ease of acquisition is expected when the function of the head noun is parallel with its coreferential relative pronoun. Therefore the predicted order of acquisition of relative clause is represented as follows (Sheldon, 1974):

(1) Subject – Subject (SS) & Object – Object (OO)
   > Subject – Object (SO) & Object – Subject (OS)

Based on this order of acquisition, we can predict that learners of English acquire the sentences in (2a) and (2d) prior to those in (2b) and (2c).

(2) a. SS: The man who lives next door is my uncle.
   b. SO: The girl who(m) I met yesterday is John’s sister.
   c. OS: I know the girl who lives next door.
   d. OO: She met the man who(m) I know.

The head nouns in the sentences of (2a) and (2d), the man in each sentence, are a subject and an object of each matrix clause, and the relative pronoun, who and who(m), derive from the position of the subject and the direct object in each relative clause. In other words, the head nouns and the relative pronouns in sentences (2a) and (2d) have the identical functions in the matrix and the relative clauses. On the other hand, the functions of the head nouns in (2b) and (2c) are a subject and an object of each matrix clause, while the relative pronouns function as an object and a subject respectively in the relative clauses.

2. The Perceptual Difficulty Hypothesis (PDH)

The second hypothesis, the PDH, is based on the arguments of the universal constraints on the cognitive processing of human beings. The human cognitive processing in the matrix clause can be interrupted when the embedding of a restrictive relative clause occurs in the middle of the matrix clause (Kuno, 1974). Therefore, the location of the relative clause in the matrix clause is critical in the PDH, and the hierarchy of difficulty of acquisition is determined whether the relative clause is center-, right-, or left-embedded in the matrix clause. The highest difficulty arises when the relative clause is center-embedded, that is, when the matrix clause is interrupted in the middle of its processing, while little difficulty is expected when the relative
clause is right-embedded, that is, when the object of the matrix clause is restricted by the relative clause.

The order of acquisition or the difficulty order which the PDH predicts regarding English relative clauses is the following (3):

(3) Object – Subject (OS) & Object – Object (OO)
    > Subject – Subject (SS) & Subject – Object (SO)

OS- and OO-type restrictive relative clauses are easier to acquire than SS- and SO-types, since the embedding occurs at the end, or after the object, of the matrix clause in OS- and OO-type relative clauses. When we look back the sample sentences in (2), the relative clauses in (2c) and (2d) are just attached to the matrix clauses at the end of the matrix clauses, which makes smoother the human cognitive processing of sentence formation. On the contrary, the relative clauses in (2a) and (2b) are inserted after the subjects of the matrix clauses, which interrupts the smooth cognitive processing of the meaning of the matrix clauses.

3. The Accessibility Hierarchy Hypothesis (AHH)

The AHH, the third hypothesis that predicts the order of difficulty for English relative clauses, is based on Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) typological hypothesis which is called Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH). The NPAH refers to the universal hierarchy of markedness in the acquisition of relative clauses across languages and views relative clauses in which the relative pronoun is the subject of the embedded clause as the least marked, and those including relative pronoun which is the object of a comparison as the most marked. Based on the principles of markedness, the NPAH suggests the following universal hierarchy of difficulty for relative clauses of any language:

(4) SU (Subject) > DO (Direct Object) > IO (Indirect Object) > OPREP (Object of a Preposition) > POSS (Possessive) > OCOMP (Object of a Comparison)

The order of difficulty represented in (4) is based only on the function of relative pronoun, and the NPAH proposes that when the relative pronoun of relative clauses is originally the subject of the relative clauses, the relative clause construction is the easiest to acquire. The acquisition of relative clauses in which the relative pronoun functions as the object or shows a possessive relationship is more difficult and shows a hierarchical order exemplified in (4). When we reconsider the difficulty order of (4) in terms of the functions of head noun and relative
pronoun, it is represented as the following (5), which is called Accessibility Hierarchy Hypothesis (AHH):

(5) Subject – Subject (SS) & Object – Subject (OS)
   > Subject – Object (SO) & Object – Object (OO)

The AHH is regarded as the most powerful predictor of difficulty in acquiring English relative clauses among the three hypotheses, since it has been empirically supported by many studies on the L2 acquisition of English restrictive relative clauses. For example, Gass (1979) found that second language learners of English followed the developmental path predicted by the NPAH in their production of English relative clauses. In addition, Doughty (1988, 1991) argued that none of the L1 and L2 accuracy and production data violated the developmental pattern of English relative clauses predicted by the NPAH.

To sum up, the orderings of the acquisitional difficulty of English relative clauses are predicted by the three hypotheses as follows:

(6) a. The PFH
    SS & OO > SO & OS
b. The PDH
    OS & OO > SS & SO
c. The AHH
    SS & OS > SO & OO

III. METHOD

1. Research Question

This study investigates and compares the relevance of the three hypotheses which have been suggested to predict the hierarchy of difficulty in the acquisition of English restrictive relative clauses. The three hypotheses make different predictions from each other regarding the relative ease or difficulty of the four types of English restrictive relative clauses. The research question which the present study aims to answer is stated as follows:

RQ: Which hypothesis will best predict the order of difficulty Korean EFL learners feel when they learn English restrictive relative clauses, PFH, PDH, or AHH?
2. Participants

Fifty-nine Korean students from a first-grade high school class in Seoul were selected as participants of the present study. 24 of 59 participants are male students and since the subjects are all the members of one class there seemed to exist a wide range of English proficiency among the participants. The English curriculum of high schools in Korea is not structurally-based and English grammar is not emphasized or explicitly taught in English teaching classroom. However, reading is emphasized in high school English classrooms and English reading texts of high school English textbooks include a number of uses of English relative clause structures. In fact, relative clauses are included even in middle school English textbooks. Therefore, Korean high school students including the subjects of the study are believed to have been learning English relative clauses, the target structures of the present study.

3. Materials

The experiment of the present study consisted of three types of tasks which were designed to measure the students' proficiency in English restrictive relative clauses: a grammaticality judgment task and two production tasks (a sentence combination task, and a gap-filling task). The grammaticality judgment task consisted of 24 target sentences and 26 fillers (See Appendix, Part I). Both grammatical and ungrammatical uses of English relative clauses were included in the task, and the subjects were asked to judge the grammaticality of each sentence out of their intuition.

One of the production tasks, the sentence combination task, was composed of 16 questions (See Appendix, Part II). Two sentences were given in each question and the subjects were asked to combine the two sentences into one using an appropriate relative pronoun. The other production task, the gap-filling task, also consisted of 16 questions in which the subjects were asked to complete the given sentences by filling the blanks (See Appendix, Part III).

Both the grammaticality judgment task and the production tasks included four types of relative clauses which differ in the functions of the head noun and its coreferential relative pronoun, that is, SS-, SO-, OS-, and OO-type relative clauses. The following examples in (7) – (9) are from each task:

(7) Grammaticality judgment task
a. The movie which was very exciting was made in France. (SS-type)
b. That book which he suggested to me is very good. (SO-type)
c. Do you know the man who lives next door? (OS-type)
d. I found the key which you lost yesterday. (OO-type)

(8) Sentence combination task

a. The bus isn’t running today. It goes to City Hall. (SS-type)
⇒ ____________________________
b. The eggs were bad. I bought them yesterday. (SO-type)
⇒ ____________________________
c. Yesterday I met a woman. She liked to sing a song. (OS-type)
⇒ ____________________________
d. I didn’t like the man. My sister married him. (OO-type)
⇒ ____________________________

(9) Gap-filling task

a. The man plays golf. He lives at Apt. No. 10. (SS-type)
⇒ The man _______________________ plays golf.
b. The people are very nice. We met them yesterday. (SO-type)
⇒ The people ___________________ are very nice.
c. Can you pick up the papers? They are lying on the table. (OS-type)
⇒ Can you pick up the papers ___________________?
d. He showed me the computer. He bought it yesterday. (OO-type)
⇒ He showed me the computer ___________________?

Half of the 24 target sentences in the grammaticality judgment task were ungrammatical. The ungrammatical sentences in the task contained four possible error types: errors of nonadjacency of head noun and relative pronoun, errors of pronoun retention, errors of incorrect relative pronoun, and errors of inappropriate relative pronoun omission. Examples of ungrammatical sentences including the four possible error types are given in (10):

(10) a. The shop is closed today which sells that good bread. (nonadjacency)
b. Most of the people who they live in Austria speak German. (pronoun retention)
c. The people which live next door have five children. (incorrect RP)
d. The people came to dinner stayed very late. (inappropriate omission)

In all the three tasks, there was no who/whom distinction, and the whom form was
excluded from the task. The subjects of the study were informed to answer the questions solely on the basis of the grammaticality of each sentence, not of any spelling errors. The subjects of the study were expected to have little difficulty understanding the meanings of all the sentences because the sentences in the three tasks were made up of simple everyday vocabulary items.

4. Procedures

The subjects of the study were given 50 minutes to perform all the three tasks. They were told that the purpose of the test was to diagnose their general proficiency of English grammar. In the grammaticality judgment task, the students were asked to indicate whether the given sentences are grammatically correct or not depending only on their intuition, that is, without much thinking. The subjects read directions how to perform the tasks before they started to answer the questions, and all the directions were given in Korean. They were permitted to ask questions about vocabulary, but they were not allowed to use any dictionary.

IV. RESULT

1. Grammaticality Judgment Task

Table 1 shows the results of the grammaticality judgment task for each type of relative clauses. The subjects received the highest mean score in their judgment of OS-type relative clauses (M = 65.76), and the second highest score on the SS-type relative clauses (M = 60.52). The mean scores of the subjects’ judgment on the SO- and OO-type relative clauses were lower than the other two types (M = 55.56, and 48.68, respectively). The differences of mean scores between the four types of relative clauses are graphically displayed in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task type</th>
<th>RC type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammaticality</td>
<td>SS-type</td>
<td>60.52</td>
<td>19.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judgment task</td>
<td>SO-type</td>
<td>55.56</td>
<td>20.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OS-type</td>
<td>65.76</td>
<td>17.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OO-type</td>
<td>48.68</td>
<td>31.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 1
Comparison of Mean Scores of Grammaticality Judgment Task for Each Type of Relative Clause

A one-way analysis of variance indicates that there is a significant difference in the subjects’ judgment between the four types of relative clauses \( F(3, 184) = 71.90, p < .05 \); See Table 2). In order to determine where the differences are in their judgment scores between the four types, a post-hoc analysis using the Scheffe test was performed to reveal that there are significant differences between OS-/SS-types and SO-/OO-types (See Figure 2). In fact, the differences are between OS- and SO-types, between OS- and OO-types, between SS- and SO-types, and between SS- and OO-types. However, there was no significant difference between OS- and SS-types, and between SO- and OO-types. It means that the subjects of the present study correctly judged the grammaticality of OS- and SS-type relative clauses substantially better than that of the SO- and OO-types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results of Statistical Analysis for Grammaticality Judgment Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*( p &lt; .05 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 2
Location of Significant Difference Between Relative Clause Types

OS > SS > SO > OO
2. Sentence Combination Task

The results of the sentence combination task for each type of relative clauses are represented in Table 3. The subjects received the highest mean score on the OS-type relative clauses \((M = 67.86)\), which was the same in the grammaticality judgment task. Unlike the grammaticality judgment task, however, the second highest score in the sentence combination task is on the OO-type relative clauses \((M = 48.02)\). The mean scores on the SS- and SO-type relative clauses were much lower than the other two types \((M = 29.52, and 24.87, respectively)\). The differences of mean scores between the four types of relative clauses are graphically displayed in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task type</th>
<th>RC type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>SS-type</td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>39.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SO-type</td>
<td>24.87</td>
<td>38.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OS-type</td>
<td>67.86</td>
<td>38.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OO-type</td>
<td>48.02</td>
<td>42.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way analysis of variance indicates that there is a significant difference between the four types of relative clauses \((F(3, 184) = 8.76, p < .05; \text{See Table 4})\). In order to determine where the differences are in their judgment scores between the four types, a post-hoc analysis using the Scheffe test was performed to reveal that there are significant differences between OS- and OO-type relative clauses, and between SS- and SO-types (See Figure 4). No significant difference was found between OO- and SS-types.

**FIGURE 3**
Comparison of Mean Scores of Sentence Combination Task for Each Type of Relative Clause

![Figure 3](image-url)
TABLE 4
Results of Statistical Analyses for Sentence Combination Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination task</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74.38</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>8.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
<td>520.72</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>187</td>
<td>595.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

FIGURE 4
Location of Significant Difference Between Relative Clause Types

OS > OO > SS > SO

3. Gap-filling Task

The results of the gap-filling task for each type of relative clauses are represented in Table 5. The subjects received the highest mean score on the SS-type relative clauses (M = 66.67), and the second highest on the OS-type relative clauses (M = 60.32). The mean scores on the SO- and OO-type relative clauses were lower than the other two types (M = 51.59, and 54.76, respectively). The differences of mean scores between the four types of relative clauses are graphically displayed in Figure 3. Unlike the other two tasks, the grammaticality judgment task and the sentence combination task, it appears that the differences between the four types of relative clauses are not so big in the gap-filling task.

TABLE 5
Results of Gap-filling Task for Each Type of Relative Clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task type</th>
<th>RC type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gap-filling task</td>
<td>SS-type</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>38.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SO-type</td>
<td>51.59</td>
<td>44.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OS-type</td>
<td>60.32</td>
<td>37.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OO-type</td>
<td>54.76</td>
<td>45.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 5
Comparison of Mean Scores of Gap-filling Task for Each Type of Relative Clause

A one-way analysis of variance indicates that, unlike the grammaticality judgment task and the sentence combination task, there is no significant difference between the four types of relative clauses ($F (3, 184) = 1.03, p > .05$; See Table 6). Even if some differences seem to exist in Figure 5, the differences are not statistically significant.

| TABLE 6 |
| Results of Statistical Analyses for Sentence Combination Task |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|
|         | df  | SS  | MS  | F   |
| Gap-filling task | 3   | 9.06| 3.02| 1.03|
|               | 184 | 538.21 | 2.93 |     |
|               | 187 | 547.28 |     |     |

The orders of the difficulty hierarchies in each task and the locations of statistically significant differences between types of relative clauses are summarized in Figure 6. Looking at the orders of difficulty represented in Figure 6, the AHH seems to correctly predict the order of difficulty in the grammaticality judgment task and the gap-filling task, while it appears that the PDH is better in predicting the difficulty order in the sentence combination task. However, the statistical results do not fully support the hypotheses. Only in the grammaticality judgment task is the difficulty order exactly the same as is predicted by the AHH: SS & OS > SO & OO. Even if the surface order of difficulty in the gap-filling task also follows the pattern predicted by the AHH, the statistical analysis does not support the hypothesis since no significant difference was found between the four types of relative clauses. The PDH, which seems to correctly predict the surface order of difficulty in the sentence combination task, is not fully supported by the statistical analysis, because the significant differences exist not between OS- and SS-types, but
between OS- and OO-types and between SS- and SO-types.

**FIGURE 6**
Orders of Difficulty in Each Task and Locations of Significant Differences Between Relative Clause Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammaticality judgment task</th>
<th>OS &gt; SS &gt; SO &gt; OO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination task</td>
<td>OS &gt; OO &gt; SS &gt; SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap-filling task</td>
<td>SS &gt; OS &gt; OO &gt; SO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The present study investigates the relevance of the three hypotheses (i.e., the PFH, the PDH, and the AHH) in predicting the acquisition order, or the difficulty hierarchy, of English restrictive relative clauses by Korean EFL learners. As shown in Figure 6, the AHH appears to be the most relevant hypothesis among the three. In the grammaticality judgment task, the order of difficulty is exactly the same as the AHH predicts and, furthermore, the statistical analyses revealed that the OS- and SS-type relative clauses are grouped into the easier types of relative clauses and the SO- and OO-type relative clauses belong to the more difficult types. There is no significant difference between the OS-type and the SS-type, and between the SO-type and the OO-type, which is exactly predicted by the AHH. The AHH seems to be weak for predicting the difficulty order in the gap-filling task. The surface order of difficulty in the gap-filling task is the same as the AHH predicts, but the order is not sustained by the statistical analyses since no significant difference is found between different types of relative clauses.

The sentence combination task produced favorable results to the PDH, which is different from the results of the grammaticality judgment task and the gap-filling task. The PDH predicts the difficulty order as OS & OO > SS & SO, and the order of difficulty in the sentence combination task is OS > OO > SS > SO, which appears the same as is predicted by the PDH. However, the groupings by the statistical analyses are different from the prediction of the PDH. The significant differences exist between the OS-type and the OO-type, and between the SS-type and

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1 The acquisition order of a grammatical structure is often not regarded as being identical with the difficulty order, they have been assumed to be the same in the present study.
the SO-type, but no significant difference is found between the OO-type and the SS-type. It means that even if the PDH correctly predicts the difficulty order in the sentence combination task, the prediction is not a perfect one.

The subjects of the present study, Korean EFL learners, produced incongruent results regarding the acquisition of English relative clauses depending upon the types of tasks, that is, whether the task is the grammaticality judgment task, the combination task, or the gap-filling task. One of the big differences between the tasks is whether it is a comprehension task or a production task. The grammaticality judgment task focuses on the subjects' comprehension or recognition of the grammaticality of the given sentences, while the sentence combination task and the gap-filling task are more related to the subjects' production ability of English relative clauses. The three hypotheses have not distinguished comprehension ability from production ability. They have been only concerned with a unitary explanation of the learners' acquisition of restrictive relative clauses in English. Therefore, the full prediction or explanation of the hierarchy of difficulty learners feel when they acquire English restrictive relative clauses may be accomplished on the basis not only of the relationships between the head noun and the relative pronoun, but also of the distinction between the learners' comprehension and production ability.

According to Piememann (1984, 1989),
classroom instruction is effective only when learners are developmentally ready. He argues that pedagogical intervention cannot alter the developmental order of a structure. In addition, Mackey (1995, 1999) maintains that even if instruction does not interrupt the sequence of acquisition, it helps learners move along a developmental path more rapidly than when there is no instruction. Taking into consideration these research studies, the present study is expected to provide some pedagogical implications for teaching English relative clauses in the EFL classroom. More effective instruction on English relative clauses may be possible when the teacher correctly judges how much the learners know about English relative clauses. Determining whether the learners are at the immediately preceding stage or at much earlier stage is critical for the successful acquisition. Therefore, the investigation of the learners' stages of acquisition of English relative clauses should precede the classroom instruction. In this respect, the present study is expected to give pedagogical significance to the classroom instruction of English relative clauses.

The present study reveals many limitations in its theoretical backgrounds and research methodology. First of all, the study includes very limited types of English relative clauses. Among the three hypotheses, the PFH and the PDH focus on the relationship between the head

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2 Piememann (1984) suggested a hypothesis which is called Teachability. He investigated 10 Italian children's development of German word-order. There were two weeks of instruction on a particular stage of word-order development. Only children who were at the immediately preceding stage learned the target word-order through instruction because they were developmentally ready to learn it.
noun and the relative pronoun, so they refer to only the four types of restrictive relative clauses: SS-, SO-, OS- and OO-types. The AHH, which is concerned with the function of the relative pronoun, also deals with the four types of relative clauses. As seen in the NPAH, there are all six types of relative clauses in English which differ in the function of relative pronoun: SU > DO > IO > OPREP > POSS > OCOMP. Of these six types of relative clauses, the three hypotheses refer to two: SU (subject) and DO (direct object), and the three tasks of the present study tested the learners’ knowledge about the two types only. For a complete understanding of the developmental path of English relative clauses, a future study which includes more types of relative clauses seems to be required.

Another limitation of the present study lies in the proficiency range of the subjects who participated in the tests. The subjects of the present study were from one whole class of a high school, and their proficiency ranged widely from low to high. Even if the subjects were of the same age and had similar backgrounds of English language learning, they were believed to have reached different developmental stages regarding English relative clauses. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the order of acquisition or difficulty Korean EFL learners feel when they learn English relative clauses. If there exist proficiency differences between learners, especially between low-level learners and high-level learners, the decision on the difficulty order or on the developmental stage of the learners may become less reliable. The possibility of the reduced reliability is implied in the standard deviations of the learners’ tasks of three types. All the standard deviations, except for the grammaticality judgment task, of the three tasks for each type of relative clause were over 35 and the highest standard deviation is 45.76 in the OO-type gap-filling task (See Table 1, 3, and 5). In order to determine more exact order of difficulty or acquisition of English relative clauses, this study should have divided the subjects into several (two or three) proficiency groups and compared each group’s order of difficulty. This task is left to future studies which investigate the order of acquisition of English relative clauses from the very beginning level to the advanced level.

REFERENCES


London: Longman.

APPENDIX

English Grammar Test

[Part I]

Read the following sentences. Write O if you think that it is grammatical, and write X if you think that it is ungrammatical. Do not spend much time thinking about the sentences. Please show your first impression about the sentences.

(보기) There are three boys in the classroom. (O)

There is three boys in the classroom. (X)

1. Most of the people who they live in Austria speak German.

2. A plane have crashed at Incheon Airport.

3. Do you know a shop which sells these good cheese?

4. You had better to take your umbrella when you go out.

5. Where shall we meet tomorrow?

6. The movie which was very exciting was made in France.

7. Baseball is played by two teams of nine players.

8. The people which live next door have five children.

9. What kind of American dish do you like?

10. The campsite who we found was very dirty.

11. I wanted cleaning the table, but my mother did it.

12. The people came to dinner stayed very late.

13. I usually read the paper before going to work.

14. I want to speak to the person who wrote this letter.

15. She spoke for an hour without using notes.

16. Yesterday I met a man who works with your brother.

17. I put on my best clothes for the interview yesterday.

18. The tomatoes are all bad which I bought yesterday.

19. Her hair is as black as her mother’s.

20. The woman who gives me tennis lesson is from Brazil.

21. Come here and look at this photos.

22. The car which I bought last month isn’t very good.

23. She works more carefully than me.

24. The computer which was broken yesterday is mine.

25. The man puts tomato sauce on everything.
26. Do you know the man who lives next door?  
27. We started without her because of she was late.  
28. The tickets which I bought were very expensive.  
29. You can either come in my car and walk home.  
30. I'm not going to buy this new car.  
31. The man who works in the shop is very friendly.  
32. Do you know what does this word mean?  
33. The girl said a word which I couldn't understand it.  
34. She wants to know where is Peter's sister.  
35. We know the woman who she teaches French at your school.  
36. You're from Scotland, aren't you?  
37. The girl lives in a small town near Edinburgh.  
38. That book which you suggested to me is very good.  
39. None of these telephones work.  
40. The shop is closed today which sells that good bread.  
41. My father don't like me to ask for money.  
42. The police stopped a man which looks very dirty.  
43. Please try to not laugh when Bill sings.  
44. The poems which he wrote them are very hard to understand.  
45. Do you know what time her plane arrives?  
46. I found the keys which you lost yesterday.  
47. How long does it take to get to New York?  
48. I know a shop sells really good meat.  
49. I stayed up late last night to finish my English homework.  
50. Do you remember these people which you met last year?

[Part II]

Combine the two sentences with an appropriate relative pronoun.

1. The police are looking for two men.  
   They robbed a bank last night.  

   ⇒  

2. A cup of coffee is on the table.  
   You wanted it.  

   ⇒  

3. The bus isn't running today.  
   It goes to City Hall.  

   ⇒  

4. I'm working for a man.  
   I first met him ten years ago.  

   ⇒  

5. Joe bought a motorbike.  
   It can run 200 kilometers an hour.  

   ⇒  

6. The eggs were bad.  
   I bought them yesterday.  

   ⇒  

7. The ring belonged to my mother.  
   You lost it yesterday.  

   ⇒
8. The man came from Canada. He won the prize.
   ⇒ ____________________________________________________

9. I can't find the key. It opens this door.
   ⇒ ____________________________________________________

10. Yesterday I met a woman. She liked to sing a song.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

11. The boys are my friends. They are playing football.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

12. The woman is a famous writer. She is standing over there.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

13. I lost the ear-rings. Harry gave them to me.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

14. The girl was ill. She didn't come to school.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

15. I didn't understand the words. She was speaking them.
    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

    ⇒ ___________________________________________________

[Part III]

Fill in the blanks with an appropriate relative pronoun.

1. Do they find the dog? It bit the little girl.
   ⇒ Do they find the dog ____________________ ?

   ⇒ The man ____________________ plays golf.

3. The books are very expensive. They look wonderful.
   ⇒ The books ____________________ are very expensive.

4. Can you pick up the papers? They are lying on the table.
   ⇒ Can you pick up the papers ____________________ ?

5. She said a word. I didn't hear it.
   ⇒ She said a word ____________________ .

6. He showed me the computer. He bought it yesterday.
   ⇒ He showed me the computer ____________________ .

7. The man was a policeman. He gave me the book.
   ⇒ The man ____________________ was a policeman.

8. The letter is for me. You saw it yesterday.
   ⇒ The letter ____________________ is for me.

9. The people are very nice. We met them yesterday.
   ⇒ The people ____________________ are very nice.

10. That cheese come from Scotland. You like them very much.
    ⇒ That cheese ____________________ come from Scotland.

11. The people are Canadian. They live downstairs.
    ⇒ The people ____________________ .
12. Did I tell you about the film? We saw it yesterday.
   ⇒ Did I tell you about the film?

13. The flowers are beautiful. You gave them to Sandy.
   ⇒ The flowers are beautiful.

14. Do you know the girls? They are standing by the window.
   ⇒ Do you know the girls?

15. I don't like the man. He is going out with my sister.
   ⇒ I don't like the man.

16. I gave him the present. I bought it in Japan.
   ⇒ I gave him the present.

Applicable levels: secondary level
Key words: relative clauses, PFH, PDH, AHII

Jong-Bai Hwang
Department of English Language and Literature
Konkuk University
1 Hwayang-dong, Gwangjin-gu
Seoul 143-701, Korea
Tel: (02)450-3344 / H.P.: 011-9838-3407
Email: jongbai@konkuk.ac.kr

Received in February 2003
Reviewed in April 2003
Revised version received in August 2003