

Revisiting Causes of Grammar Errors: Commonly Confused Lexical Category Dyads in Korean EFL Student Writing*

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Kim, Sugene. (2016). Revisiting causes of grammar errors: Commonly confused lexical category dyads in Korean EFL student writing. *English Teaching*, 71(2), 61-85.

This study reports on the findings of error analysis of a learner corpus consisting of 238 English argumentative essays written by Korean college students, specifically on errors that stem from confusion of lexical categories. A three-step error analysis was conducted following a procedure established by Rod Ellis in 1995. The results revealed 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads—coordinators or subordinators mistaken for adverbs, adverbs for conjunctions, gerunds for nouns, the adverb *almost* for either an adjective or a noun, the pronoun *each other* for an adverb, adverbs for nouns, conjunctions for prepositions, prepositions for conjunctions, the preposition *to* for an infinitive, and the adverbial *for example* for a preposition. Discussions of the causes of such confusion—homogeneous L1 translation, failure to correctly punctuate spoken language in writing, lack of L2 grammar knowledge, negative transfer of L1 morphosyntactic properties, and lack of L2 lexical knowledge—are delineated with specific examples. The limitations of the study and pedagogical implications are addressed.

Key words: error analysis, error source, lexical category, EFL writing, language transfer

1. INTRODUCTION

A large body of research has established the fact that comparatively advanced language proficiency is demanded when it comes to producing academic writing (Hinkel, 2011, 2013; I. Lee, 2009; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Thompson, 2001; Weigle, 2002).

* This paper is built on research conducted by the author for her doctoral dissertation.

Celce-Murcia (1991), for example, pointed out that “the importance of a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy in academic or professional writing cannot be overstated” (p. 465), citing a study that indicates EFL students’ academic writing laden with frequent grammar errors can make essays unacceptable to university faculty in mainstream courses (as cited in Hinkel, 2013, p. 4).

To have a full understanding of second language (L2) grammar errors, a number of English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) studies have investigated causes of grammatical errors made by a certain first language (L1) group (Granger, 1998). Following outstanding works done by Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986), Odlin (1989), Kellerman (1995), and James (1998), an analytical tool referred to as transfer analysis was introduced, and SLA researchers began to investigate interlanguage-target language (TL) discrepancies upon the assumption that certain deviances in learner production are the results of L1 transfer (James, 1998).

Correcting hundreds of student essays every semester for over 10 years as an English instructor at a large university in Seoul, South Korea, I have come across quite a few typical error patterns—not only grammatical but lexical and mechanics-related ones as well—that consistently appear in Korean EFL student compositions. Consequently, I began to develop an interest over time in exploring types of grammar errors that my native Korean-speaking students are prone to make; to establish a comprehensive, empirically based taxonomy of frequent errors; and to find an easy, understandable way to explain them.

To date, a number of studies have been undertaken to identify common grammar errors made by Korean students in either written or spoken English production (e.g., Chin, 2001; J.-Y. Kim, 1998). However, studies are scarce in the Korean EFL context that attempted to explain those errors by identifying their specific sources. Therefore, I set out to inquire into these recurrent, systematic deviations from the norms of the English language presumably due to cross-linguistic influence (Sharwood Smith, 1983) and to get at their possible sources.

This study was conducted with an aim to help English instructors teaching Korean EFL learners to better understand the types of errors that their students are likely to make and, thus, to diagnose and treat them effectively (Selinker, 1974) by means of effective remedial instruction and corrective feedback. Among 22 error categories (see Appendix for details) identified as a result of the study, this paper deals with only one of them—error category No. 16 “Confused lexical categories”—due to space limitations. The paper begins with a brief review of previous studies on the use of learner corpora as a means of analyzing L2 errors and their causes. It then presents the error analysis procedure followed in the present study. In later sections, the paper reports and discusses the findings of the error analysis—the 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads and the sources of such confusion—with specific examples drawn from the collected L2 data.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Analysis of Learner Corpora

Since the late 1980s, analysis of L2 language errors by investigating learner corpora burgeoned as a discipline, and it has created an important link between the two previously disparate fields of corpus linguistics and ESL/EFL research. Corpus linguists have shown a persistent interest for decades in the pedagogical implications and applications of corpus-based research, and the COBUILD project—which gave birth to a new generation of learner dictionaries—and the compilation of learner corpora, such as the International Corpus of Learner English, are testimony of this fact.

Corpus linguistics aims to gather objective data and to provide improved descriptions of various aspects of learner language (Granger, 1998; Tan, 2005). Since Granger (1994) first situated learner corpus research in relation to second language acquisition (SLA) in the early 1990s, it has been used as a major source for learning about various types of errors and their possible origins (Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006). Through investigating authentic, natural English learner data, researchers can access learners' interlanguage, and educators can determine areas that need reinforcement in teaching and, accordingly, concentrate on the needs of learners (Pravec, 2002).

To name a few empirical studies that utilized learner corpora, Gilquin, Granger, and Paquot (2007) compared native speakers (NSs) of English corpora to non-native speakers (NNSs) of English corpora. They discovered that NNSs made errors in frequency (e.g., the overuse of words or phrases that NSs do not frequently use) and register, which indicates that English learners tend to use words or phrases in their academic writing that NSs use in speech, and conversely. Discussing the results of the study, they addressed the benefits of using learner corpora and suggested that they can provide insight into the types of errors that language learners are prone to make.

Using a fairly large corpus of over 1,000 texts, Hinkel (2003) looked at the level of complexity exhibited by advanced NNSs and compared it to texts produced by NSs. Her study showed that significantly more markers of simplicity such as the *be*-copula and vague nouns were present in essays written by NNSs. The learner corpora have also been used to elucidate various aspects of learner language, including the use of connectors (see Milton & Tsang, 1993), adjective intensification (see Lorenz, 1998), adverbial connectors (see Altenberg & Granger, 2002), and syntactic and lexical constructions in academic writing (see Hinkel, 2003).

In the Korean EFL context, Yoon and Yoo (2011) conducted an error analysis on a learner corpus of 399 Korean college freshman students—especially on grammar errors in the use of English conjunctive adjuncts. Their study showed that Korean students tend to

use sentence-initial coordinators and that sentence fragments occur much more frequently than run-on sentences. J.-Y. Kim's (1998) study analyzed grammar errors in 200 tenth grade Korean student writing samples. The results showed 22 common grammar categories under six domains of noun phrases, verb phrases, clauses and sentences, prepositional phrases, adjective phrase domains, and other common errors.

From a pedagogical perspective, the use of learner corpora has suggested a new direction of teaching grammar (see Conrad, 2000; Conrad & Biber, 2009; Gilquin et al., 2007; Granger & Tribble, 1998; Meunier, 2002). For instance, research into learner corpora has led to the creation of EFL tools such as the Electronic Language Learning and Production Environment tool driven by the learner corpus of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, which was designed to help ESL learners improve the lexical, grammatical, and discursual aspects of their written work (Granger, 1998).

More recently, Cowan, Choo, and Lee (2014) have shown how corpus linguistic analysis can help ESL students raise awareness of correct grammatical form and improve their ability to edit persistent grammatical errors from their writing. They compiled a database containing typical errors found in Korean ESL student essays, and then manually inspected the corpus for recurrent patterns. After identifying four persistent errors with the highest frequency, they built a computer-assisted courseware and imparted grammar instruction on it to the instructional treatment group once a week for four weeks. The pre-test-post-test experiment has shown that the experimental group performed significantly better in correcting the four types of errors than the control group that had received standard ESL writing instruction with no explicit instruction on any of the grammar topics.

To summarize, a review of relevant literature on learner corpus analysis and its use indicates that the usefulness of learner corpora is now widely acknowledged for its apparent benefits in both ESL and EFL teaching (Granger, 2004). As many would agree, "corpora constitute resources which, [when they are] placed in the hands of teachers and learners who are aware of their potential and limits, can significantly enrich the pedagogic environment" (Aston, 1995, p. 261). In effect, learner corpus data are extensively utilized in the fields of materials design, syllabus design, and classroom methodology as a useful resource not only to describe learner language but to identify typical difficulties of a certain learner group (Granger, 1998).

2.2. Sources of Errors

In 1972, Selinker (as cited in Richards, 1974, p. 37) reported five sources of errors: language transfer (negative transfer that hinders the learning of L2), transfer of training (which results from particular approaches used in training), strategies of L2 learning (employed in an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the TL),

strategies of L2 communication (adopted by the learner in order to communicate with NSs of the TL), and overgeneralization of TL rules and semantic features without making appropriate exceptions. In 1974, Corder identified three sources of errors of L1 interference accountable for interlingual errors, learner's generalization and overgeneralization of particular rules accountable for intralingual errors, and faulty teaching techniques accountable for teaching-induced errors. In the same year, Richards and Sampson (1974) suggested seven sources of errors—language transfer; intralingual interference, four causes of which include overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and semantic errors such as building false concepts/systems; sociolinguistic situations; modality; age; successions of approximative systems; and universal hierarchy of difficulty.

Among others, the studies pertaining to language transfer have received considerable attention in the literature (see Khodabande, 2007; I. Kim, 1989; E. P. Lee, 2001 for studies conducted in EFL contexts). During the 1940s and 1950s, L1 transfer was regarded as a major influence in SLA, and comparisons between the L1 and the TL were even used as the only predictor of success in SLA. However, a great paradigm shift occurred in the 1970s with the introduction of the concept of interlanguage (Corder, 1967; Selinker, 1972), and the role of L1 transfer began to be seen as one of many possible factors influencing SLA. Interest in L1 transfer was revitalized in the 1990s with its concept often combined with other phenomena such as typological distance and degree of markedness (see Gass & Selinker, 1993; Kellerman, 1995; Odlin, 1989).

Chan (2004), for instance, has presented confirmatory evidence of syntactic transfer from Chinese to English based on data obtained from 710 Hong Kong Chinese college students. She focused on five specific syntactic patterns—lack of control of the copula, incorrect placement of adverbs, inability to use the *there be* structure for expressing the existential or presentative function, failure to use relative clauses, and confusion in verb transitivity. Her study showed that many Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners tend to think in Chinese first and then write in English and that in many cases the surface structures of the interlanguage strings produced by the participants were very similar or even identical to the usual or normative sentence structures of the learners' L1 (Cantonese). The results also showed that syntactic transfer occurs to the greatest extent for complex target structures.

As shown in the previous studies, despite a view that argues for a lack of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition (e.g., Epstein, Flynn, & Martohardjono, 1996), the more dominant view is that L1 transfer plays an important role in L2 acquisition (Odlin, 1989). Also, the role of L1 knowledge and its relationship to L2 acquisition or proficiency are considered an important issue in the field of L2 research and teaching nowadays.

3. METHOD¹

3.1. Participants

The participants consist of 238 EFL college students attending a large private university in Seoul, South Korea. They were female students of mixed majors, and their age ranged from 19 to 22. They were from 13 intact mandatory freshman composition classes that the researcher taught. The class met twice a week for 75 minutes each.

With regard to the participants' language learning history, they all had learned English both at elementary and secondary school and private language institutions for an average period of approximately 10 years when they took the composition course. English was a foreign language for all the participants, with none of them living in English-dominant countries for more than one year.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Collection of learner language samples

A written English corpus of Korean learners (WECKL) was compiled to identify and analyze the common grammatical error patterns that Korean EFL college students exhibit. The data collection was done for four years (2010-2013), and 238 argumentative essays were collected from 13 sections of college composition classes that were taught by the researcher. The collected L2 data were then compiled into the WECKL, comprising a total word count of 112,098. The essays used for WECKL construction were first drafts of the students' writing assignments, which was to write a five-paragraph argumentative essay in the range of 450 to 500 words in response to one of the following prompts:

1. It seems many of us cannot function well without smartphones, meaning that we are becoming overwhelmingly dependent on them. Is this dependence a good phenomenon or should we be more suspicious of their benefits? Use specific reasons and convincing evidence to back up your argument.
2. Technology makes communication easier in today's world. Many people prefer text messages to voice calls, or socialize with others through the social networking service (SNS) instead of meeting them in person. Do you think that face-to-face communication is better than other types of communication, such as Facebook? Use specific reasons and convincing evidence to back up your argument.

¹ The array of methods used in the author's doctoral study (S. Kim, 2016) is adopted.

3.2.2. Identification of errors

Identification of errors in the WECKL was done by two native English-speaking instructors teaching at the same university as the researcher. One of the participating instructors had been teaching English composition in South Korea for 11 years and the other for 7 years when asked to correct grammar errors in the student writing (hard copies of WECKL data). Both were US citizens with a master's degree in communication and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), respectively. To check the comparability of the instructors, they were asked to correct and comment on five sample essays drawn from the WECKL. They were found to agree on the identification of almost all of the grammar errors, so the researcher randomly divided the collected 238 student essays in half and asked them to correct 119 essays each.

3.2.3. Classification of errors

After the error identification was finished, the researcher classified the errors. For the categorization of genetic errors, a taxonomy for error analysis was developed based on the one proposed by James (1998), which divides errors into four categories of grammatical, syntactic, lexical, and mechanics-related errors. In an attempt to better reflect various types of errors made by Korean learners of English, a total of 22 error categories were identified, one of which was related to errors caused by confused lexical categories. Errors as such were selected based on English grammar rules. In addition, for further verification of the cause of those errors, the researcher consulted with the students about the erroneous word choices they had made in their writings during a one-on-one writing conference (refer to the following subsection 3.2.4. for details).

3.2.4. Description and evaluation of errors

As the final step of the error analysis, different types of errors were given explanations—the ultimate object of error analysis (Corder, 1974). In the mean time, additional descriptive data were collected through direct conversations with the students whose writing samples were collected for the error analysis.

When identifying sources of errors, a general distinction is made between interlingual (transfer) and intralingual (developmental) errors according to their causes (Richards, 1974). However, the distinction between the two is often not clear-cut; furthermore, it is not always possible to classify intralingual errors into their subcategories (e.g., overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concept hypothesized). Therefore, the researcher held a one-on-one writing conference

with the students when returning their first drafts for its advantages of immediacy, negotiation, and opportunity for clarification (see Atwell, 1998; Brender, 1998; Fregeau, 1999; Zamel, 1982, 1985). For approximately 15 minutes with each of the students, the researcher consulted about the incorrect word choices made in their writing, aiming at investigating the nature of learning difficulties and probing into their possible causes (Williams, 2003). During the conference, the researcher made a quick note of the students' responses that were relevant to lexical category confusion. After all conference sessions were finished, the responses were categorized according to their common properties.

4. RESULTS

This chapter reports on the results of the error analysis conducted on the WECKL comprised of 238 first drafts of Korean college student argumentative essays. Direct consultation with the students revealed that of a total of 6,545 sentences in the WECKL, 384 sentences were grammatically incorrect due to lexical category confusion. Table 1 summarizes 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads found in Korean EFL college student writing. Error types 1 to 10 are numbered in order from most to least frequent errors.

TABLE 1
Commonly Confused Lexical Category Dyads in Korean EFL Student Writing

Error Type	Confused Lexical Category Dyad	Frequency	%
1	Coordinators <i>but</i> and <i>and</i> and subordinator <i>because</i> mistaken for adverbs	98	25.5
2	Adverbs <i>however</i> and <i>therefore</i> mistaken for conjunctions	87	22.7
3	Gerunds mistaken for nouns	52	13.5
4	Adverb <i>almost</i> mistaken either for an adjective or a noun	39	10.2
5	Pronoun <i>each other</i> mistaken for an adverb	34	8.9
6	Adverbs <i>online</i> , <i>anytime</i> , and <i>anywhere</i> mistaken for nouns	28	7.3
7	Conjunctions <i>while</i> and <i>although</i> mistaken for prepositions	16	4.2
8	Prepositions <i>during</i> and <i>despite</i> mistaken for conjunctions	14	3.6
9	Preposition <i>to</i> mistaken for an infinitive	9	2.3
10	Adverbial <i>for example</i> mistaken for a preposition	7	1.8
Total		384	100.0

A detailed description of each error type with specific examples is given in the following sections. The example sentences are drawn from the WECKL, and the word causing the grammar error in question appears in boldface for easy identification. The caret symbol (^) represents an omission of an essential grammatical word, and the asterisk symbol (*) an incorrectly inserted one. Words leading to grammar errors with frequencies of three or lower in the WECKL are not discussed in this paper.

4.1. Coordinators or Subordinators Mistaken for Adverbs

Of the 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads, the coordinator/subordinator–adverb confusion occurred most frequently, accounting for slightly over a quarter of all grammar errors (25.5%) that were caused by confusion in lexical categories. As shown in the examples below, many Korean students seem to initially parse the L2 (English) using the grammatical structures from their L1 (Korean), commonly confusing coordinators or subordinators for adverbs. Such conjunctions include *but*, *and*, and *because* in descending order of frequency.

- (1) Smartphone made our life much more convenient. **But** over reliance on smartphone causes acute problems.
- (2) We can meet new people on SNS easily. **But**, the number of times people talking face to face decreased because of these conveniences.
- (3) Dry eye syndrome, and herniated cervical disc are dangerous diseases that result from smartphone. **And** there are many other damaging syndrome also.
- (4) As long as people use the social network site carelessly, it can cause psychological problems for individuals, for example depression and SNS fatigue syndrome. **And**, social problems, such as cyber bullying and privacy can be developed in this cyber world.
- (5) There is no need to restrict the use of cell phones in public places. **Because** it does not hurt people physically.
- (6) People who think that dependence is not good say that person who read a newspaper on the subway or the street consider oneself as a loser. **Because**, many people read online newspaper using the smartphone.

One-on-one consultations with the students confirmed that Korean EFL students often mistake the conjunctions *but*, *and*, and *because* for adverbs due to their semantic homogeneity in L1 translation. As a result, the anomalous structure in which a comma comes immediately after the coordinator or subordinator (as in [2], [4], and [6]) is not only common but instinctively understandable to most native Korean-speaking students.

The coordinator *but* was found to be confused for the adverb *however* because *but* and *however* are translated identically as *guro-na* in Korean. Even though the correct Korean equivalent of the coordinator *but* is the coordinate conjunctive suffix *-jiman*, most English-Korean dictionaries translate it as an adverbial, thus resulting in confusion between the two lexical categories. The coordinator *and* and subordinator *because* were found to be mistaken for adverbs because most English-Korean dictionaries translate *and* and *because* as *guri-go* and *way-nya-ha-mion*, respectively, both of which are adverbs.

As shown in examples (1), (2), (3), and (4), confusion of coordinators *but* and *and* for adverbs results in constructions that go against the stern admonition: “Never begin a sentence with a conjunction.” Even though the ban on introductory *buts* and *ands* is controversial (see Allen, 2008; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Trimble, 1975), according to prescriptive grammar, a sentence with sentence-initial coordinating conjunctions are ungrammatical because such a sentence expresses an incomplete thought.

The example sentences (5) and (6) are grammatically incorrect, without controversy, as they are “sentence fragments.” In the case of (5), the sentence is incomplete because the subordinate clause beginning with *because* cannot stand alone. For the same reason, the example sentence (6) is ungrammatical.

4.2. Adverbs Mistaken for Conjunctions

The adverb-conjunction confusion was found to occur second most frequently, constituting 22.7% of the grammar errors caused by lexical category confusion. The adverbs commonly mistaken for conjunctions are *however*, *therefore*, *then*, and *even*, in descending order of frequency.

- (7) Social network service has not only advantages but also demerits, **however** many benefits make up for the weak points.
- (8) For example, Seoul Bus application inform us about the timetable of the bus service, **therefore** we do not have to wait for the bus.
- (9) There are much informations in smartphone, **then** people have huge trouble in searching the information that they need.
- (10) Students who become addicted to smartphone lose learning ability, **even** it leads them to game addiction.

The grammatical error type for the example sentences above falls under “comma splice,” which occurs when a comma is incorrectly inserted between two independent clauses. In example sentences (7) and (8), many Korean students were found to confuse the adverbs *however* and *therefore* for the conjunctions *but* and *so*, respectively. Such phenomena were found to result from the semantic homogeneity in L1 translation of the pairs of *however–but* and *therefore–so*. Even though the correct translation of coordinators *but* and *so* are *-jiman* and *-haeso*, most English-Korean dictionaries translate them as *haji-man* and *guro-muro*, both of which are adverbs. One-on-one consultation confirmed that most Korean students have a fuzzy concept of the difference between a conjunction and an adverb, which is induced mainly from cross-linguistic transfer (Sharwood Smith, 1983).

Regarding the example sentences (9) and (10), the adverbs *then* and *even* were found to be used incorrectly as conjunctions, but for a different reason. When questioned during the individual conference why they used *then* or *even* as they did, most students responded that they “heard” people say it that way. Since it is difficult, without adequate knowledge of English grammar rules, to infer punctuation in a spoken language, it seems that they confused sentence-initiating instances of *then* and *even* as conjunctions connecting the second clause to a preceding one.

4.3. Gerunds Mistaken for Nouns

A gerund—a verbal—was found to be often confused for a noun. The gerund-noun confusion comprised 13.5% of the grammar errors caused by confused lexical categories. A total of 52 ungrammatical sentences were found in this category, and frequently detected errors are shown below.

- (11) Long time **using** of the smartphone can cause health problems.
- (12) Smartphone causes a lack of true **communicating** among family and friends.
- (13) No matter how much our **living** has become convenient thanks to smartphone, that convenience will be useless if smartphone causes other serious problems.
- (14) Problems came up too many because of the **increasing** of smartphone users.
- (15) If we don’t want someone else to look out our every **acting** on Facebook, we have to make our information status “block”.

As shown in the examples above, a tendency was exhibited among Korean college students to use gerunds and nouns interchangeably. Consultation with the students further confirmed that not many Korean EFL students understand the difference between the two and that they regard a noun and a gerund as the same. When asked why they thought so, a massive majority responded that a gerund “is” a noun and that is why it is named that way. (A noun and a gerund are translated as *miong-sa* and *dong-miong-sa* in Korean, respectively, and they share the same root word *miong-sa* [noun].)

4.4. Adverb *Almost* Mistaken for Either an Adjective or a Noun

One adverb was found to belong to this category—*almost*. Thirty-nine sentences (10.2% of all errors) were extracted from the WECKL containing either *almost* or *almost of* immediately followed by a noun, as shown in the following examples:

- (16) **Almost** public places have a sign for prohibiting people from using cell phone.
- (17) **Almost of** smartphone users think that smartphones have become an indispensable part of their lives.

Individual consultation with the student writers revealed that quite many Korean students misunderstand the lexical category of the adverb *almost* as either an adjective (resulting in the “*almost + noun*” formation as in [16]) or a noun (thus the phrase “*almost of + noun*” as in [17]), understandably because of the Korean translation equivalent *day-bu-boon*, which is both an adjective and a noun. Therefore, the example sentences (16) and (17) make perfect sense when one translates them word for word into Korean.

4.5. Pronoun *Each Other* Mistaken for an Adverb

The pronoun *each other* was found to be frequently confused for a noun. Thirty-four erroneous sentences were extracted from the WELKC, which accounted for 8.9% of all grammatical errors analyzed for the current study.

- (18) Through SNS, people communicate \wedge **each other** easily and become friends whom they haven’t seen before.
- (19) When hedgehogs move closer \wedge **each other** to share their body heat, they often hurt each other because of their thorn.

Conversations with the students revealed that Korean students often misunderstand the lexical category of the pronoun *each other* as an adverb. Therefore, necessary prepositions are often omitted, as seen in the example sentences above: *with* for (18) and *to* for (19). Such an error is attributable to the fact that *each other* is translated as *soro-soro* in Korean, which is an adverb (as well as a noun). In addition, it was revealed that the fuzzy boundary between the two verb categories of intransitive and transitive verbs has almost fossilized the phenomenon among Korean EFL college students. A majority of the students failed to offer a clear answer to the question of why the sentence *they like each other*, for instance, is grammatically correct, whereas *they communicate each other* is not.

4.6. Adverbs Mistaken for Nouns

A total of 28 sentences were found to be ungrammatical because of an unnecessary preposition preceding an adverb. Such errors constituted 7.3% of all errors, and the adverbs *online*, *anytime*, and *anywhere* were found to be commonly confused for nouns.

- (20) Also, the more people participate in SNS, the more information of social issues are spread ***in online**.
- (21) You can contact them ***in anytime** anywhere with your smartphone.
- (22) Nearly everyone in buildings, at bus stop, and in the street are using smartphone. In the other words, almost every people use smartphone anywhere and ***at anytime**.
- (23) These days, almost people use smartphones, for it has many useful applications or can use internet ***in anywhere**.

For the adverb *online*, some Korean students were found to confuse it for one of those common nouns that denote a place, such as *house* or *classroom*, understandably because the word *online* is incorporated into the Korean lexicon as a noun. Thus, the L1 morphological property of *online* seems to have negatively affected the L2 production, resulting in the phrase *in online*.

For the same reason, the phrases *in anytime* and *in anywhere* were frequently found in the WELKC because some students mistook them for common nouns denoting time and place, respectively. The students, however, offered almost baseless grounds for such overgeneralization during the conference that “any-time is time, and any-where is a place”—to put their answers in Korean into English *verbatim*.

For the phrase *at anytime* shown in example (22), all five students who used it incorrectly in their writing passionately defended their choice, on the grounds that they had “heard” of the expression—several times. Since it is impossible to tell the noun phrase *any time* from the adverbial *anytime* in verbal communication, they seem to have heard *at any time* and falsely identified it as *at anytime*.

4.7. Conjunctions Mistaken for Prepositions

The conjunction-preposition confusion formed 4.2% of all errors. The conjunctions commonly confused for prepositions include *while* and *although*.

- (24) Also they use social networking and entertainment apps **while** their spare time.
- (25) **Although** the demerit mentioned above, people are still addicted to SNS.

Individual consultations revealed that some students have difficulty distinguishing between the conjunction *while* and the similarly defined preposition *during* because of their semantic homogeneity in L1 translation. It was found that the same holds for the dyad of the conjunction *although* and the preposition *despite*. (In Korean, both *while* and *during* are translated identically as *-dong-ahn*, and *although* and *despite* as *-bool-gu-hago*.)

4.8. Prepositions Mistaken for Conjunctions

A total of 14 erroneous sentences (3.6% of total errors) were extracted from the WELKC that were wrongly constructed by confusing a preposition for a conjunction. The prepositions in this category are *during* and *despite*.

- (26) They apologize for their rudeness **during** they watch smartphone.
- (27) **Despite** SNS causes many affairs, that is inevitable phenomenon because too many people are using SNS.

As discussed in the previous section 4.7., some students seem to identify the preposition *during* with the similarly meaning conjunction *while*. Likewise, the preposition *despite* is sometimes confused for the conjunction *although*.

4.9. Preposition *to* Mistaken for an Infinitive

Nine sentences were extracted from the WELKC that were grammatically incorrect because the preposition *to* was incorrectly used as an infinitive. Such an error constituted 2.3% of all errors.

- (28) People **are used to** get what they want quickly.
- (29) Now, we are living in amazing convenient world due to smartphone developers who **devote** their knowledge **to** make a better smartphone.
- (30) Smartphone **contribute to** improve our life in that immediacy.

The one-on-one consultation revealed that most students making the preposition *to*-infinitive *to* confusion error were ignorant of the L2 grammar rule that specifies that the *to* coming after certain verbs (e.g., *to admit*, *to be opposed*, *to be used*, *to be addicted*, *to be used*, *to commit*, *to confess*, *to contribute*, *to dedicate*, and *to object*) or nouns (e.g., *challenge*, *guide*, *key*, and *solution*) are a preposition, not an infinitive.

4.10. Adverbial *For Example* Mistaken for a Preposition

The error analysis of the WECKL revealed that the prepositional phrase *for example* is sometimes misused as a preposition by Korean students. A total of seven sentences were found to be ungrammatical due to such confusion, accounting for 1.8% of all errors.

- (31) As long as people use SNS carelessly, it can cause psychological problems for individuals, **for example** depression and SNS fatigue syndrome.
- (32) The devices supply a lot of contents, **for example**, news, games, webtoons, novels, communication and etc.

It was found that some Korean students mistake the prepositional phrase *for example* functioning as an adverbial for the preposition *such as* or *like*. Direct conversations with the students during the writing conference confirmed, as expected, that they mistook the adverbial *for example* as a preposition. Presumably, the L1 syntactic rule was negatively transferred (Chan, 2004; Rothman & Cabrelli, 2009; Whong-Barr & Schwartz, 2002) as *yerul-dul-mion*, the Korean translation equivalent for *for example*, is always followed by a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase—either singular or plural.

Interestingly, a consistent pattern was discerned in all seven sentences in which the adverbial *for example* was incorrectly used. Even though the students used the prepositional phrase *for example* as a preposition—albeit incorrectly—they all put a comma in front of it, for some inexplicable reason, as shown in both (31) and (32), which they rarely do with other prepositions.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the main findings (the 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads) of the present study. It also delineates the causes of the findings in relation to previous studies in relevant fields. Finally, it addresses the limitations of the study and presents some pedagogical implications.

5.1. Discussion of the Main Findings

The findings of this study have shown that there are commonly confused lexical category dyads among Korean EFL learners, which is consistent with the findings of S.-H. Kim's (2001) and Yoon and Yoo's (2011) studies. As summarized in Table 2 below, the factors that contribute to such confusion, resulting in the anomalous structures, include homogeneous L1 translation, failure to correctly punctuate spoken language in writing, lack of L2 grammar knowledge, negative transfer of L1 morphosyntactic properties, and lack of L2 lexical knowledge. For error types 2 (adverb-conjunction dyad) and 6 (adverb-noun dyad), it was found that the example sentences in the same category were ungrammatical for different reasons. Therefore, separate descriptions of each case are given according to its cause.

TABLE 2
Factors Contributing to Lexical Category Confusion Among Korean EFL Students

Cause	Type	Confused Lexical Category Dyad
Homogeneous L1 translation	1	Coordinators <i>but</i> and <i>and</i> and subordinator <i>because</i> mistaken for adverbs
	2	Adverbs <i>however</i> and <i>therefore</i> mistaken for conjunctions <i>but</i> and <i>so</i> , respectively
	4	Adverb <i>almost</i> mistaken for either an adjective or a noun
	5	Pronoun <i>each other</i> mistaken for an adverb
	7	Conjunctions <i>while</i> and <i>although</i> mistaken for prepositions <i>during</i> and <i>despite</i> , respectively
	8	Prepositions <i>during</i> and <i>despite</i> mistaken for conjunctions <i>while</i> and <i>although</i> , respectively
Failure to correctly punctuate spoken language in writing	2	Adverbs <i>then</i> and <i>even</i> mistaken for conjunctions
	6	Adverb <i>anytime</i> mistaken for a noun (e.g., <i>at anytime</i>)
Lack of L2 grammar knowledge	3	Gerunds mistaken for nouns
	9	Preposition <i>to</i> mistaken for an infinitive
Negative transfer of L1 morphosyntactic properties	6	Adverb <i>online</i> mistaken for a noun
	10	Adverbial <i>for example</i> mistaken for a preposition
Lack of L2 lexical knowledge	6	Adverbs <i>anytime</i> and <i>anywhere</i> mistaken for nouns (e.g., <i>in anytime</i> and <i>in anywhere</i>)

The findings regarding the confusion of conjunctive adjuncts for other lexical categories (error types 1, 2, and 10) are mostly compatible with those of Yoon and Yoo (2011), who analyzed Korean college students' use of English conjunctive adjuncts and reported that errors such as sentence fragments and run-ons are frequently found in Korean EFL student writing due to learners' failure to distinguish grammatical differences among different lexical categories (parts of speech). Their presumption that such errors seem to be "attributed to interference from learners' mother tongue" (p. 236) is confirmed in the present study by directly consulting with the students about the incorrect lexis choice that led to the grammatical error.

As is evident from the findings of the study, many Korean EFL students seem to lack the necessary knowledge of grammatical properties (i.e., lexical category) to produce correct English texts in academic setting. Specifically, a gap was identified between the semantic and the grammatical knowledge (error types 1, 2, 7, and 8) so that some students do not understand the difference between words of different grammatical properties if they are translated homogeneously in their L1 (e.g., the coordinator *but* and the adverb *however*, the adverb *therefore* and the coordinator *so*, the adverb *almost* and the adjective *most*, the conjunction *while* and the preposition *during*, and the conjunction *although* and the preposition *despite*). Since lexical knowledge consists of not only form and meaning but "use" (Nation, 2001), grammatical aspect (use) of word knowledge needs to be as equally stressed as form and meaning when teaching or learning English.

The finding that eight (of 10) types of confused lexical category dyads originated from L1 transfer—from either homogeneous L1 translation (error types 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8) or negative transfer of L1 morphosyntactic properties (error types 6 and 10)—support the Full Transfer/Full Access model proposed by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996), which states that L2 learners activate properties of their L1 lexicon when processing relevant L2 sentences. Specifically, the finding that many Korean students produce anomalous structures in English by negatively transferring L1 morphosyntactic properties, accords with previous studies that investigated negative transfer of L1 grammar properties (see Chan, 2004; Pongpaiboj, 2002; Whong-Barr & Schwartz, 2002). Direct conversations with the students have confirmed that many Korean EFL students recruit L1 grammar (e.g., word order in an L1 sentence) in L2 production in an attempt to compensate for their lack of L2 linguistic knowledge (Hahn, 2000).

An interesting factor was identified in this study that has not been reported in the previous studies, which concerns the failure to correctly punctuate spoken language in writing. Taking the sentences for example that were already discussed in the Result section, these are perfectly correct when spoken aloud rather than in writing.

- (9) There is much information in smartphone, **then** people have huge trouble in searching the information that they need.
- (10) Students who become addicted to smartphone lose learning ability, **even** it leads them to game addiction.
- (22) Nearly everyone in buildings, at bus stop, and in the street are using smartphone. In the other words, almost every people use smartphone anywhere and ***at anytime**.

That is, these sentences can be easily corrected by punctuating them differently as in (9c1), (9c2), (10c1), and (10c2), or by inserting a space in a word that was wrongly run together in the given contexts as in (22c).

- (9c1) There is much information in smartphone. **Then**, people have huge trouble in searching the information that they need.
- (9c2) There is much information in smartphone; **then**, people have huge trouble in searching the information that they need.
- (10c1) Students who become addicted to smartphone lose learning ability. **Even** it leads them to game addiction.
- (10c2) Students who become addicted to smartphone lose learning ability; **even** it leads them to game addiction.
- (22c) Nearly everyone in buildings, at bus stop, and in the street are using smartphone. In the other words, almost every people use smartphone anywhere and **at any time**.

The factor of inadequate L2 lexical knowledge (resulting in incorrect L2 phrases like *in anytime* and *in anywhere* as shown in the example sentences [21] and [23]) seems to partly reflect learners' inattentiveness (Cumming, 2006) in not checking the correct usage of the lexis. That is, overgeneralization of the adverbs *anytime* and *anywhere* as nouns simply because they "sound" that way lacks sufficient basis.

To conclude, considering the current English education curriculum in Korean, which only focuses on receptive skills (e.g., reading and listening), the gap between semantic and grammatical knowledge seems inevitable. That said, it is an irrefutable fact that the production of academic writing requires comparatively advanced language proficiency (see Celce-Murcia, 1991; Hinkel, 2011; I. Lee, 2009; Leki et al., 2008; Thompson, 2001; Weigle, 2002) as it consists of a variety of grammatical features all working together (see Coxhead & Byrd, 2007; Leki et al., 2008). Furthermore, recent research in SLA has shown that form-focused L2 instruction produces a positive effect on acquiring target structures by bringing them into prominence and by drawing learners' attention to them (Doughty, 1991; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Spada, 1997). Therefore, it seems necessary for English language teachers to highlight salient structural and lexical differences between the L1 and the L2 so that ESL/EFL learners become aware of L1 influence when interference occurs (Chan, 2004). In addition, more explicit instruction on grammatical properties (e.g., lexical category) of the lexis needs to be provided to help students enhance their communicative competency in written forms (Ellis, 2006).

5.2. Limitations of the Study

Despite the relatively large sample size, the findings of the study need to be interpreted with caution for the following reasons: First, the current study analyzed the essays written by Korean EFL college students. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to other groups of Korean EFL students, not to mention the entire EFL learner population. Second, the essays used for the error analysis were argumentative essays so that there is a possibility that error patterns identified in the study might not apply to writing of a different genre. Last, of the 10 commonly confused lexical category dyads identified, the four categories—the adverb *almost* mistaken either for an adjective or a noun (error type 4), the pronoun *each other* mistaken for an adverb (error type 5), the adverbs *online*, *anytime*, and *anywhere* mistaken for a noun (error type 6), and the preposition *to* mistaken for an infinitive—are highly topic-specific. The essays comprising the WECKL were on one of the two prompts of "smartphone dependence phenomenon" and "preference for SNS communication to its face-to-face equivalent." As a result, it must have been inevitable for the student writers to use the aforementioned expressions frequently because both the smartphone and the SNS are communication media that almost all college students are

used to nowadays to communicate with each other and to socialize with others online, anytime and anywhere. Therefore, the frequent error types reported in the present study might have limited bearing on compositions written on a different topic.

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APPENDIX

Common Errors in Korean EFL College Student Writing (S. Kim, 2016)^a

No.	Error category
1.	Lack of subject–verb agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-1. Subject and verb divided far by interrupting phrase 1-2. No “-(e)s” third person singular ending 1-3. Sentence beginning with <i>there</i>, <i>every</i>, <i>each</i>, or <i>no</i>
2.	Vague pronoun reference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-1. Incorrect pronoun-antecedent agreement 2-2. No antecedent
3.	Unnecessary shift in pronoun
4.	No or two subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-1. No subject in an inverted sentence 4-2. No subject after object relative pronoun <i>who</i>, <i>that</i>, or <i>which</i> 4-3. Incorrect omission of a subject while trying to form a participial phrase
5.	No or two verbs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-1. No verb 5-2. Two verbs 5-3. No necessary modal auxiliary verb
6.	Tense and aspect errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-1. Incorrect use of past tense in place of present perfect 6-2. Incorrect use of present tense in place of present perfect
7.	Incorrect passive constructions
8.	Incorrect forms of object complement for a causative verb (e.g., <i>to have</i> , <i>to make</i> , and <i>to let</i>)
9.	Incorrect dative constructions
10.	Incorrect verb forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-1. Preposition + “-ing” form of a verb 10-2. <i>To</i>-infinitive + “base” form of a verb
11.	Sentence-level errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11-1. Sentence fragment 11-2. Comma splice 11-3. Faulty parallelism
12.	Lexical errors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-1. L1 translation (negative transfer) 12-2. Collocation errors 12-3. Creation of nonexistent words 12-4. Inappropriate context

13. Adjective errors
 - 13-1. Adjectives that cannot refer to a person (e.g., *hard*, *useful*, *convenient*, *inconvenient*, *possible*, and *easy*)
 - 13-2. Adjectives that cannot refer to a thing (e.g., *sure*, *able*, and *unable*)
14. Article errors
 - 14-1. No definite article *the* or indefinite article *a(n)*
 - 14-2. Incorrect use of indefinite article *a* in place of *an*
15. Pluralization of count and non-count nouns
 - 15-1. Incorrect use of count noun singular in place of plural
 - 15-2. Pluralization of non-count nouns
16. Confused lexical categories
17. Incorrect comparative forms
18. Incorrect possessive forms
19. Frequently misused prepositions
20. Incorrect word order of a phrase that begins with an interrogative word (e.g., *what*, *when*, *where*, *who*, *why*, and *how*)
21. Incorrect listing of elements
 - 21-1. No *and* or *or* between the last and second-to-last elements in a list
 - 21-2. Unnecessary *and* or *or*
22. Unnecessary or missing comma
 - 22-1. Unnecessary comma
 - 22-2. No comma after an adverbial clause placed before the main clause

^aThis table is abstracted from S. Kim (2016) with minor modifications.

Applicable levels: Tertiary

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Received on March 1, 2016

Reviewed on April 15, 2016

Revised version received on May 15, 2016