

Individual Verb Differences in Korean Learners' Use of English Non-alternating Unaccusatives

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This study investigates individual verb differences in Korean learners' use of English non-alternating unaccusatives as well as the factors that influence various errors. Specifically, it focuses on the effects of L1 transfer and animacy of subjects on overpassivization errors. Concordance lines from a learner corpus consisting of 6,572 essays written by Korean college-level learners were analyzed to observe the syntactic distribution across ten non-alternating unaccusative verbs. The results revealed that overpassivization errors show disproportionate dispersion across the ten unaccusative verbs, and that Korean L1 influence is not a significant factor while inanimate subjects influence overpassivization. Furthermore, salient error patterns such as transitivization and overgenerated *be* were identified from the Korean learners' use of unaccusative verbs. This study proposes that some unaccusative verbs are more susceptible to overpassivization errors, and that Korean learners of English will benefit from being able to identify the factors contributing to errors for each unaccusative verb.

Key Words: corpus analysis, unaccusative verb, individual verb differences, overpassivization, Korean L1 influence, animacy effect

I. Introduction

It is well known that second language (L2) learners of English tend to overpassivize intransitive verbs, specifically, unaccusative verbs. The unaccusative hypothesis (Perlmutter, 1978) classified intransitive verbs into unergative and unaccusative verbs. Unergative verbs (e.g., *laugh* and *walk*) assign an agent role to the subject, while unaccusative verbs (e.g., *arrive* and *fall*) assign a theme or a patient role to the subject. The subcategorization of unaccusative verbs, however, is contrary to the typical form-meaning mappings in English that associate the subject and object with the agent and patient, respectively. Thus, the incongruence between syntactic and semantic configuration in the unaccusative verbs may cause L2 learners to make errors such as overpassivization in the following example:

* When the physical punishment *is disappeared*, teacher can't control their children.

What makes the overpassivization phenomenon fascinating in interlanguage studies is that these errors are observed across L2 learners from various first languages (L1) and are surprisingly prevalent among advanced L2 learners. Although advanced learners use passives correctly most of the time, they are prone to overpassivization when using unaccusative verbs.

To explain the phenomenon of overpassivization by L2 learners of English, many second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have proposed a series of accounts including the transitivity hypothesis (Yip, 1990, 1995), the post-verbal NP movement hypothesis (Balcom, 1997; Oshita, 1997; Zobl, 1989), and the animacy effect (Croft, 1995; Ju, 2000; No & Chung, 2006; Pae, Schanding, Kwon, & Lee, 2014; Yip, 1995). While many researchers attributed the phenomenon to a single account that applies to all unaccusatives and various native languages uniformly, some studies (Balcom, 1997; Hirakawa, 1995; Hwang, 2001, 2006; Ju, 1997; Kim, 2010; Kondo, 2005; Montrul, 2000; No & Chung, 2006) have revealed between-verb differences as well as different L1 influences on overpassivization errors. For example, it is widely accepted that L2 learners of English make considerably more overpassivization errors in alternating unaccusative verbs that have transitive pairs (e.g., *open* and *change*) than in non-alternating ones (e.g., *happen* and *appear*). Narrowing down the focus to the non-alternating unaccusative verbs that are assumed to be less susceptible to overpassivization, a few researchers (Mo, 2015; Owada, Muehlesien, & Tsubaki, 2009; Owada, 2013) have recently tried to investigate individual verb differences among the non-alternating unaccusatives. However, similar research has yet to be conducted using Korean as the native language.

Compared to the plethora of experimental research on overpassivization, few studies have made use of a learner corpus that demonstrates authentic and contextualized data produced by L2 learners. The learner corpus, however, is advantageous in that learners are freer to choose their own wording contrary to the experimental data for which learners are requested to produce a particular word or structure. In one of the earlier studies that analyzed a learner corpus from various L1s, Oshita (2000) revealed a high prevalence of overpassivization with non-alternating unaccusative verbs among Korean learners of English. He considered the result to be unexpected in the regard that Korean language does not allow a passive construction with unaccusative verbs. In fact, however, some Korean unaccusative verbs have overt passive morphemes in their Korean translations, making it difficult to distinguish passives from unaccusatives (e.g., *open*: transitive – *yelta*, passive – *yel-i-ta*, unaccusative – *yel-i-ta*). To correct for the misconception on Korean unaccusative verbs in the previous study and to demonstrate

the high prevalence of overpassivization among the Korean cohort, a close investigation with a proper understanding of Korean and with a larger Korean learner corpus is needed.

The present study aims to investigate individual verb differences in Korean learners' use of English non-alternating unaccusatives in terms of overpassivization errors. A learner corpus consisting of 6,572 texts written by Korean college-level learners is analyzed, and factors influencing overpassivization in the unaccusatives are examined. The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. Does Korean learners' use of English non-alternating unaccusatives show a different distribution of overpassivization across individual verbs?
2. What factors influence overpassivization in each individual verb?
3. Are there any salient error patterns other than overpassivization that are exhibited in Korean learners' use of English non-alternating unaccusative verbs?

II. Theoretical Background

2.1. Various accounts on overpassivization in unaccusative verbs

There are two trends of research regarding overpassivization in the literature. The first is the major trend of the overpassivization phenomenon, suggesting language universal account. One example of this accounts is the transitivization hypothesis (Yip, 1990, 1995), claiming that L2 learners interpret unaccusatives as underlying transitive verbs and that apply the passivization rule to the unaccusative verbs, which result in overpassivization. Dismissing the transitivization hypothesis, however, some researchers (Balcom, 1997; Oshita, 1997; Zobl, 1989) argued that L2 learners transitivize unaccusative verbs occasionally when there is a majority of passive unaccusatives, so it is not reasonable to connect the transitivization tendency with overpassivization. Instead, they advanced the post-verbal NP movement hypothesis, proposing that learners use 'be + en' structure as an overt marker for the syntactic movement of the post-verbal noun phrase to the subject position.

Both of the above accounts, nevertheless, overlooked individual verbs, behaving differently even within the same verb class. According to Ju (1997), Korean learners showed between-verb variation with overpassivization errors. In a grammaticality judgment task on a variety of unaccusatives, great disparity was observed between sentences such as 'The car disappeared (80% incorrectly rejected)' and 'The accident happened (20% incorrectly rejected).' In line with the between-verb variation account, Balcom (1997) reported that acceptance of overpassivized sentences in a grammaticality judgment task differed among verb classes of alternating and non-alternating unaccusatives, ranging from 71% to 4%. Hwang (2006) also manifested that Korean

learners of English learners have more difficulties acquiring *change*-type verbs than *happen*-type ones, indicating differences between English and Korean with respect to a transitive alternation in *change*-type verbs. More results that support the between-verb differences in alternating and non-alternating unaccusatives are found in No & Chung (2006) and Kim (2010) that reported Korean learners' higher error ratio in English alternating unaccusatives than non-alternating unaccusatives.

The second trend of the research, on the other hand, identified a language specific account. Montrul (2000) alluded to an influence of L1 morphology on passivizing English unaccusative verbs in Spanish and Turkish that have homophonous morphemes in intransitive and passive forms of transitive verbs. Supporting Montrul's suggestion, Kondo (2005) asserted that Spanish L2 learners of English overpassivized alternating unaccusatives but not non-alternating unaccusatives due to L1 influence, with morphological properties of Spanish affecting their English interlanguage grammar. In respect of Korean L1 influence on overpassivization, No & Chung (2006) reported that Korean learners of English are more likely to accept the passivized unaccusatives when their Korean translations include passive morphemes than when they do not. The result was subsequently confirmed in Kim (2010) that examined the effects of Korean passive morphological markings on overpassivization errors.

Taking another point of view other than syntactic or morphological accounts on overpassivization, some researchers identified cognitive factors. Yip (1995) posited that L2 learners are not likely to accept any change of state, occurring spontaneously without external causation, and thus resort to passive unaccusatives. Developing her ideas, Ju (2000) investigated an effect of external causation in a discourse that influences overpassivization in unaccusative verbs. As a result, she revealed that Chinese learners accepted passivized unaccusative verbs more frequently when an external agent or cause was available than when it was not. In accordance with Croft (1995) who proposed that the animacy of an argument is one of the crucial factors in choosing the voice of sentences, No & Chung (2006) examined the animacy effect of subjects and proved that Korean learners of English tend to accept passive unaccusatives with inanimate subjects and not with animate subjects. More recently, Pae et al. (2014) reported that the degree of animacy appears to influence overpassivization of unaccusative verbs among Korean learners of English, especially when a subject is not concrete.

Following the progress in previous research, it seems legitimate to investigate overpassivization in non-alternating unaccusatives and to examine the factors such as L1 transfer and the animacy effect. Compared to a large number of studies exploring the alternating unaccusatives that have transitive pairs, little concerns have been given to the non-alternating unaccusatives. On top of that, the language universal report on overpassivization neglected extraordinary tendencies emerging in specific languages, so

it is necessary to investigate L1 influence as well as animacy effect on Korean learners' overpassivization errors in English unaccusatives.

2.2. Passive construction in Korean

Korean has two types of passives including morphological and syntactic passives. The morphological passive, which is the representative passive type, is formed by attaching passive morphemes *-i*, *-hi*, *-li*, and *-ki* to the stem of a verb as in *po-ta* (to see) to be transformed to *po-i-ta* (to be seen). Unlike the morphological passive that requires only one morpheme, the syntactic passive is formed by adding passive auxiliary *-ci* to the stem of a verb, often with a connective ending *-e/a* preceding it. *Mantul-ta* (to make), for example, can be transformed to a passive form, *mantul-e-ci-ta* (to be made). While the morphological passive can transform few transitive verbs into passives, the syntactic passive can passivize all the verbs in Korean (see Nam & Go, 1985 and William, 1991).

There is a problem, however, since some Korean unaccusatives have the same morphemes (*-i*, *-hi*, *-li*, *-ki*, and *-(e)ci*) as the passives. The examples are as follows:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| (1) Transitive: | <i>Ku-ga</i> | <i>changmun-ul</i> | <i>yel-ess-ta.</i> |
| | he-NOM | window-ACC | open-PAST-DC |
| (2) Passive: | <i>Changmun-i</i> | <i>ku-e uyhay</i> | <i>yel-i-ess-ta.</i> |
| | window-NOM | him-by | open-PASS-PAST-DC |
| (3) Unaccusative: | <i>Changmun-i</i> | <i>yel-i-ess-ta.</i> | |
| | window-NOM | open-PASS-PAST-DC | |

Note: NOM=nominative, ACC=accusative, PAST=past suffix, PASS=passive suffix, DC=declarative

As we can see in the passive and the unaccusative sentences above, the passive morpheme *-i* appears in both forms, making the distinction between them blurred. Consequently, the ambiguous morphological markings in Korean unaccusatives and passives can affect Korean learners to passivize English unaccusatives as follows.

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) Transitive: | He opened the window. |
| (2) Passive: | The window was opened by him. |
| (3) Unaccusative: | *The window was opened. |

Taking all these learnability problems into consideration, this study will examine the effect of passive morphemes on Korean learners' overpassivizing English unaccusatives.

III. Method

3.1. Data

The present study analyzes the Yonsei English Learner Corpus (YELC, 2011) consisting of approximately one million words from 6,572 written texts collected from the Yonsei English Placement Test (YEPT). Since the YEPT was administered to preliminary freshmen of Yonsei University from all over Korea, the data can be representative of writing proficiency of Korean college-level learners. The participants' levels varied from A1 to C2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and the majority was rated B1.

TABLE 1
YEPT participants' writing proficiency according to CEFL

Level	A1	A1+	A2	B1	B1+	B2	B2+	C1	C2	Total
N	41	185	684	1,173	705	378	81	37	2	3,286

Each participant produced two types of essays one of which was narrative writing on daily lives such as hobbies, vacations, and special people or objects. The other type was argumentative writing on academic topics such as smoking, physical punishment, internet privacy, and animal testing. Rhee & Jung (2014) reported that average length per a sentence was 13.85 words, and standardized type token ratio (STTR) was 77.70% in the YELC. The result was relatively similar to that of British preliminary college freshmen, reporting 12.36 words and 80.77% respectively, which shows that Korean learners write relatively long English sentences with various word choices. In comparison to the Korean learner data used in Oshita (2000) including only 236 essays, the extensive and systematic data of the YELC enabled a thorough analysis on recurring error patterns in individual unaccusative verbs.

3.2. Procedure

The non-alternating unaccusative verbs to be examined in this study are *appear*, *arise*, *arrive*, *die*, *disappear*, *exist*, *fall*, *happen*, *occur*, and *rise* similar to Oshita (2000). He explained that the reason for selecting these verbs was their common appearance in passive forms as documented in the literature. It was not apparent that the overpassivizing tendency of the selected verbs would be also prevalent in Korean learners' data. However, for the purpose of comparison with previous research, the

present study analyzed the same verbs.

Concordance lines of the unaccusative verbs were extracted using WordSmith Tools 7.0 (Scott, 2016), and manually classified into five major sentence types that showed the salient patterns: (1) NP-V, (2) *There-V-NP*, (3) *NP-be-Ven*, (4) *NP-be-V*, and (5) *NP1-V-NP2*. The sentence type, *NP-be-V* was initially assumed to be a minor corruption of *NP-be-Ven*. However, it was hard to discriminate between *NP-be-V* from an overgenerated *be*, and two verbs (i.e., *exist* and *disappear*) showed unusually high frequency of *NP-be-V*. To reduce possible influences of the skewed frequencies, *NP-be-V* was classified apart from *NP-be-Ven*. Among the sentences obtained from the YELC, some types of verb forms were excluded because they were not relevant to the purpose of the study. The excluded verb forms are as follows: (1) raising verbs (e.g., *X appear to/that*, *X happen to/that*), (2) nonfinite verbs whose subjects are not identified, (3) participial adjectives, (4) idiomatic and prefabricated expressions (e.g., *fall in love*, *fall asleep*), and (5) random errors that do not belong to the sentence types above.

The present study investigated factors such as Korean L1 transfer and animacy effect excluding language universal factors. To examine Korean L1 influence, Korean translations of ten unaccusative verbs were searched from two English-Korean dictionaries, and checked whether they have passive morphemes *-i*, *-hi*, *-li*, *-ki*, and *-(e)ci*. The selected Korean translations that have passive morphemes were compared with concordance lines of overpassivization to make sure that they can be construed as the Korean learners' intention. With regard to the animacy effect, five unaccusative verbs (i.e., *appear*, *arrive*, *disappear*, *exist*, and *fall*) that are semantically used with both animate and inanimate subjects were selected and their concordance lines were extracted from the YELC. The animacy of the subjects in each concordance line was manually counted.

IV. Result and Discussion

A total of 1,719 sentences were obtained from ten unaccusative verbs, of which 80.6 percent were grammatical while 19.4 percent were ungrammatical. Table 2 indicates an overall syntactic distribution of the unaccusative verbs produced by Korean learners of English. According to the number of total sentences, ten unaccusative verbs were decreasingly ordered from left to right. In each column, the raw token of each sentence type is presented and the ratio of each sentence type to the total sentences of the verb is given in parenthesis. Among the ungrammatical sentence types displayed in shading, the passive structure *NP-be-Ven* shows the highest ratio, confirming the overpassivization tendency among L2 learners. The result will be more closely examined and discussed by answering each research question presented in the introduction.

TABLE 2
Overall syntactic distribution of Korean learners' use of English unaccusative verbs

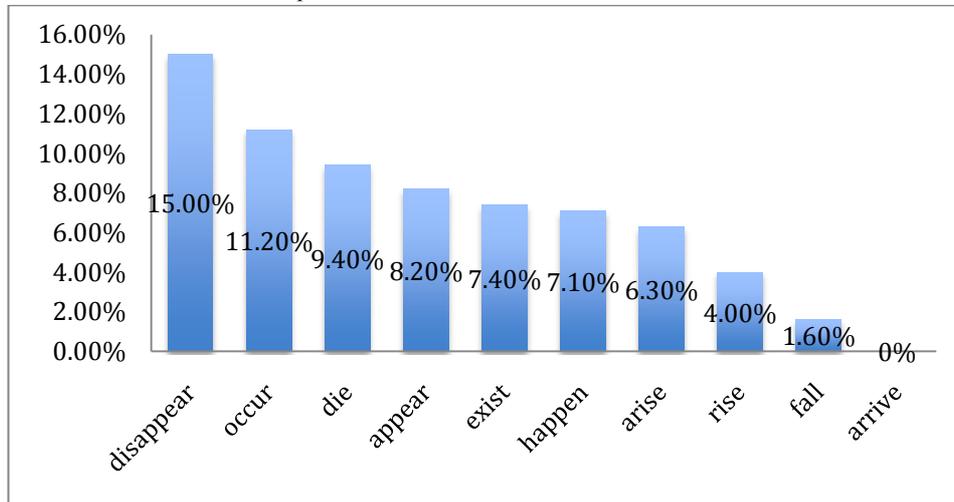
	<i>happen</i>	<i>die</i>	<i>occur</i>	<i>Exist</i>	<i>disappear</i>	<i>fall</i>	<i>appear</i>	<i>arrive</i>	<i>rise</i>	<i>arise</i>	Total
NP-V	515 (85.5%)	316 (87.1%)	131 (58.7%)	134 (66.3%)	74 (69.2%)	56 (87.5%)	58 (79.5%)	44 (100%)	18 (72%)	13 (81.3%)	1,359 (79%)
There-V-NP	5 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.2%)	16 (7.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (6.3%)	28 (1.6%)
NP-be-Ven	43 (7.1%)	34 (9.4%)	25 (11.2%)	15 (7.4%)	16 (15%)	1 (1.6%)	6 (8.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	1 (6.3%)	142 (8.3%)
NP-be-V	26 (4.3%)	10 (2.8%)	8 (3.6%)	35 (17.3%)	16 (15%)	4 (6.3%)	3 (4.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	1 (6.3%)	104 (6.1%)
NP1-V-NP2	13 (2.2%)	3 (0.8%)	54 (24.2%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	3 (4.7%)	5 (6.8%)	0 (0%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	86 (5%)
Total	602	363	223	202	107	64	73	44	25	16	1,719

4.1. Overpassivization in individual unaccusative verbs

The corpus analysis on Korean learners' use of English unaccusatives revealed a disproportionate distribution of overpassivization errors across ten individual verbs as presumed in research question 1. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of overpassivization errors (NP-be-Ven) arrayed from the highest 15% to the lowest 0%. The highest ratio of overpassivization is seen in *disappear*, corresponding to the Korean example in Ju (1997), while no errors appear in *arrive*.

FIGURE 1

Distribution of overpassivization in Korean learner's use of unaccusative verbs



To verify that the different overpassivization across ten unaccusative verbs is statistically significant, a chi-square test was conducted. Table 3 shows that an overall occurrence of the overpassivization errors in the upper five verbs (i.e., *disappear*, *occur*, *die*, *appear*, and *exist*) outnumbered that in the lower five verbs (i.e., *happen*, *arise*, *rise*, *fall*, and *arrive*). The difference between the two groups of verbs was proved to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 [1] = 8.025, p < .01$). The result implies that it is not appropriate to assert that Korean learners of English are prone to overpassivization errors regardless of the kinds of unaccusative verbs.

TABLE 3

Occurrence of overpassivization errors in upper and lower verbs

	Upper verbs	Lower verbs
Overpassivization	96	46
Other than overpassivization	872	705

The present study was compared with Owada et al. (2009) that investigated Japanese learners' use of ten unaccusative verbs, following Oshita (2000). The comparison was conducted to observe similarities and differences in overpassivization produced by Korean and Japanese L2 learners of English. Owada et al. (2009) did not report the ratio of each verb's overpassivization errors to the total tokens of the corresponding verb, so the raw token and the percentage of each verb's overpassivization were compared. Table 4 indicates the respective overpassivization errors generated by the L2 learners of two different L1s.

TABLE 4
Overpassivization errors produced by Korean and Japanese learners of English

Korean learners				Japanese learners		
1	<i>happen</i>	43	30.3%	<i>appear</i>	51	30%
2	<i>die</i>	34	23.9%	<i>occur</i>	38	22.5%
3	<i>occur</i>	25	17.6%	<i>happen</i>	32	18.9%
4	<i>disappear</i>	16	11.3%	<i>disappear</i>	17	10.1%
5	<i>exist</i>	15	10.6%	<i>exist</i>	17	10.1%
6	<i>appear</i>	6	4.2%	<i>die</i>	11	6.5%
7	<i>fall</i>	1	0.7%	<i>arise</i>	2	1.2%
8	<i>arise</i>	1	0.7%	<i>fall</i>	1	0.6%
9	<i>rise</i>	1	0.7%	<i>rise</i>	1	0.6%
10	<i>arrive</i>	0	0%	<i>arrive</i>	0	0%
Total		142		Total	169	

The different percentages of the ten unaccusative verb's overpassivization in both L1 groups confirm that the overpassivization errors are not equally dispersed across the individual verbs and the phenomenon can be assumed to be a general tendency in several languages. What is noteworthy from the comparison is that overpassivization in the lower four verbs displayed in shading are quite similar between two L1 groups. Specifically, none of Korean and Japanese learners produced any overpassivization errors in *arrive*. The similarity in overpassivization between two L1 groups supposes that there can be a common factor influencing overpassivization in some unaccusative verbs.

To expand the discussion to other L2 learners of English, a study on Chinese learners' use of English unaccusatives (Mo, 2015) was examined. Among the findings of his study, the analysis on a written production task was compared with the corpus analysis of the present study. Mo (2015) investigated six non-alternating unaccusatives, *appear*, *arrive*, *exist*, *fall*, *happen*, and *remain*. In an attempt to juxtapose Chinese learners' data

with Korean learners' corpus data, concordance lines of *remain* were extracted from the YELC and distributed into five sentence types as shown in table 5. Out of 123 sentences obtained, 60.2 percent were grammatical while 39.8 percent were ungrammatical. Compared with the ten unaccusative verbs analyzed previously (*cf.*, TABLE 1), *remain* shows a lower percentage of correct usage produced by Korean learners.

Mo (2015) reported the greatest individual verb differences among the six non-alternating unaccusatives by contrasting the verbs that show the highest and the lowest frequency in each sentence type. Following his analytical framework, Korean learners' corpus data were examined and the unaccusative verbs revealing the highest and the lowest frequency in each sentence type were identified in table 6.

TABLE 5
Syntactic distribution of '*remain*'

<i>remain</i>	
NP-V	70 (56.9%)
There-V-NP	4 (3.3%)
NP-be-Ven	13 (10.6%)
NP-be-V	4 (3.2%)
NP1-V-NP2	32 (26%)
Total	123

TABLE 6

Greatest individual verb differences in Korean and Chinese learners' use of unaccusative verbs

Individual verb differences	Korean learners		Chinese learners	
	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest
NP-V	<i>arrive</i>	<i>remain</i>	<i>arrive</i>	<i>remain</i>
There-V-NP	<i>exist</i>	<i>arrive, fall</i>	<i>arrive</i>	<i>fall</i>
NP-be-Ven	<i>remain</i>	<i>arrive</i>	<i>remain</i>	<i>arrive</i>
NP1-V-NP2	<i>remain</i>	<i>arrive</i>	<i>remain</i>	<i>appear</i>

Interestingly, there are two verbs showing a common tendency in Korean and Chinese learners' data. Among the six unaccusative verbs, *remain* shows the lowest frequency of grammatical use (NP-V) and the highest frequency of ungrammatical overpassivization (NP-be-Ven) and transitivity (NP1-be-NP2) in both groups. On the other hand, *arrive* shows the highest frequency of grammatical use (NP-V) and the lowest frequency of ungrammatical overpassivization (NP-be-Ven) in both groups. Given that Japanese learners' data also showed the lowest frequency of overpassivization in *arrive*, it indicates that some unaccusative verbs behave similarly throughout different L1s, and that they can be influenced by a common factor. The other unaccusative verbs, on the other hand, behave differently in each L1, so language specific factors also need to be investigated. Mo (2015) explained that lexical frequency

in English textbooks used in China and teachers' explicit instructions on some unaccusative verbs could have been major factors, influencing the individual verb differences in the Chinese learners' written production.

In summary, overpassivization errors in the Korean learner's use of English unaccusatives show different distributions across ten individual verbs. Therefore, more considerations are needed to account for overpassivization produced by L2 learners of English since the factors influencing overpassivization errors in each individual unaccusative verb can differ between language specific and language universal factors. The comparison of overpassivization between Korean, Japanese, and Chinese learners of English revealed the tendency that some unaccusatives are more vulnerable to overpassivization, whereas a particular verb *arrive* is not likely to be produced in the passive form. In the following section, various factors influencing overpassivization in individual unaccusative verbs are discussed.

4.2. Various factors influencing overpassivization in individual unaccusative verbs

Many researchers (Hirakawa, 1995; Hubbard & Hix, 1988; Kim, 2010; Montrul, 2000; No & Chung, 2006) who studied the factors influencing overpassivization in English unaccusatives insisted that L1 transfer could be one of the potential causes of overpassivization. To investigate L1 Korean influence on overpassivization, the present study analyzed the Korean translations of ten unaccusative verbs if they had passive morphemes (i.e., *-i*, *-hi*, *-li*, *-ki*, and *-(e)ci*). The Korean translations were selected among the first three lexical entries of each word and then checked against the concordance lines of overpassivization to make sure that the selected Korean translations can be construed as the Korean learners intended. The following sentences are examples of the overpassivization errors in *appear* that can be construed as *sayng-ki-ta* in Korean.

- (1) * Someone talk that we have the right of expressing our opinions and it could **be appeared** by using fake name.
- (2) * As cellular phones began to be sold by almost all the public, many new-uprising problems including this problem has **been appeared** so often.

Table 7 shows that five unaccusative verbs out of ten turned out to have the Korean passive morphemes from two English-Korean dictionaries.

TABLE 7
Unaccusative verbs with passive morphemes in Korean translations

	Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Korean Dictionary	Dong-a's Prime English-Korean Dictionary
<i>appear</i>	<i>natana-ta, sayng-<u>ki</u>-ta</i>	<i>natana-ta</i>
<i>disappear</i>	<i>sara-<u>ci</u>-ta</i>	<i>sara-<u>ci</u>-ta</i>
<i>fall</i>	<i>ttel-e-<u>ci</u>-ta, nem-e-<u>ci</u>-ta</i>	<i>ttel-e-<u>ci</u>-ta</i>
<i>happen</i>	<i>palsayngha-ta, pel-e-<u>ci</u>-ta</i>	<i>ilena-ta, sayng-<u>ki</u>-ta</i>
<i>occur</i>	<i>ilena-ta, palsayngha-ta</i>	<i>ilena-ta, sayng-<u>ki</u>-ta</i>

It is important to note that the Korean passive morphemes shown in these five unaccusative verbs do not have passive meaning in Korean. They are homophonous to the Korean passive morphemes, but lack the passive function. It is noteworthy that although the five unaccusative verbs are not used in the passive structure in Korean, Korean learners of English tend to use passive forms with the English equivalents. Table 8 specifies the occurrences of overpassivization errors in the unaccusative verbs that have or do not have the passive morphemes in Korean translations.

TABLE 8
Overpassivization errors in the unaccusative verbs with/without Korean passive morphemes

[+] Korean Passive morpheme		[-] Korean Passive morpheme	
<i>happen</i>	43	<i>die</i>	34
<i>occur</i>	25	<i>exist</i>	15
<i>disappear</i>	16	<i>arise</i>	1
<i>appear</i>	6	<i>rise</i>	1
<i>fall</i>	1	<i>arrive</i>	0

Among the five unaccusative verbs that have the passive morphemes in their Korean translations, the most overpassivization errors are seen in *happen* while only one error is found in *fall*. The other five unaccusative verbs that do not have the passive morphemes in the Korean translations exhibit the most overpassivization errors with *die* while no overpassivization error is observed in *arrive*. The different overpassivization between the two unaccusative verb groups in regard of presence or absence of the Korean passive morphemes was statistically testified. A chi-square test revealed that the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 [1] = 0.237, p > .01$), and it did not conform to the previous research claiming that passive morphemes in L1 translations could have affected overpassivization in unaccusative verbs.

Among the previous research, No & Chung (2006) studied multiple effects such as English inherent factors, L1 influence, and the animacy effect on overpassivization and their result was statistically significant. The study, however, classified *appear* and *happen*, which were regarded to have the Korean passive morpheme in the present study, into [-Ci] that refers to the unaccusative verbs without Korean passive morphemes. In addition, No & Chung (2006) administered a grammaticality judgment test that shows the participants' perception rather than production. Considering all these different research designs and methods, the result of the present study cannot be compared on the same level with the results of No & Chung (2006). Although in the present study, some unaccusative verbs with passive morphemes in the Korean translations showed relatively higher occurrence of overpassivization, the Korean L1 effect was not a statistically significant factor, influencing overpassivization in general.

Apart from the different overpassivization between the two verb groups that have or do not have the Korean passive morphemes, the different overpassivization among the unaccusatives that have Korean passive morphemes seems quite various. It is remarkable that *fall* shows only one instance of overpassivization. The Korean translation of *fall* is *tteul-e-ci-ta*, including the passive morpheme *-ci*. Several researchers (see Cho, 2001; Kim, 2010; No & Chung, 2006) reported that Korean L1 transfer could have influenced overpassivization in *fall*. On the contrary, the corpus analysis on the YELC showed that there was only one overpassivization error out of 64 occurrences of *fall*. The concordance line of the overpassivization error is as follows:

...school will raise the bad human. * If this happens, the nation is fallen objectly, and they have a sin that they can't raise children rightly to their ancestor.

The discrepant result of *fall* against the expectation of the previous research on overpassivization suggests that factors other than L1 transfer can influence overpassivization errors in *fall*.

Another factor known to affect overpassivization in English unaccusatives is the animacy of the subjects (Croft, 1995; Ju, 2000; Kim & Kim, 2013; No & Chung, 2006; Pae et al., 2014). L2 learners of English often connect animate subjects with active forms and inanimate subjects with passive forms. Korean learners, especially, are more susceptible to this semantic-syntactic association because their L1 hardly allows inanimate subjects (Lee, 2000; Yoon & Lee, 2014). Therefore, it is assumed that Korean learners of English are more likely to make overpassivization errors when the subjects are inanimate. To verify the assumption, the present study investigated the animacy of the subjects in five unaccusative verbs (i.e., *appear*, *disappear*, *exist*, *fall*, and *arrive*) that are semantically used with both animate and inanimate subjects. Table 9 indicates

the occurrences of animate and inanimate subjects in the five unaccusative verbs, classifying the sentence types into the passive forms and the others.

TABLE 9
Animate/inanimate subjects in five unaccusative verbs

	Animate subject		Inanimate subject		Total
	Passive form	Others	Passive form	Others	
<i>appear</i>	1	12	5	55	73
<i>arrive</i>	0	43	0	1	44
<i>disappear</i>	0	6	16	85	107
<i>exist</i>	1	42	14	145	202
<i>fall</i>	0	38	1	25	64
Total	2	141	36	311	490

Overall, more inanimate subjects were used with the five unaccusative verbs than the animate subjects, and more overpassivization errors were found with the inanimate subjects than the animate subjects. According to a chi-square test, the different overpassivization errors between the unaccusative verbs with animate or inanimate subjects was statistically significant ($\chi^2 [1] = 11.405, p < .01$), and it confirmed the assumption that Korean learners make more overpassivization errors in the use of English unaccusatives when the subjects are inanimate.

Recall that *fall* showed only one instance of an overpassivization error and *arrive* none. Regarding the subjects of two unaccusative verbs, *fall* occurred with animate subjects 38 times out of 64 occurrences while *arrive* occurred 43 times out of 44 occurrences. In other words, since Korean learners of English tend to use *fall* and *arrive* with animate subjects, the inanimate subjects are less likely to influence overpassivization in the two unaccusative verbs.

To sum up, overpassivization in ten unaccusative verbs produced by Korean learners of English are not significantly influenced by Korean L1 transfer but influenced by the animacy of the subjects. There were some unaccusative verbs of which overpassivization errors seemed to be influenced by Korean passive morphemes, but the Korean L1 influence could not be generalized to all the other unaccusative verbs that have passive morphemes in the Korean translations. The animacy of the subjects, however, played an important role in overpassivization of the five unaccusative verbs. It is established that more overpassivization errors occur when the subjects of the unaccusative verbs are inanimate. Since the animacy effect is not a language specific factor, it can explain the overpassivization tendency in *arrive* that showed the lowest overpassivization in Korean,

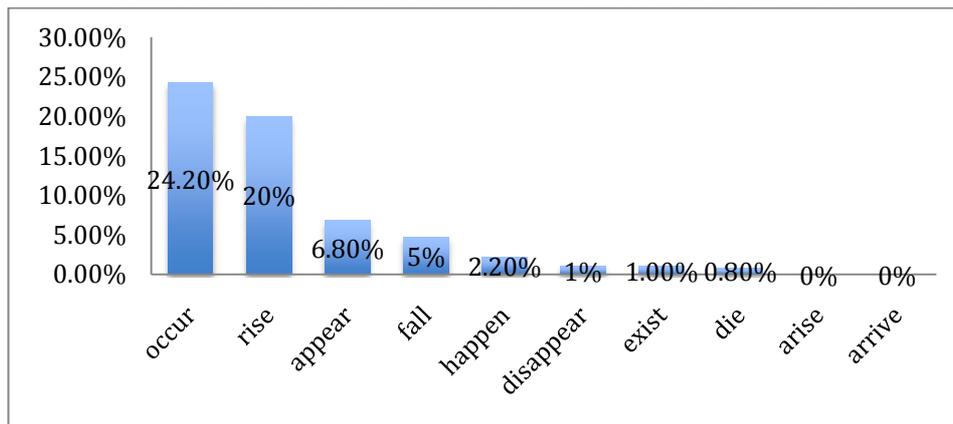
Japanese, and Chinese learners' use of English unaccusatives. *Arrive* is not often used with inanimate subjects, and that can be the reason why it seldom generates overpassivization errors.

4.3. Salient error patterns in Korean learners' use of unaccusative verbs

Among the 19.4% of ungrammatical sentence types identified from Korean learners' use of English unaccusative verbs, overpassivization (NP-*be*-V*en*) showed by far the highest ratio of 8.3%, followed by transitivity (NP1-V-NP2) and overgenerated *be* (NP-*be*-V) with ratios of 6.1% and 5% respectively (*cf.*, TABLE 1). A deeper analysis of transitivity errors across ten unaccusative verbs revealed a clear pattern, where such errors occurred at a higher frequency for the verbs, *occur* (24.2%) and *rise* (20%) as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Distribution of transitivity in Korean learner's use of unaccusative verbs



According to the transitivity hypothesis (Yip, 1990, 1995), the inability of L2 learners of English to differentiate between unaccusative and transitive verbs leads to a tendency to add objects to the former, subjecting unaccusative verbs to overpassivization. In support of the hypothesis, transitivity errors would need to appear in proportion to overpassivization errors. The present study, however, indicates a weak correlation between the high ratios of transitivity and overpassivization errors, which rejects the transitivity hypothesis. It is, nevertheless, interesting that only two unaccusative verbs, *occur* and *rise*, showed higher ratios of transitivity. The following sentences are examples of the transitivity errors in *occur* and *rise* extracted from YELC.

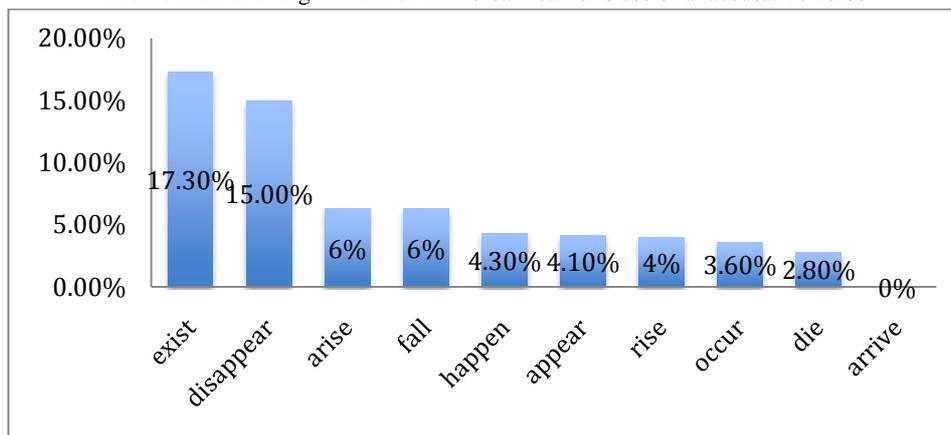
- (1) * Using cellular phones can be very dangerous, because it can **occur** accidents.
- (2) * Last, physical punishment can **occur** physical hurt to students.
- (3) * Some men can **rise** status of nation with success on own professional part.
- (4) * I think smoking is very bad thing, so we **rise** up the price of smoke for all people not to smoke.

One possible factor leading to transitivity errors is assumed to be L1 transfer (Juffs, 1996; Sorace, 1995). L2 learners, whose language expresses causative alternations with overt morphology, might be confused about the English transitivity of alternating verbs that lack morphological markings. Since Korean causatives are formed by adding the causative auxiliary *-ke hata* to a verb stem, Korean learners of English might have mistaken the use of *hata* in the Korean translations of *occur* and *rise* as an indication of English transitivity possibility (c.f., *occur: palsayng-hata*, and *rise: hyangsang-hata*). The Korean L1 influence on transitivity errors, however, cannot explain the low ratio of transitivity in *exist* and *arrive*, which are translated to Korean as *conca-y-hata* and *tochak-hata* respectively.

Another salient error pattern observed from Korean learners' use of ten unaccusative verbs is the overgenerated *be*. Figure 3 shows a skewed distribution of the overgenerated *be* with two unaccusative verbs, *exist* and *disappear*, displaying higher ratios of 17.3% and 15% respectively.

FIGURE 3

Distribution of overgenerated *be* in Korean learner's use of unaccusative verbs



The overgenerated *be*, which is one of the most controversial phenomena in the 20's SLA research, refers to L2 learners' redundant use of *be*, preceding thematic verbs (e.g.,

He is drink juice). There have been two groups of studies, one attributing the phenomenon to a topic marker (Ahn, 2003; Hahn, 2000; Sasaki, 1990), while the other arguing that it is an early morphological appearance of a functional category such as tense, agreement or aspect (Ionin & Wexler, 2002; Yang, 2001, 2006). According to Kim (2010), however, the overgenerated *be* produced by Korean learners of English seems to develop from an initial function as a topic marker into a verbal inflection.

In order to identify a possible cause of the higher ratio of the overgenerated *be* in *exist* and *disappear*, concordance lines of the two unaccusative verbs were scrutinized, and it was revealed that three Korean learners repeatedly used the overgenerated *be* in *exist* and *disappear* as in follows:

- (1) * Today, physical punishment is disappear... (Student A)
- (2) * There are exist real atom and real human... (Student B)
- (3) * If physical punishment of children in schools were not exist... (Student C)

The overgenerated *be* used by the three Korean learners seems to function as a verbal inflection rather than a topic marker since it has properties of agreement and tense, but does not signal a boundary between a topic and a comment. Considering that the total occurrences of the overgenerated *be* in *exist* and *disappear* retrieved from YELC were small (i.e., 35 occurrences in *exist* and 16 occurrences in *disappear*), the three Korean learners' repetitive errors could have led to the unexpectedly high ratio observed for overgenerated *be*.

V. Conclusion

The motivation for this study originates from the exceptionally higher overpassivization errors in Korean learners' use of English non-alternating unaccusatives. To answer the question whether overpassivization errors committed by Korean learners of English show a different tendency across individual unaccusative verbs, the Yonsei English Learner Corpus was analyzed, using a concordancing program. In addition, the factors that influence overpassivization were discussed, and the other salient error patterns were identified. The three major findings drawn from this study are as follows. Firstly, overpassivization errors found in the Korean learners' use of English unaccusatives revealed a disproportionate dispersion across ten individual verbs, a phenomenon that seemed to be congruent among Korean, Japanese, and Chinese learners of English. Secondly, the overpassivization errors produced by Korean learners of English were not significantly influenced by a Korean L1 transfer but by inanimate subjects. The low overpassivization errors in the verbs, *fall* and *arrive* could be

explained by the lower tendency for Korean learners to use the verbs with inanimate subjects, preventing the animacy effect from influencing overpassivization. Lastly, salient error patterns such as transitivization and overgenerated *be* showed higher ratios in the unaccusative verbs, *occur* and *rise*; *exist* and *disappear* respectively. Based on the result of the present study, Korean learners of English will benefit from being able to identify the factors contributing to errors for each unaccusative verb. To enhance learning, language teachers should be aware of the unaccusative verbs that are more susceptible to overpassivization among Korean learners - *disappear*, *occur*, *die*, *appear*, and *exist*.

While this study has significant findings, there are a few limitations. Firstly, more factors that could have operated as possible causes of overpassivization such as the frequency of the unaccusative verbs in native use or in English textbooks were not examined. Secondly, some unaccusative verbs showed low frequency in the target learner corpus that could be in part due to the narrow range of topics in the written texts. Consequently, the difference in the total tokens of each unaccusative verb could have had a minor effect on the results of the present study. As such, further research is needed to investigate the effects of various other factors on overpassivization.

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