Variation of the Linguistic Profiles of Advanced English-Speaking Learners of Korean*

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This paper, which is a partial replication of Kanno et al. (to appear), examined the linguistic profiles of 27 advanced English-speaking learners of Korean (23 heritage, four non-heritage). Data consisted of performance by all 27 subjects on an adapted Korean version of Kanno et al.'s written test of linguistic intuitions, and six subjects' rendition of the same guided spoken narrative was also analyzed for accuracy and complexity. Results showed that advanced learners of Korean found idiomatic expressions and passive constructions to be the most difficult; heritage learners outperformed non-heritage learners on all areas of the first written test; heritage learners found connectives easy, while non-heritage learners found them difficult; and among heritage learners, the higher their proficiency, the easier they found honorifics.

Key words: KFL, linguistic profiles, advanced learners of KFL, variation

1. Introduction

There is increasing awareness in government circles and elsewhere of the need for advanced speakers of foreign languages, especially for advanced speakers of some of the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs)

(Brecht & Ingold, 1998; Campbell & Peyton 1998). It is also recognized that U.S. institutions of higher education produce insufficient numbers of such individuals (Brecht & Ingold, 1998). Various efforts are under way to deal with the problem, including the funding of initiatives designed to strengthen the national foreign language education infrastructure. One of these, the National Flagship Language Initiative-Pilot (NFLI-P) program[2] has been launched with the purpose of providing resources to develop innovative curriculum and programming capable of producing professionals with high levels of proficiency in languages deemed critical to U.S national security.[3]

Heritage learners constitute an obvious potential source of advanced speakers of LCTLs. Many (but by no means all) possess respectable listening and speaking abilities, broad vocabularies, native-like pronunciation and fluency, and familiarity with cultural norms in the target language and culture before beginning formal language study at the tertiary level. Consequently, more attention has been given to heritage populations through conferences (e.g., Heritage Language Research Priorities Conference, NCOLCTL Conferences, National Conferences on Heritage Languages in America), and initiatives (e.g., Heritage Language Initiative jointly launched by the National Foreign Language Center and Center for Applied Linguistics). Moreover, a number of useful reports and publications have focused on a such issues as the identification of heritage languages and their speakers; heritage language education in the K-12 and community education system; heritage language maintenance and development; language backgrounds, attitudes, and motivation of heritage learners; differences between foreign and heritage language instruction; curriculum development for heritage learners; and articulation between secondary and post-secondary foreign language curricula (see, e.g., Cho, 2000; H.-S. H. Kim, 2002; Kondo-Brown, 2001; Lee, 2002; Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001; University of California, L. A., 2001; Valdés, 2001; Wiley, 2001).

It is widely accepted that two groups of learners exist in Korean as a

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2) The NFLI is funded by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), and administered by the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), housed at the University of Maryland, College Park.

3) Three languages, Arabic, Chinese, and Korean, were selected for initial focus. University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) was awarded funding to mount a pilot Korean National Flagship language program (for more information, see http://www.nflc.org).

Foreign Language (KFL) classrooms at secondary and tertiary levels in the U.S.: heritage and non-heritage learners (S. K. Lee, 2000; Lee, 2002; Sohn, 1995; Wang, 1997). The two groups are often quite different from one another, in that heritage learners have typically already attained a certain level of Korean, particularly, in listening and/or speaking, before they first come to class, while their literacy skills usually lag far behind. To varying degrees, they have acquired the language at home through communicating with Korean-speaking family members from birth. However, it is also reported that significant variation exists among Korean heritage learners, not only in the relative strength of their language skills, but also in their knowledge of vocabulary, speech style, honorifics, and sociolinguistic, pragmatic and cultural aspects of Korean (Choo, 1999; Hahn, 1998; Lee, 1995; Sohn, 1997; Sohn, Seo, Kamei, & Campbell, 2002; Wang, 1995, 1997).

In studies of KFL learners, identifying similarities and differences between heritage and non-heritage learners remains a critical issue. In an effort to characterize the linguistic and learner profiles Korean heritage and non-heritage learners, researchers attempted to identify differences in: curricula needs (e.g. Sohn, 1995, 1997); learner types based on linguistic and cultural background (e.g. S. K. Lee, 2000); interlanguage through error analysis (e.g. H.-S. H. Kim, 2001; J. Lee, 2000; Wang, 1997); degrees of difficulty in learning grammatical domains, such as particles (e.g. E. J. Kim, 2002), syntax (e.g. O'Grady, et al., 2000), and wh-questions and pro-drop settings (e.g. J.-T. Kim, 2001); and sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills (e.g. Lee, 1995; Wang, 1995; Lee, 1997).

Unfortunately, many studies are based on observations which, while informative, are mainly impressionistic and anecdotal in nature. For example, they may take the form of retrospections, based on an individual's experience as a teacher. More rigorous studies are required that systematically investigate learner profiles and linguistic characteristics of KFL learners utilizing primary data in the form of interlanguage samples. There is a continuing need for empirical research on a number of issues. They include (a) characteristics and linguistic profiles of advanced learners; (b) similarities and differences in the language and learning needs of heritage and non-heritage learners; and (c) possible differences within heritage learner groups, as a function of prior language-learning experience.

2. The Study

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to begin to address the issues mentioned above. In particular, the goal was to replicate with advanced KFL learners a study by Kanno, Hasegawa, Ikeda, Ito, & Long (to appear), which had sought to identify relationships between type of language-learning experience and variation in the linguistic profiles of advanced English-speaking learners of Japanese. Both studies were undertaken as part of the necessary groundwork for a Diagnostic Assessment Procedure (DAP), developed jointly by teams at UHM and UCLA. The DAP is designed to be usable by National Flagship programs in any language to assist with (a) selection among applicants to those programs, (b) placement of students within classes, and (c) curricular modifications for learner types identified by the research. Kanno et al. identified differences in the linguistic profiles of five groups of advanced (Advanced to Advanced-High) learners of Japanese (n = 15): naturalistic learners, classroom learners, and three groups of heritage learners with different histories of L2 exposure. Subjects' performance was analyzed on a written test of linguistic intuitions (judgments of grammatical, lexical and collocation acceptability), a guided spoken narrative, and the OPI. Although of similar overall proficiency, the learners - including the heritage groups - exhibited different linguistic profiles, suggesting curricular adjustments for learner type.

The present study had three objectives:
1. To identify linguistic characteristics of advanced English-speaking learners of Korean
2. To provide useful information in choosing among candidates for Flagship programs
3. To suggest pedagogic implications in advancing students from the Intermediate High (IH; equivalent to ILR 1+)/Advanced Low & Mid (AL & AM; ILR 2) to Superior (ILR 3) level of proficiency

Specifically, it addressed two research questions:
1. What are the common characteristics of, and differences among, the linguistic profiles of KFL learners at the advanced proficiency level?
2. Are there identifiable linguistic differences between and within the profiles of heritage and non-heritage KFL learners?

2.2. Participants

Originally, 31 advanced learners of Korean who were (or had been) en-
rolled in advanced level Korean language courses, i.e., third and fourth
year of Korean at UHM, or had reached Advanced or Intermediate High
level by ACTFL OPI standards, participated in the study.[4] However, four
were eliminated for one of the following reasons: non-native speaker of
English, evidence of cheating, and being native speaker of Korean (e.g.,
having lived and studied in Korea up to high school), thus leaving 27
participants (23 heritage, and four non-heritage) for data analysis. For
the follow-up study (revised written test), 16 advanced learners of Korean
who were enrolled in advanced level Korean language courses at UHM
in the Spring semester, 2003, participated. For similar reasons, the data of
only nine participants were analyzed. All nine were heritage learners.

2.3. Instrumentation

Three instruments were employed in the study: (1) a guided narrative,
(2) a written test, and (3) a language background questionnaire.

Six of the participants, whose OPI test scores had been previously
identified, i.e., two AM and four IH, were asked to perform the pic-
ture-guided narrative task used by Kanno et al. (to appear). Looking at a
set of four photos depicting the September 11th attacks in New York
City, the participants were asked to describe the events in detail and to
express their feelings and thoughts about them.

The written test consisted of six sections, five of which contained 10
multiple-choice questions, and one section (idiomatic expressions) uti-
lized a fill-in-the-gap format. The first three sections tested structural
knowledge, i.e. particles (Par), connectives (Con), and complex predicates
(Pred); sections 4-6 assessed lexical and collocation knowledge, i.e. collo-
cational pairs (Col), idiomatic expressions (Idiom), and mimetics (Mim).
Selection of sections and items was based on the written test used by
Kanno et al., a review of the profiling studies of KFL learners mentioned
above, and guidelines for the Korean Proficiency Test (KPT)[5].

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4) We defined "advanced" learners by those who were (or had been) enrolled in advanced
   level of Korean at UHM or had achieved Advanced or Intermediate High score on the
   ACTFL OPI test.

5) The KPT is administered by the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation. It consists

For the follow-up study, a revised version of the written test was con-structed, based on an item analysis of data from the first trial. The idi-om section was changed to a multiple-choice format. Moreover, five new sections, i.e., passives (Pas; $k = 6$), causatives (Cau; $k = 4$), honorifics (Hon; $k = 5$), noun modifier (N. Mod; $k = 3$), and tense and aspect (T&A; $k = 3$), were added to cover broader areas of Korean grammar.

Lastly, participants filled out a language background questionnaire af-ter completing the written test. The questionnaire asked about their pri-or learning experience. The purpose was to see if there relationships ex-isted between language-learning background, linguistic profile, and lan-guage proficiency.

3. Results

3.1. Language Background Questionnaire

It was shown in the questionnaire that out of 27 participants, 23 were heritage and four were non-heritage learners. As for the proficiency lev-el, eight of the participants were (or had been) enrolled in third year and 13 in fourth year Korean language classes at University of Hawaii at Manoa. Many participants also reported that they had learned Korean through Saturday (Community) schools, of which the length of in-struction ranged from six months to 10 years. Some of the reasons for visiting Korea included: attending Korean language class at a University-based institution (study abroad), visiting relatives and/or friends, and temporarily attending regular Korean school.

3.2. Guided Narrative

Narrative data were first collected from the six OPI testees. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for complexity and accuracy. The results of participants' performance on the three complexity measures,

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of six levels, each containing Vocabulary & Grammar, Writing, Listening, and Reading sections. There is no direct connection between the six levels of the KPT and the ACTFL's Guidelines but it seems that Level 3 of the KPT might be corresponding to Advanced Mid level by ACTFL Guidelines whereas Level 2 of the KPT to Intermediate High/Advanced Low by ACTFL. Therefore, the participants who were defined as "advanced" learners in this study, may fall into Level 2 and/or 3 of the KPT.

i.e., number of clauses per C-unit (C/CU), number of dependent clauses divided by total number of clauses (DC/C), and number of inflectional suffixes per C-unit (IS/CU), are shown in Table 1[6]. Results showed that the AM pair produced more complex utterances than the IH group, as measured either by C/CU (3.75 vs. 2.10) or DC/C (0.72 vs. 0.53), or IS/CU (4.73 vs. 2.84). In other words, students of higher proficiency produced more syntactically and morpho-syntactically complex speech.

Table 1. Six OPI Testees' Performance on Three Complexity Measures

	N of CU	N of C	N of DC	N of IS	C/CU	DC/C	IS/CU
AM (n = 2)	13.5	52	38.5	65	3.75	0.72	4.73
IH (n = 4)	25	53	28.25	73.75	2.10	0.53	2.84

Table 2 shows the results of the six OPI testees' performance on the two accuracy measures[7]. Similar observations can be made. The AM pair made fewer errors, either structurally or lexically, than the IH group, as measured either by the error rate (E/C, 0.12 vs. 0.34) or the error-free clauses ratio (EFC/C, 0.88 vs. 0.73)[8]. In other words, the students of higher proficiency produced more accurate speech.

Table 2. Six OPI Testees' Performance on the Two Accuracy Measures

	N of E	N of EFC	E/C	EFC/C
AM (n=2)	4.5	47.5	0.12	0.88
IH (n=4)	18.50	38	0.34	0.73

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6) A c-unit was defined as one main clause plus any subordinate clauses attached to or embedded in it, or isolated phrases not accompanied by a verb, but which have communicative value (e.g., elliptical answers to questions). For example, a sentence like *naika tto yeki iss.ess.tameyn sala.na,ci anh.ul kes kath.i sayngkak.i tulko acwu mwu.sepko kepnal kes kath.a.yo* (the Yale romanization system) can be coded to have 1 CU (with one main clause, *-kes kath.a.yo*), 8 Cs (*iss.ess.ta, salta, -e/a nata, anhta, tulta, mwusep.ta, kepnata, kathta*), 5 DCs (*issessta, salta, -e/a nata, anhta, kepnata*), 8 ISs (*ess, umyen, ci, ul ko, ko, (kepna)l, ayo*). Coding criteria were based on Sohn, H.-m. (1999).

7) Inter-rater reliability was calculated only for accuracy, since coding for complexity was rather straightforward. To assess reliability, agreement coefficients among three raters were calculated for the accuracy measures, and an acceptably high level of 95% achieved for both E/C and EFC/C.

8) Note that smaller numbers of E/C indicate more accurate speech, and larger numbers of EFC/C means the less accurate speech.

3.3. Written Test

In order to identify similarities and differences in the linguistic patterns of advanced learners of Korean, gain scores (from the highest to lowest) of the 27 participants were ranked. The learners were then divided into three groups (n = 9 in each group): (i) the Most Advanced Group (Group 1); (ii) the More Advanced Group (Group 2); and (iii) the Least Advanced Group (Group 3). Table 3 reports mean scores for the three groups on each section of the test. The total mean scores were 78.15% for the Most Advanced group, 62.22% for the More Advanced group, and 32.04% for the Least Advanced group. The reliability of the test (K-R20) was .99 indicating the test was very reliable.[9]

Table 3. Scores for the Three Groups

	Par (10)	Con (10)	Pred (10)	Col (10)	Idiom (10)	Mim (10)	Total (%)
G1: Most adv (n=9)	9.22	9.67	9.33	7.78	2.22	8.67	78.15
G2: More adv (n=9)	6.78	8.78	7.78	5.44	1.33	7.22	62.22
G3: Least adv (n=9)	4.00	3.56	5.00	2.56	0.11	4.00	32.04
Overall (n=27)	6.67	7.33	7.37	5.26	1.22	6.63	57.47

Scores of the six OPI testees were also included in Table 3. Despite the ratings they had received for their performance on the OPI test (two AM and four IH), variation existed among them in their written test scores. Of the two AM participants, one fell into Group 1 (most advanced) while

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9) Also, as mentioned above, an item-analysis was conducted to find the item facility or item difficulty (IF) and item discrimination (ID). Results showed that the items in Par were not too difficult nor easy (four items' IF was above .7, and the six' between .3 and .7) and quite effective in discriminating more advanced from less advanced learners (eight items' ID was above .4); those in Con were a little bit easy (six items' IF was above .4, and the four's between .3 and .7) but very effective in discriminating the advancedness of learners (nine items' ID above .4); those in Pred were quite easy (seven items' IF was above .7, and the two's between .3 and .7) but again very effective in their discrimination of learners (nine items' ID above .4); those in Col were the opposite of those in Pred (two items' IF was above .7 and the seven's between .3 and .7) and effective in their discrimination (seven items' ID was above .4); those in Idiom were too difficult (only one item's IF was between .3 and .7, and the rest less than .3) and not as much effective as those mentioned above (three items' ID was above .4); and those in Mim were not easy (two items' IF was above .7, and the eight's between .3 and .7) but very effective in their discrimination of learners (all the 10 items' ID was above .4).

the other was in Group 2 (more advanced). Likewise, for the four IH participants, one was placed into Group 1, two in Group 2, and one in Group 3 (least advanced). However, as described above, oral performance on the complexity and accuracy measures for the narrative task showed that the AM pair produced more complex and more accurate utterances than the IH group. This can be explained, in part, by the fact that (1) the OPI test attempts to assess overall speaking ability, whereas the written test assessed structural and lexical knowledge, and (2) all the OPI testees were heritage learners with distinct language-learning backgrounds, particularly with regard to formal Korean language instruction.

A noticeable discrepancy was also found between participants' current class standing and membership of the three groups. Students not only from the highest level class, i.e., KOR 481, but also KOR 301 and 401 classes, fell into the most advanced group, while the remainder of the 301 and 401 students were distributed among Group 2, the More Advanced group, and Group 3, the Least Advanced group. This raises problematic issues regarding student placement at advanced levels. More research is needed as to how heritage and non-heritage learners should be placed, given their varied language-learning experience, formal education, and competence in different language skills (e.g., high aural-oral communicative ability, but poor literacy skills and grammatical accuracy).

Figure 1 shows the ranking of the six sections according to difficulty for each group. The overall results indicated that idiomatic expressions were most difficult (mean score: 1.22 out of 10) for all the participants, followed by collocational pairs (5.26), mimetics (6.63), particles (6.67), connectives (7.33), and complex predicates (7.37), although there were differences between and within groups. In Kanno et al. (to appear), idioms were also found to be hardest. However, the reliability of this result is questionable, due to the dissimilarity in the nature of the task, i.e., fill-in-the-gap (as opposed to multiple-choice), in the idiom expression section. In other words, this section tested participants' productive ability by requiring them to write their answers, i.e., supply missing vocabulary items, whereas the other sections tested learner's receptive skills. Therefore, aside from idiomatic expressions, collocational pairs were found to be the most difficult area, regardless of participants' proficiency level.

Groups	Ranking
Group 1 (Most advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Mimetics > Particles > Complex predicates > Connectives
Group 2 (More advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Particles > Mimetics > Complex predicates > Connectives
Group 3 (Least advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Connectives > Particles, Mimetics > Complex predicates
Overall	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Mimetics > Particles > Connectives > Complex predicates

Figure 1. Ranking of the Six Sections According to Difficulty
(from most to least difficult)

An interesting pattern worth noting in Figure 1 is that Groups 1 and 2 found connective items easiest, whereas Group 3 (least advanced) found the connective section relatively difficult. This result may have been caused by three of the nine participants in Group 3 being non-heritage learners. Their scores on the connective section were comparably lower than those of the heritage learners in Group 3. Thus, a separate analysis of the two populations was in order.

In Table 4, scores of heritage and non-heritage participants were first separated. Then, the scores were further divided into three heritage learner sub-groups, as in Table 3, i.e., Group 1H (Most Advanced), Group 2H (More Advanced), and Group 3H (Least Advanced)[10].

Table 4. Scores of Heritage and Non-Heritage Groups

		Par (10)	Con (10)	Pred (10)	Col (10)	Idiom (10)	Mim (10)	Total (%)
Heritage (n=23)	G1H:Most Adv (n=8)	9.13	9.75	9.50	7.88	2.13	9.00	78.96
	G2H:More Adv (n=8)	7.50	9.63	8.38	5.75	0.63	7.38	65.42
	G3H:Least Adv (n=7)	4.57	5.00	6.71	3.43	0.71	4.71	41.90
	Mean	7.17	8.26	8.26	5.78	1.17	7.13	62.97
Non-Heritage (n=4)		3.75	2	2.25	2.25	1.5	3.75	25.83
Overall (n=27)		6.67	7.33	7.37	5.26	1.22	6.63	57.5

This breakdown revealed a sizeable difference in the mean scores of

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10) Due to their small number, non-heritage learners were not divided into sub-groups.

the heritage and non-heritage groups (62.97% vs. 25.83%). Even though the four non-heritage students were enrolled in KOR 401, three were at the lowest end of the scores, ranging from 5% to 22%.

In Figure 2, the six sections were ranked, based on results in Table 4, to see if there were any distinct patterns of difficulty between the two populations (heritage and non-heritage). The two groups exhibited similar difficulty rankings for the six sections of the test, except for connectives, where an interesting contrast existed. While the heritage group showed least difficulty with connectives (even Group 3H), the non-heritage group found them the second most difficult area of the test. This confirmed our explanation, mentioned above, with regard to Figure 1. The reason for the non-heritage learners' low scores on connectives will be discussed later.

Heritage group	Difficulty Ranking
Group 1H (Most advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Mimetics > Particles > Complex predicates > Connectives
Group 2H (More advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs >Mimetics > Particles > Complex predicates > Connectives
Group 3H (Least advanced)	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Particles > Mimetics > Connectives > Complex predicates
Overall of heritage group	Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs > Mimetics > Particles > Connectives, Complex predicates
Non-heritage group	Idiomatic expressions > Connectives > Collocational pairs > Complex predicates > Particles > Mimetics

Figure 2. Difficulty Ranking of Six Sections for Heritage and
Non-Heritage Learners (from most to least difficult)

3.4. Revised Written Test

As noted earlier, the written test was revised after pilot testing. Many items in the first test were either revised or discarded, based on an item analysis, and revisions were made to the stem and/or distracters of multiple-choice questions. For example, all idiomatic expressions were discarded, and nine new items were constructed in a multiple-choice format. Also, five new sections, i.e., passives (Pas; $k = 6$), causatives (Cau; $k = 4$), honorifics (Hon; $k = 5$), noun modifier (N. Mod; $k = 3$), and tense and aspect (T&A; $k = 3$), were included to test additional areas of Korean grammar known to be difficult for KFL learners to acquire. The revised test consisted of nine intact items (14.5%), and 19 revised items from the

first test, plus 34 new items - a total of 62 items.

Results of the revised test are shown in Table 5. Nine heritage learners in advanced Korean courses participated[11]. The reliability of the revised test (K-R20) was .95 indicating the test was quite reliable. Again, the scores of the nine participants were divided into the three groups according to their total scores. Note that the number of items in each section of the test ranged from three to nine. Passives were the most difficult area for all participants, regardless of their proficiency level, whereas tense and aspect and complex predicates were easiest (see Figure 3).

Table 5. Scores (%) on the Revised Test for Three Learner Groups

	Par $(k=5)$	Con $(k=8)$	Pred $(k=5)$	Pas $(k=6)$	Caus $(k=4)$	Hon $(k=5)$	N. Mod $(k=3)$	T&A $(k=3)$	Col $(k=6)$	Idiom $(k=9)$	Mim $(k=8)$	Total (%)
Most Adv (N=3)	73.33	87.50	100	61.11	83.33	93.33	77.78	88.89	83.33	81.48	75.00	81.72
More Adv (N=3)	46.67	62.50	60	27.78	41.67	40.00	55.56	55.56	38.89	37.04	37.50	44.62
Least Adv (N=3)	26.67	29.17	46.67	11.11	66.67	20.00	22.22	55.56	33.33	40.74	29.17	33.33
Overall (N=9)	48.89	59.72	68.89	33.33	63.89	51.11	51.85	66.67	51.85	53.09	47.22	53.23

Groups	Difficulty Ranking
Most Advanced group	Passives >Particles > Mimetics > Noun modifiers > Idiomatic expressions > Collocational pairs, Causatives > Connectives > Tense and aspect > Honorifics > Complex predicates
More Advanced group	Passives > Idiomatic expressions > Mimetics, Collocational pairs > Honorifics > Causatives > Particles > Noun modifiers, Tense and aspect > Complex predicates > Connectives
Least Advanced group	Passives > Honorifics > Noun modifiers > Particles > Mimetics, Connectives > Collocational pairs > Idiomatic expressions > Complex predicates > Tense and aspect > Causatives
Overall	Passives > Mimetics > Particles > Honorifics > Noun modifiers, Collocational pairs > Idiomatic expressions > Connectives > Causatives > Tense and aspect > Complex predicates

Figure 3. Difficulty Ranking of 11 Sections of the Revised Test for Three Heritage Groups (from most to least difficult)

11) Six out of nine participants were found to have taken the first test the previous semester. However, their data were not excluded because the revised form was very different from the earlier version, as described above, and a significant period of time, i.e., five months, had elapsed since the first version had been administered.

According to Figure 3, a difficulty pattern for the honorifics section can be observed within the heritage groups, particularly between the Most Advanced and Least Advanced groups. Honorifics were one of the easiest areas for the Most Advanced group, while the Least Advanced group found them one of the more difficult sections of the test (after passives). This result indicates that variation may exist even among heritage learners at the advanced level, in terms of their knowledge of Korean honorifics, with difficulty inversely related to proficiency. Explanations for such a counter-intuitive relationship will be provided in the following section.

4. Discussion

In this partial replication study, an attempt was made to identify common characteristics of, and differences among, the linguistic profiles of advanced English-speaking learners of Korean. In particular, the study sought to determine whether identifiable linguistic differences existed between and within the profiles of heritage and non-heritage learners. Three types of data were collected: performance on a written test (original and revised versions), a guided narrative (from the OPI testees; only), and a language background questionnaire. The findings were as follows:

1. The results for both versions of the written test indicated that advanced learners of Korean found idiomatic expressions and passive constructions to be the most difficult.
2. Heritage learners outperformed non-heritage learners on all areas of the first written test.
3. Heritage learners found connectives easy, while non-heritage learners found them difficult.
4. Among heritage learners, the higher their proficiency, the easier they found honorifics.

Based on Table 3, it can be stated that advanced learners of KFL, no matter their proficiency, seemed to have more problems with collocations and idiomatic expressions than any other areas tested. Collocations are known to be an important part of native speaker competence, and of particular importance if foreign language learners are to achieve a high

degree of competence in the language (Nesselhauf, 2003). The relatively poor performance with collocations also has pedagogical implications, in terms of instructional procedure and curricular design.

Idiomatic expressions are also important for similar reasons in that it requires the learner to have a deep knowledge of culture and history of the target language. Thus, the difficulty exhibited by the participants on Korean idiomatic expressions (despite their proficiency level and significant exposure to Korean language) can be an indication that they lack full understanding of Korean history, tradition, and culture. However, it is premature to draw generalizations based on results for this particular section of the test, due to problems with its construction. The poor performance on the first version of the test (mean of 1.22 out of 10) can be explained by the fact that the test questions required participants not only to recognize idiomatic expressions, but also to supply key missing lexical items. Why might results on these two areas of the revised test have been different from those on the first version? It is probably due in part to the fact that test items had undergone major revisions, including change or elimination of items and distracters; new items included; changes made to the format, e.g., from fill-in-the-blank to multiple-choice in the case of idiomatic expressions; coverage increased; and the test administered to different participants. Clearly, additional test data are needed.

Results for the revised version of the test offer some additional information. Table 5 shows that all participants had most problems with passives, but fewer problems with predicates, tense and aspect. Korean passives are constructed by adding a morphological suffix to a verb predicate. Passive constructions seem to be inherently difficult for, at least, heritage learners. Studies on first language acquisition may shed light on this issue. For instance, O'Grady (1997) notes "Passives of any type are relatively rare in parental speech to children" (p. 193), and "passive patterns are not fully mastered until the early school years" (p. 198, same book). Due to the low frequency and complex nature of passive forms in Korean, formal instruction, exposure, and special attention to forms may be necessary for them to be acquired, even by advanced learners (both heritage and non-heritage).

More importantly, however, variations existed in participants' performance on connectives, as shown in Table 4. In general, advanced heritage learners had no problems, whereas non-heritage learners found connectives one of the hardest areas tested. Connectives are used in Korean

to join two parts of a sentence, e.g., clauses, propositions, or ideas, which could be logically, temporally, conditionally, or semantically related to one another. In other words, the more advanced the learners, the fewer problems they had with connectives, thereby giving themselves additional options for expressing more complicated ideas by combining two or more propositions. Although Korean connectives are introduced fairly early in most foreign language teaching materials, due to linguistic differences between English and Korean (e.g., Korean's SOV word order, agglutinative nature, etc), English speakers may find it hard to acquire connectives without adequate input in various contexts. On the other hand, with the significant amount of exposure to Korean that heritage learners may have received, they tend to exhibit ease in processing connectives.

Heritage learners on the other hand, may already have acquired those complex structures of Korean naturalistically from birth. As a matter of fact, many connectives seemed not easily amenable to formal instruction, partly because of their complex nature, as described earlier. Therefore, early exposure and an input flood may account for the difference observed between the two groups in this area.

The second research question addressed by this study sought to identify linguistic differences between and within the profiles of heritage and non-heritage learners. The results of the first version of the written test showed that the total score of non-heritage learners (25.83%), was significantly lower than that of the heritage group (62.97%). Even the Least Advanced heritage group (41.9%) outperformed the non-heritage learners. However, due to the small number of the non-heritage subjects (n = 4), no firm generalizations can be drawn. Comparable data on non-heritage learners of Korean, particularly at the advanced level, are difficult to obtain, due to the fact that the dominant group in a typical KFL class consist predominantly of heritage learners. Thus, a logical next step is to examine differences among advanced heritage learners.

Interestingly enough, a discrepancy was observed among the heritage learner participants' performance on Korean honorifics. While the Most Advanced group had little problem with this section (a mean score of 93.3%), the Least Advanced group found it one of the hardest areas of the revised test. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of Korean are often cited as one of the hardest areas for KFL students to master. The core of the difficulty lies in the complexity of Korean honorifics, which

basically mark socially appropriate use of the language, according to re-
lationships among speakers, listeners, and referents (Lee, 1995). Moreover,
the difficulty is compounded by the existence of different speech styles
in Korean, among which speakers must choose appropriately according
to situation (Choo, 1999). Hence, studies such as Wang (1995) have looked
at the relationship between Korean heritage students' oral performance
on Korean honorifics and their parents' language use at home. They re-
port that most Korean heritage learners understand the concept of hon-
orifics from having grown up in a Korean family, but due to the differ-
ent degrees of input and parental awareness of the issue, among many
other factors, they encounter difficulties with correct usage. Lee (1997)
investigated the acquisition of Korean referent honorifics agreement by
advanced KFL learners, and concluded that learners were aware of the
importance of honorifics, following formal instruction, but had difficulty
using them properly.

This result can be explained by differences not only in the amount of
exposure to Korean, but also in the type, degree, timing, and quality of
that exposure. In other words, the amount and quality of exposure to
Korean, especially in the early stages, may have contributed to the Most
Advanced group's acquired knowledge of this rather complicated system
of Korean.

As mentioned earlier, variation existed among the six OPI testees' per-
formance on the written test. In other words, learners at the same oral
proficiency level as measured by the OPI test displayed different linguis-
tic profiles in some areas, e.g., mimetics and particles. Two OPI testees
(AM and IH) in the Most Advanced group did well in those areas, but
the other three (two IH and one AM) in the More Advanced group, and
the one (IH) in the Least Advanced group showed variability; some did
relatively well, while the other did relatively poorly in the same area,
and vice versa. From this, it can be said that the oral proficiency test
alone does not give a full explanation of a foreign language learner's
knowledge of Korean and perhaps of other languages.

5. Conclusion

The present study set out to describe the linguistic profiles of ad-
vanced learners of Korean, based on their oral and written performance.

Furthermore, differences between and within heritage and non-heritage learner profiles were examined. Results indicated that the OPI test can provide a good measure of a learner's oral proficiency. Likewise, written tests of collocational knowledge, connectives, passives, and honorifics can provide useful data when identifying learners with high language proficiency, as well as their remaining linguistic problems. A written test, along with a similar type of narrative task to the one used here, can provide useful information when selecting candidates for National Flagship programs. Such instruments produce diagnostic information relevant for advancing students from the IH (1+)/AL & AM (2) to Superior (3) level of proficiency. More importantly, following Kanno et al., this study begins to go beyond the traditional 'heritage' and 'non-heritage' categories by exploring distinctions within each group, particularly among advanced heritage learners. Such distinctions in linguistic profiles suggest implications for teaching, curricula design, and assessment. However, a larger-scale study with more controls (e.g., larger groups of subjects) is in order before generalizations can be made with any confidence.

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