A STUDY ON THE ERROR
IN THAI LEARNERS’ KOREAN
USAGE BY NATIVE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE

Yoon Kyung Won
Associate Professor of Department of Thai Interpretation and Translation,
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Necessity and Purpose of Research

Native language system is already established in the second language learning, which critically influence in learning target language. Applying knowledge of native language to target language is ‘(language) transfer’. Linguistic interference can result in correct language production called positive transfer, while that language interference is most often discussed as a source of errors known as negative transfer, or called interference.

Although native language and target language have language differences, negative transfer that native language system remains in learning target language occurs many types of errors to disturb learning target language after all. Thus, to minimize negative transfer, or interference, it is needed to analyze errors of students and to figure out how native language has influenced in learning target language.

Analyzing errors of students is one process of learning target language, therefore, it can let teacher evaluate the level of accomplishment of students and let students check their errors to improve and more correctly use the language.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze errors of Thai native students occurred with native language interference in usage of grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure of Korean language, and to examine reasons, aspects and problems in learning and ultimately to provide data for Thai teachers and students in learning Korean language.

1.2. Scope and Content of Research

This study is based on contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis is the study of a pair of language in phonology, morphology and syntax with a view to identifying their differences and similarities in order to figure out how and what is difficult or easy for students.

According to studies of reason of error in learning foreign language, error occurred with L1 interference is almost 50 %. Ability of native language of a student often becomes barrier in learning foreign language. Contrastive analysis is useful for reducing this barrier from L1 interference and helping to overcome the barrier.
Understanding overall structure of target language is required in learning correctly. Thus, it can be effective to realize the differences from native language through comparison and measurement and to prevent errors that occur from those differences.

It is not easy to compare two far different languages which contain different language system such as Korean and Thai language, however, it is also very important to find out linguistic similarities and differences in order to learn foreign language effectively.

Comparing the difference of two languages effectively and adapting the result of analysis on teaching can lead better Korean language learning.

2. The Error Occurred from Phonetic Systematic Difference Between Thai and Korean Languages

Phoneme is the smallest segmental unit of sound. Phoneme of each language has generally linguistic universality, but at the same time, it also has individuality which is distinguished from other languages. Korean language and Thai language have similarities and differences each other. Korean grammar learning will be more effective in focusing on similarities and difference with native language.

2.1. Consonant System

Number of consonant between Korean and Thai language is different. Total consonant of Korean language is 19, while Thai is totally 44 with 21 total phonetic values because some consonants of Thai language have same phonetic values. Due to consonant system of Thai language, some consonants of Korean language are very easy to acquire for Thai students, but some are trickier to pronounce such as lenis ‘ㅂ, ㄷ, ㄱ, ㅈ, ㅅ’. Because Thai language has fortis and aspirated but does not have lenis in consonant system, so errors occur with L1 interference in pronouncing these sounds.

In addition, Thai consonant system does not have ‘ㄹ’ as a final consonant. With this reason, ‘ㄹ’ as a final consonant often makes trouble for Thai students in learning Korean language.

(1) 살 -> 쌀
(2) 달 -> 딸

As example (1) the above, many Thai students pronounce ‘살’ which is lenis, to ‘쌀’, and ‘달’ to ‘딸’, due to that there is no lenis in Thai consonant system.

(3) 발 -> 반
 솔 -> 손
Example (3) shows error of Thai student in pronouncing final consonant ‘ㄹ’. In Thai consonant system, first consonant ‘ㄹ’ is allowed, but final consonant ‘ㄹ’ is not accepted. Therefore, Thai students make errors in pronouncing ‘ㄹ’ as a final consonant with L1 interference. In order to reduce these errors, it needs to make a correct understanding the differences through comparison between Korean consonants and Thai consonants, in particular, phonological characteristics and pronunciation of Korean lenis.

2.2. Vowel System

Vowel is the sound with an open vocal tract so that there is no build-up of air pressure at any point above the glottis. The distinct of vowel depends on position of tongue. This is linguistic universal phenomenon. Korean vowel system has 10 basic sounds and 11 diphthongs from combinations of basic vowels.

Basically Thai vowel system is quite similar to Korean language in that there are 32 vowels including 18 monophthongs, 6 diphthongs, and 8 special vowels.

For Thai students, acquiring Korean vowel system is not much difficult. First of all, acquisition of basic vowels of both two languages is almost same, so it is easy to understand. However, 10 diphthongs except rounded vowels such as ‘ㅐ’, ㅏ’ and diphthong such as ‘ㅔ’, are the vowels to pronounce for Thai students. Because these vowels are combined with consonant and vowel, but not as a diphthong in Thai language.

For example, vowel ‘ㅐ’ in Korean language is a combination of ‘w’ sound consonant with ‘i’ vowel in Thai language. In other words, it is composed as a syllable. Vowel ‘ㅏ’ in Korean language is a combination of consonant ‘y’ with vowel ‘a’ in Thai language. This is also a syllable. Therefore, a syllable composed with first consonant and diphthong in Korean language features as a cluster of initial consonants in Thai language. In Thai language, a cluster of initial consonants is acceptable but very limited, thus Thai students make many mistakes in pronouncing Korean syllables.

\[
\begin{align*}
(1) & \text{ לומר} \rightarrow ㄱ + \text{ㅟ} \\
& \text{쥐} \rightarrow ㅈ + \text{ㅟ} \\
(2) & \text{교} \rightarrow ㄱ + \text{ㅛ} \\
(3) & \text{규} \rightarrow ㄱ + \text{ㅠ}
\end{align*}
\]

The words above are a syllable composed with initial consonant and diphthong, while it is accepted as a syllable in Thai language as the following.

\[
\begin{align*}
(4) & k + w + i \\
& j + w + i \\
(5) & k + y + o \\
(6) & k + y + u
\end{align*}
\]
Syllable structures as the above is ‘consonant + consonant + vowel’, which forms cluster of initial consonant. With this reason, limitation of syllable structure of Thai language, L1 interference causes many errors in pronouncing for Thai students.

3. The Error Caused by The Difference of Sentence Structure Between Thai and Korean Language

Sentence structure is the order of the elements in a sentence, which includes linguistic universality and individuality.

One of the most distinguished differences between Korean and Thai language is word order. Korean language is so-called SOV language, while Thai is SVO language which is same as English. This distinct of sentence structure dose not seem to be difficult for Thai students in learning Korean or Korean students in learning Thai, however, the truth is not as it is. It requires efforts to understand and acquire this difference. Besides, it needs to more focus on differences of sentence structure between Korean and Thai language to improve effective learning language.

3.1. Sentence Components

Sentence is composed with several components and this is called sentence component. Sentence components are divided into two types; essential components and subsidiary components. Essential components are subject, object, complement, and predicate, while subsidiary components are adnominal phrase, adverb, and independent phrase. This is linguistic universals, so there is no big difference between Korean and Thai language. Only one difference between Korean and Thai language is that part of speech in Korean language is up to postpositional particle as the following;

(1) 철수가 밥을 먹는다.

This example is the sentence composed with essential components such as subject, object and predicate. ‘철수’ as subject is because of adding prepositional particle ‘가’, and ‘밥’ as object is because of using prepositional particle ‘를’. While due to that Thai language is an isolated language, the order of the word or the position of the word can determine part of speech. Thus, the order of the word or the position of the word of Korean language is very flexible, while in Thai language the change of the order of the word would produce incorrect sentence. As follows;

(2) ชอล ซู กิน เข้า
    ชอล กิน คารว
    ‘철수’ 먹다 밥
    ‘철수가 밥을 먹는다.

As the example (2) above, subject ‘철수’ can function as a subject is because it is on the position of subject, and there is no element added to present subject or no word transforms. Likewise, the reason that ‘카우’ is object because it is on the position of an object, and any element is not added or any word is not transformed. If subject and
object switch their position each other in the sentence above, its meaning is changed to ‘Rice eats Chulsoo’ and this becomes incorrect sentence. Besides, if the words are changed their position by various combination, they will be also incorrect sentence.

On the contrary, components of sentence in Korean language are more flexible, i.e., subject is subject no matter where it positions, and object is object no matter where it positions. This is because of role of prepositional particle. However, Thai language does not have propositional particle. Therefore, Thai students make errors in using prepositional particle. If the students do not understand that sentence components are freely switched their position due to that Korean language has prepositional particle, the students cannot use correct language. And, although sentence components can switch their position freely, the students should understand which position is supposed to be. For example, complement is pre-positioned of verbs that accompanied complement; Adnominal adverb is located ahead of modificand. Because modifier is post-located of modificand in Thai language, so Thai students can make errors with L1 interference in learning Korean language.

3.2. The Error Caused in Using Prepositional Particle

Prepositional particle in Korean language clings to noun to present the relationship between that word and the other words in a sentence. Prepositional particle has various types. While Thai language which is an isolated language does not have prepositional particle but case is presented by each independent words. Same words can be subject and object depending on its position in Thai language. Thai students, therefore, are troubled in using prepositional particle and make errors.

1) The Error in adverbial particle
   a. The Error of ‘에’ and ‘에서’

   Adverbial particle both ‘에’ and ‘에서’ indicate location in Korean language. Adverbial particle ‘에’ mainly indicates ‘aiming direction’ along with Locomotion Verbs, while ‘에서’ indicates location using with action verb and descriptive verb. And ‘에’ can be used after temporal noun, while ‘에서’ cannot.

   Comparing to locative preposition ‘ที่’ and ‘ใน’ in ‘Thai language, there is similarity and at the same time there is difference. Thus, if Thai students fail to understand the difference between ‘에’ and ‘에서’ correctly, many errors can occur with L1 interference.

   1) ㄱ. 한국에 갑니다
     ㄴ. 한국에서 갑니다.
     ㄷ. ไป ที่ เกาหลี
   2) ㄱ. 한국에서 공부합니다.
     ㄴ. 한국에 공부합니다.
     ㄷ. เรียน ที่ เกาหลี
In the examples (1)~(3) above, ‘ㄱ’ is correct sentence, but Thai students often use ‘ㄴ’ sentence because ‘ที่’ or ‘ใน’ is used in sentence of Thai language. In other words, Thai students make errors due to that adverbial particle ‘에’ and ‘에서’ in Korean language have different usage.

b. The Error of ‘에서’

‘에서’ presents starting point of certain action with a noun such as time or location, which is used with ‘을/를’ in case of some verbs. Thus, Thai students can feel confused and make errors.

(4) ㄱ. 집에서 왔습니다
ㄴ. มาจากบ้าน

(5) ㄱ. 한국외국어대학교를 졸업했습니다.
ㄴ. 한국외국어대학교에서 졸업했습니다
ㄷ. จบจากมหาวิทยาลัยฮันกุ

As the example (4), ‘에서’ presents the starting point of certain action along with a noun such as time or location, and preposition ‘จาก’ is corresponded to this case in Thai language. Objective particle ‘를’ is used instead of ‘에서’ such as the example (5, ㄱ) in case of some verbs. While, Thai language uses same preposition, so Thai students can make an error such as (5, ㄱ).

2) Error of objective particle ‘를/을’

Postposition particle which makes a noun into object such as ‘를/을’ called objective particle. Objective particle is generally located after object of transitive verb. L1 interference of Thai students with difference of sentence structure appears as follows.

(1) ㄱ. 나는 친구가 많이 있습니다
ㄴ. 나는 친구를 많이 있습니다
(2) ㄱ. 나는 한국 사람이 좋습니다
ㄴ. 나는 한국 사람을 좋습니다

Verb ‘있다/좋다’ in the example above is intransitive verb. Thus, the verbs above do not need to use objective particle but subjective particle. While in Thai language, verbs which have same meaning such as ‘มี’ and ‘ชอบ’ are transitive verb, so they need object. Therefore, Thai students can make a mistake to add object to verbs above.

(3) ผมมีเพื่อนมาก

(4) ผมชอบคนเกาหลี

The example (3) is Thai sentence which means ‘I have many friends’. Here, verb ‘มี’ is transitive verb which means ‘have’, so it has object ‘เพื่อน’. Thus, Thai students make errors with L1 interference such as the difference of sentence structure as the example (1, ㄴ). The example (4) is also similar to (3) and its meaning is ‘I like Korean’. Here, verb ‘ชอบ’ means ‘like’ and transitive verb, so it has object ‘คนเกาหลี’. Likewise, Thai students make an error with L1 interference such as the example (2, ㄴ).

4. Conclusion

This study examined errors of Thai students based on phonemes and sentences. Korean language is an agglutinative language and postpositional particle is well developed, while Thai language is isolated language. Thus Thai students often make errors with this reason.

Errors in pronouncing caused from phonetic environment of Thai students are noticeable. Specifically, many errors are caused by without understating phonetic characteristics of lenis of Korean consonant system. In vowel system, combination of consonant and diphthong in Korean language is considered as consonant cluster with phonetic systematic interference of Thai language, therefore Thai students make an error in pronouncing.

In sentence structure, errors in using postpositional particle are mainly appeared. This is because Thai students are not accustomed to use postpositional particle, and because of L1 interference from the structural difference between Korean and Thai language.

I examined the errors in using Korean of Thai students. To conclude, it is very important to understand the difference and to acquire Korean language through comparison and analysis of two languages for using more correct Korean language.
References


김정은(2002), “한국어 교재와 문법서에 나타난 문법 용어와 문법 내용 비교”, 국제한국어 교육학회 추계학술대회 논문집


김재열(2001). “한국어 교육에서 기초 문법 항목의 선정과 배열 연구” , 한국어교육 12-1. 국제 한국어 교육학회

남기심, 고영근(2001), 『표준 국어문법론』. 탑출판사.


박영순(1998), 『국어문법 교육론』, 박이정.

박영순(2001), 『외국어로서의 한국어 교육론』, 윤인.

방성원(2002), “한국어 교육용 문법 용어의 표준화 방안” , 한국어 교육 13-1. 국제 한국어 교육학회

백봉자(1991), “외국어로서의 한국어 문법”, 《동방학지》71.72, 연세대학교 동방학 연구소


최창성(1985), 『타이어 문법 총론』, 서울:삼경사.


นววรรณ พันธุเมธา. ไวยากรณภาษาไทย.[태국어 문법],กรุงเทพ หนานคร:รังเรืองสาสันการพิมพ์. ๒๕๒๗

วิจินตน ภานุพงศ. โครงสร้างภาษาไทย ระบบไวยากรณ.[태국어 문법]], กรุงเทพ หนานคร : มหาวิทยาลัยรามคำแหง. ๒๕๒๗