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The utility of indirect written corrective feedback for learners with different proficiency levels

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Abstract

김옥연 · 박은성. 2017. 9. 30. **한국어 학습자의 언어 숙달도에 따른 간접적 피드백의 효용성 연구.** 이중언어학 68, 1-26. 본 연구는 한국어를 배우는 외국인 학습자의 작문 오류에 제공되는 간접적 피드백(indirect feedback)의 효용성을 연구하였다. 다양한 모국어를 사용하는 24명의 초급과 중급 한국어 학습자들에게 간접적 피드백을 제공하고 해당 오류를 수정하게 하여 그 결과를 조사 분석하였다. 각 학습자는 연구자와 개별적으로 만나 주어진 주제로 작문을 한 후 연구자로부터 해당 작문의 오류에 밑줄을 긋는 방법의 간접적 피드백을 제공받고 자신의 오류를 직접 수정하였다. 분석 결과 실험에 참여한 한국어 학습자들의 오류는 총 다섯 가지 유형(동사 활용, 철자, 조사 사용, 단어 선택, 어순)으로 분류할 수 있었다. 그중에서 초급 학습자들은 철자 오류를, 중급 학습자들은 단어 선택 오류를 가장 많이 범하는 경향을 보였다. 간접적 피드백을 제공했을 때 초급과 중급 학습자들 모두 40%의 오류를 자가 수정할 수 있었고, 이러한 간접적 피드백은 철자 오류와 조사 사용 오류와 같은 처치 가능한 오류(treatable errors)에 더 효과가 있는 것으로 나타났다. 본 연구 결과는 학생들의 언어 숙달도와는 상관없이 학습자 스스로 자신의 오류를 수정할 수 있으며, 교사들은 오류의 종류에 따라 간접적 피드백을 제공하여 보다 효과적인 교육을 할 수 있음을 제시한다. **(서강대학교)**

【Key words】 간접적 피드백(indirect feedback), 자가 수정(self-correction), 글쓰기 피드백(written corrective feedback)

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1. Introduction

In the recent second language (L2) writing literature, there has been a series of research examining the efficacy of written corrective feedback. Recent studies have shown that written corrective feedback (WCF) can result in L2 development (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, 2010; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007) with most research focusing on investigating the benefits of different types of feedback—namely indirect and direct feedback—with varying degrees of explicitness.

Advocates of direct WCF argue that it enables learners to instantly internalize the correct form. Thus, it is a fast and easy way for learners to help resolve complex errors. On the other hand, advocates of indirect WCF argue that it enables learners to engage in a deeper level of language processing. As Bitchener and Knoch (2008) aptly pointed out, the value of the indirect approach lies in the fact that it "requires pupils to engage in guided learning and problem solving and, as a result, promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition" (pp. 414-415).

While there are different advantages associated with different types of feedback, there are also drawbacks associated with each type. For example, several researchers are concerned that in providing direct feedback, L2 teachers instinctively try to correct their students' errors even before they finish reading the writing, without attempting to understand what the student is really trying to express. Echoing this sentiment, researchers such as Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) have characterized such feedback as arbitrary, inconsistent, insensitive, and careless at best, and argued that it may be too much of a burden and even

unrealistic to simply hand over the responsibility of error correction solely to the teachers. In this regard, indirect feedback may serve as a halfway house where the teacher takes on some responsibility for pointing out the error but leaves it up to the student to make the actual correction.

Indirect feedback, however, is not without limitations. One of the possible shortcomings is that when provided with indirect feedback, learners may self-correct their errors only if they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge at hand. In fact, some researchers have argued that learners with lower levels of proficiency may not be able to self-correct their errors even when the error is pointed out to them. Thus, most researchers have targeted learners with intermediate or higher levels of proficiency when examining the efficacy of indirect feedback (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982). Some researchers (e.g. Park, Song, & Shin, 2016), however, have pointed out that the assumption that indirect feedback works better for learners with higher proficiency levels is a speculation which needs to be empirically tested in further research.

The present study aims to examine the efficacy of indirect written corrective feedback on learners with two different proficiency levels in an attempt to determine whether lower level learners may be relied upon to self-correct their own errors that have been signaled to them by means of indirect feedback.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Direct and indirect feedback

Ever since the well-known contention about the efficacy of error correction between Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1999), a plethora of research has been conducted on the issue. Many of the studies have examined the efficacy of different feedback types (i.e. indirect and direct feedback) by examining learners' performances on their revision or on a new piece of writing. Despite the extensive research examining the efficacy of different types of feedback, the findings have been inconclusive. Some L2 writing scholars have shown a strong preference for indirect feedback, arguing that it can be more effective in helping student writers as it requires them to cognitively engage in guided learning and problem-solving activities (e.g. Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Reid, 1998). Likewise, findings from longitudinal studies, albeit limited, (e.g. Frantzen, 1995; Lalande, 1982) have shown that students who received indirect feedback significantly outperformed those who received direct feedback.

On the other hand, researchers who have conducted studies under controlled experimental or quasi-experimental conditions have placed a premium on direct WCF (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). They argue that the indirect approach might fail because indirect feedback fails to provide learners with sufficient information to resolve complex errors (e.g. syntactic errors). Similarly,

Chandler (2003) points out that direct WCF enables learners to instantly internalize the correct form compared to learners whose errors are indirectly corrected who may not know if their hypothesized corrections are accurate or not.

It should be noted however that the efficacy of direct feedback only operates under the assumption that the teacher is able to provide appropriate corrections in the form of direct corrective feedback. Ferris (2011) cautioned that teachers could easily misunderstand or misinterpret the students' original intent and thus provide inappropriate or inaccurate correction. In fact, L2 classroom research has also shown that the feedback given by teachers is often arbitrary, incomplete, idiosyncratic, and inaccurate (see Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Truscott, 1996). In Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), a case study involving three teachers and nine student writers, it was found that each teacher "only dealt with approximately half the issues that could have been dealt with" or "avoided or overlooked over twice as many problems as [they] commented on" (p. 173).

One plausible reason for the aforementioned conundrum is the teacher's lack of sensitivity to different contexts and to varying levels of need, ability, and other individual differences inherent in each learner (e.g. Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Park, 2009). Lack of understanding of such variables leaves the teacher with only his/her intuition to decide which error is important to correct, and the learner is left on his/her own to process the teacher's correction (Han, 2002) which often results in a 'mismatch' between the teacher's and the learner's intentions.

Given the potential mismatch of teachers' well-intentioned (but infelicitous) corrections on learners' errors, it is important and meaningful to revisit the purpose of providing corrective feedback in L2 writing. Ultimately, the purpose of providing feedback to learners is to help them notice their weaknesses in what they have produced and improve their writing ability (via enhanced accuracy or coherence, among others). However, given the myriads of individual variables and styles on the part of the students as well as the teachers, it is often difficult for the teacher to accurately assess the learner's writing intentions and correct their errors accordingly. In other words, it may not be wise to put the teacher in a position where he or she carries the responsibility of appropriately assessing the learner's intentions and correcting the errors for the student-writer. The teacher should provide support in the form of feedback, but the learner or the writer should also be an active participant in the 'feedbacking' process. Hence, it is important to consider the issue of feedback efficacy and usability from the learners' perspective.

2.2 Focus on the learners

Most of the WCF studies have focused on the teacher's perspective, and very little attention has been paid to the learner, the recipient of the feedback. Hendrickson (1980) suggested that although teachers are supposed to be responsible for providing corrective feedback on learner errors, the role of the teacher in correcting the students' errors should not be dominant, and that learners should be encouraged to correct their own errors. Moreover, teachers are often advised to give students the

opportunity to self-correct their errors (e.g. Hedge, 2000; Park et al., 2016). In this regard, some researchers have also examined whether self-correction is possible, and if so, to what extent. Evidence suggests that prodding the learner to self-correct is effective in promoting L2 development (e.g. Lyster, 2004; Ferris, 2006). Furthermore, studies that have investigated the type of feedback that learners say they would like to receive have shown that most learners preferred to receive indirect feedback (Brandl, 1995; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Despite the potential benefits, providing indirect feedback via means of underlining, for example, and having learners to self-correct their underlined errors may not always fair well. Several researchers have claimed that learners with low levels of L2 proficiency are less likely to benefit from indirect feedback, which necessitates learner's self-correction. Prior research has also suggested that learners can self-correct their errors only if they possess the necessary linguistic knowledge at hand (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; cf. Park et al., 2016). In other words, it has been suggested that learners with lower levels of language proficiency may not be sufficiently equipped to correct their own errors. Thus, it appears that encouraging learners to self-correct may be effective in promoting L2 acquisition, yet it may not always be possible or feasible. This further raises the question of whether the teacher should push the learner to self-correct their errors or provide direct corrections themselves.

As mentioned, while researchers advocate that self-correction is pedagogically beneficial for the learners, the general assumption is that it would be beneficial only for higher level learners who possess certain

levels of L2 knowledge. As Park et al. (2016) pointed out, the widespread assumption that learners with higher L2 competence can self-correct their errors and thus are better candidates for indirect feedback (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ferris, 2004, 2011; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) remains a sensible (yet unverified) assumption that needs to be empirically validated. In their recent study, Park et al. (2016), examined the utility of indirect feedback by examining to what extent learners with different proficiency levels—lower and intermediate—can perceive and self-correct their own errors signaled by underlining. They targeted 40 heritage and non-heritage undergraduate students with different proficiency levels who were enrolled in two intact Korean courses at a university in the United States. Their results showed that self-correction is useful and feasible for lower level as well as higher level learners. Based on their findings, they concluded that indirect feedback can be useful for lower level learners especially when it comes to "treatable" errors[1] including errors on orthography and particles.

To sum up, there is little understanding of how learners with low levels of L2 proficiency can benefit from indirect feedback. Clearly more research is needed to confirm whether or not lower level learners can make use of indirect feedback. In addition, as discussed, the provision of direct feedback on learners' errors may put a strain on the part of the teachers in interpreting learners' intentions behind their writing. Hence, examining the efficacy of indirect feedback promises important

1) Treatable errors are related to linguistic structures that "occur in a patterned, rule-governed way" (Ferris, 1999, p. 6), whereas untreatable errors are concerned with linguistic features that are "non-idiomatic, idiosyncratic" (Ferris, 1999, p. 6) and often require acquired knowledge (Ferris, 2011).

pedagogical insights for L2 writing teachers.

In view of the foregoing review, the current study examines to what extent learners with different levels of proficiency can benefit from indirect feedback. Similar to Park et al. (2016), the current study examines the efficacy of indirect feedback on learners of L2-Korean. However, the participants in the current study comprised Korean language learners who are studying Korean as a second language (KSL) in Korea as opposed to Park et al. (2016) which targeted learners of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) studying in the United States, and which was a classroom-based study. In contrast, the current study was conducted one-on-one with one of the researchers. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What type of errors do Korean as a second language learners of different proficiency make?
2. (a) To what extent do learners accurately self-correct their own errors that have been signaled by means of indirect feedback?
   (b) Do higher level learners benefit more from indirect feedback than lower level learners?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants comprised 24 KSL learners (17 female, 7 male) who came from different L1 backgrounds with varying levels of L2 proficiency. All of them were enrolled in a Korean Language Program

housed in a private university located in Seoul.

The participants were divided into two groups depending on their current enrollment in the language program (Levels 1 & 2 were placed in the "elementary" group; Levels 4 & 5 were placed in the "intermediate" group). Twelve students were placed in each proficiency group. Most of the participants had experience learning two or more additional languages prior to (or along with) learning Korean. The mean number of additional languages learned was three languages per participant (see Table 1).

<Table 1> Learner Profiles

	Gender	Age	Length of Korean Instruction	L1	L2	L3	L4
Elementary							
1	F	24	3 mths	Chinese	English	Korean	
2	M	26	6 mths	Uzbek /Persian /Russian	English	Korean	
3	F	25	3 yrs 4 mths	Polish	English	Korean	Chinese
4	F	27	5 mths	Malay	English	Korean	
5	M	27	1 yr 6 mths	Bicolano	Filipino	English	Korean
6	F	25	6 mths	Cantonese	English	Chinese	Korean
7	F	36	6 mths	English	Spanish	Korean	
8	F	22	6 mths	Vietnamese	English	Korean	
9	F	21	3 mths	Indonesian	English	Mandarin	Korean
10	F	21	3 mths	Indonesian	English	Korean	
11	F	20	3 mths	Indonesian	English	Mandarin	Korean
12	M	22	3 mths	Czech	English	German	Korean

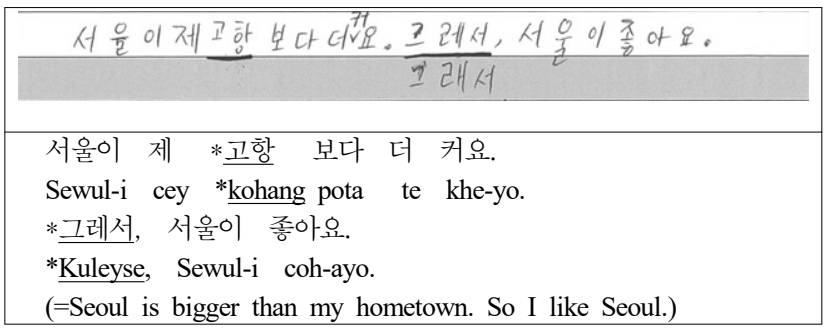
Intermediate							
13	F	27	2 yrs	Ukrainian	Russian	English	Korean
14	F	31	7 yrs	English /Tagalog	Korean	Spanish	
15	M	32	2 yrs	Chinese	English	Korean	Japanese
16	F	24	5 yrs	French	English	Korean	Italian
17	F	22	0.8 yrs	Chinese	English	Korean	
18	F	25	7 yrs	Russian	English	Korean	Spanish
19	F	25	4 yrs	Romanian	English	Korean	Japanese
20	F	40	3 yrs	Dutch	English	Italian	Korean
21	M	25	2 yrs	Russian	English	Chinese	Korean
22	M	43	1 yr	Dutch	English	German	Korean
23	F	21	3.4 yrs	Russian /Belarusian	English	Korean	
24	M	33	3.5 yrs	English	Korean	German	Irish

All the participants indicated that they knew at least two additional languages, and 15 participants indicated that they were familiar with four languages. All the participants had received some formal Korean instruction at a language program in Korea. The mean length of Korean language instruction was six months for the elementary group, and three years and two months for the intermediate group. Their ages ranged from 20 to 43 years old, with a mean of 25 years.

3.2. Data collection

One of the researchers met with each participant individually. Each participant signed a consent form and was asked to write a one-page composition. Each could choose one topic from two topics which varied according to their proficiency level. The lower level learners could choose

one from the following two topics: '*My Most Memorable Trip*,' and '*Introduction of My Hometown*.' Intermediate level learners could choose a topic from '*Cultural Difference in Dating Culture*', and '*Night Life Comparison Between My Hometown and Korea*.' Each participant was asked to write on the given topic for 30 minutes. The researcher collected the writing and provided unfocused indirect feedback by underlining all the errors before returning it to the participant. After receiving their writing with all of the errors underlined, each participant was asked to correct the underlined error. They were asked to self-correct the underlined errors as they read through their writing. They were also told that they did not have to correct the underlined error if they did not know how to correct it. Fig. 1 shows a sample of a participant's journal entry that had been underlined by the researcher and self-corrected by one of the participants.



<Fig. 1> Sample of student writing with underlined errors

As seen in Fig. 1, each participant wrote on the white part of the paper after which all the errors were underlined by the researcher. The researcher then asked the participant to self-correct the underlined error

on the grey part of the paper. In the sample shown in Fig. 1, the participant was unable to self-correct the spelling of the first underlined error, *kohang* (고항), but was able to successfully correct the spelling of the second underlined error, *Kuleyse* (그레서), by changing it to *Kulayse* (그래서).

3.3. Data analysis and coding

Data analysis was done in two phases. The first phase involved examining all the underlined errors and categorizing them by type. Each participant's writing was visited several times to review the underlined errors in order to create relevant categories. Through this repeated process, the errors were allocated to the appropriate categories. Error categories that emerged from the data were adapted and modified from Ferris' (2006) categories: Verb Conjugation (VC) errors, Orthographic (OR) errors, Particle (PA) errors, Lexical (LE) errors, and Word Order (WO) errors.

<Table 2> Sample Error Types

Error Type	Examples
Verb conjugation (VC)	제 고향은 마닐라랑 너무 *멀읍니다. cey kohyang-un manilla-lang nemwu *melupnita. (=My hometown is very far from Manila.) *melupnita* should be *mepnita*.
Orthographic (OR)	*여자진구/*남자진구 없으면... *yecacinkwu/*namcacinkwu epsumyen... (=If one doesn't have a girlfriend or a boyfriend...) Misspelling: *yecacinkwu* → *yecachinkwu* *namcacinkwu* → *namcachinkwu*

2) Since *sai* ("gap") and *chai* ("difference") sound similar, it could be thought of as

Particles (PA)	*한국에 술을 마시면 보통 음식이랑 먹어요. *Hankwuk-ey swul-ul masi-myen pothong umsik-ilang meke-yo. (=In Korea, one usually consumes drinks with food.) *-ey* should be *-eyse*.
Lexical (LE)	한국과 네덜란드 문화는 *사이[2]가 많다. hankwukkwa neytellantu mwunhwanun *saika manhta (=There are a lot of differences between Korean and Dutch culture.) *sai* (gap) should be *chai* (difference).
Word order (WO)	여기에서 공부하는 것이 *마음에 아주 들지만… yeki-eyse kongpwuha-nun ke-si *maum-ey acwu tulciman… (=[I] really like studying here but...) Adverb *acwu* should be placed before the noun *maum-ey*.

VC errors concerned incorrect use of verb final and prefinal endings or suffixes, including adnominal, nominal, terminative, and conjunctive endings and suffixes. Thus, it entailed changes in the case and tense of verbs in the sentence as well as its meaning. OR errors were limited to spelling errors, and PA errors pertained to incorrect use of the nominative, objective, locative, and adverbial particles. LE errors involved inappropriate or incorrect use of words in a given text. Finally, WO errors concerned problems with word order (see Table 2).

The second phase of the data analysis involved examining the learners' self-corrections. All the underlined errors and the participants' self-corrections were examined to determine whether the self-corrections were accurate or not. As previously seen in Fig. 1, the participant successfully corrected the second underlined error by changing its spelling, yet s/he failed to correct the first spelling error. Hence, the first error counted as an instance of inaccurate self-correction, while second

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an OR error. We asked the participant what s/he meant by *sai*, and s/he confirmed that it meant "gap."

one counted as an instance of accurate self-correction.

4. Results

4.1. Distribution of error types

The first question addressed the types of errors that KSL learners typically make in their L2 writing. Writing samples from 24 learners were marked and categorized into the five afore-mentioned categories (see Table 2). The participants made a total of 484 errors: 249 errors from elementary group, and 235 errors from intermediate group. The average number of words per each participant's writing was 79 words for elementary group and 106 words for intermediate group. Elementary level learners made a mean of 19.5 (25%) errors per writing, compared to the intermediate level learners who made a mean of 18.5 (17%) errors per writing. The distribution of error types is summarized in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, the elementary-level learners produced 249 errors compared to the intermediate learners who produced a total of 235 errors. Overall, the results revealed both similarities and differences between the two groups.

<Table 3> Distribution of Error Types

Error type	Elementary			Intermediate			*t*	*p*
	Raw (%)	M	SD	Raw (%)	M	SD		
VC	23 (9%)	0.11	0.10	34 (14%)	0.20	0.17	1.54	0.14
OR	142 (57%)	0.51	0.24	74 (31%)	0.30	0.16	-2.47	0.02*
PA	71 (29%)	0.31	0.17	92 (39%)	0.38	0.18	0.19	0.37
LE	12 (5%)	0.04	0.06	29 (12%)	0.19	0.10	4.10	0.00*
WO	1 (0%)	0.00	0.02	6 (3%)	0.02	0.03	1.69	0.11
Total	249 (51%)			235 (49%)				

Note: $p<0.05$

In terms of similarity, PA and OR errors were the most common error types for both groups, followed by errors on VC. WO errors were produced the least by both groups. In terms of inter-group differences, OR errors were the most frequent error type for the elementary group covering more than half (57%) of all errors, followed by PA errors (29%). This was the reverse for the intermediate group where the most common error comprised the PA errors (39%), followed by OR errors (31%). An independent samples *t*-test showed a significant difference between the two groups for OR errors (t=-2.47, p=0.02), demonstrating that the elementary group produced significantly more OR errors than the intermediate group. A significant difference was also found for LE errors (t=4.10, p=0.00) with the intermediate group producing significantly more errors than the elementary group, but significantly fewer LE errors than the intermediate group.

4.2. Learners' self-correction of errors

The second research question (2a) addressed the extent to which the participants were able to successfully correct their own errors. Table 4 summarizes the results.

<Table 4> Learners' Self-Correction of Errors

Error type	Number of self-corrected errors (%)
VC	26/57 (45.61%)
OR	79/216 (36.57%)
PA	67/163 (41.10%)
LE	10/41 (24.39%)
WO	3/7 (42.86%)
Total	185/484 (38.22%)

As seen in Table 4, all learners in general were able to self-correct about 40% of the errors that have been signaled by means of indirect feedback. VC errors showed the highest correction rate (46%), followed by PA errors (41%). LE errors showed the lowest self-correction rate of 24%. This shows that "treatable" errors are more likely to be self-corrected than "untreatable" errors.

The second part of the research question (2b) concerned the differences in the self-corrected error categories across the two proficiency levels (see Table 5).

<Table 5> Learners' Self-Correction of Errors by Proficiency Level

Error type	Elementary			Intermediate			*t*	*p*
	Raw (%)	M	SD	Raw (%)	M	SD		
VC	9/23 (39%)	0.40	0.35	17/34 (50%)	0.48	0.37	0.49	0.63
OR	52/142 (37%)	0.37	0.15	27/74 (36%)	0.31	0.27	-0.65	0.52
PA	35/71 (49%)	0.49	0.34	32/92 (35%)	0.42	0.20	-0.63	0.53
LE	4/12 (33%)	0.38	0.49	6/29 (21%)	0.19	0.30	-1.03	0.31
WO	0/1 (0%)	N/A	N/A	3/6 (50%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	100/249 (40%)			85/235 (36%)				

Note: $p<0.05$

As seen in Table 5, the elementary group was able to self-correct 40% of their errors compared to the intermediate group whose overall self-correction rate was 36%. The elementary group self-corrected almost half of their PA errors (49%), followed by VC errors (39%). They were also able to correct about 37% of their OR errors. With the exception of WO error type, this group was able to self-correct more than a third of errors in each category. On the other hand, the intermediate group was able to self-correct half of their VC errors and WO errors (50% each), and 36% of their OR errors, closely followed by PA errors (35%). An independent samples *t*-test showed no significant differences between the two groups for any of the error category.

While there were no significant differences in the self-correction rate of different error categories, some interesting differences can be noted. The elementary group showed higher correction rates for PA (49%) and VC (39%) errors. The intermediate group, on the other hand, showed the highest correction rate for errors on VC (50%) and WO (50%). With the exception of WO error category which had just one instance of error, the

elementary group showed the lowest self-correction rate for LE errors (33%); the intermediate group also showed the lowest self-correction rate for the LE errors (21%) compared to the other error types.

5. Discussion

The results revealed significant differences between the two proficiency levels in terms of their OR errors and LE errors whereby the elementary group produced significantly more number of OR errors (t=-2.47, p=0.02) than the intermediate group. The fact that the lower level learners produced significantly more OR errors may be explained by the fact that they had learned the Korean language only for an average of merely six months, whereas those learners in the intermediate group have had at least three or more years of Korean instruction (see Table 1).

With regard to LE errors, the intermediate group produced significantly more number of errors (t=4.10, p=0.00) than the elementary group. However, it should be noted that although the higher level learners produced more LE errors than the lower level learners, the type of LE errors typically committed by each group was quite different. The elementary level learners made simple one-word choice errors (e.g. 20 *pwun* [분] “minutes” instead of 20 *il* [일] “day”). On the other hand, the higher proficiency learners attempted more complex lexical collocations, such as *innay-lul kacita* (인내를 가지다) “have patience.” Hence, LE errors from the intermediate group mostly concerned wrong collocational word association. For instance, they would use noun-based associations with the wrong choice of verb, *nwunchi-lul chikhita* (눈치를 치키다) instead of *nwunchi-lul pota* (눈치를 보다).

According to Hong (2004), intermediate or higher proficiency level learners start to use various lexical collocations in their writing, and in turn, tend to make more lexical errors than grammatical errors. Echoing Hong's observation, the intermediate learners produced more LE errors as they tried to use more complicated collocations than the elementary level learners who relied on simple, frequently occurring words. Similarly, during post-treatment interviews, the intermediate level participants mentioned that they made an attempt to use unfamiliar words because they wanted "to take risks to learn more."[3)]

Regarding the learners' self-correction results, no significant differences were found, indicating that both groups exhibited comparable self-correction rate for all error types. The elementary level learners were able to self-correct about 40% of their own errors, with the exception of WO error category for which merely one error was observed. Likewise, the intermediate group also exhibited comparable self-correction ratio across all error types (37%). This indicates that contrary to the widespread assumption, lower level learners are capable of accurately self-correcting their own errors as much as (or slightly more than) the intermediate level learners.

It is worth noting that although not statistically significant, the elementary group was able to accurately self-correct almost half of their PA errors (49%), compared to the intermediate level learners who were able to accurately self-correct 35% of their PA errors. This contrasts with previous results from Park et al. (2016) who found that higher proficiency

3) Since different writing topics were given to each group, it is possible that the nature of the topics affected the frequency of error types for the two groups.

learners were better at correcting PA errors than lower level learners, which they attributed to the increased metalinguistic knowledge of the higher level learners. This prompted a closer examination of the PA errors committed by the two groups. Further analysis revealed that 50% of the intermediate level learners' PA errors were omission errors and that 72% of the PA omission errors failed to be corrected by the intermediate learners. For the elementary level learners, omission errors comprised 38% of the PA errors, and they were able to successfully correct 59% of their particle omission errors. The discrepancy between the current results and Park et al.s' (2016) results may stem from the fact that the current participants are learning L2-Korean in a KSL environment. In other words, they are surrounded by formal and informal target language input as they are learning the Korean language in Korea. Thus, it is only natural that these learners are affected by the ambient aural L2 input. As an illustration, some particles such as the object particle (*-ul, -lul*) and the subject particle (*-i, -ka*) can be omitted in spoken Korean depending on the context.[4] Accordingly, Korean language learners tend to permit overgeneralization in which they omit the particles in writing as well as in speaking (Kim & Nam, 2002). The participants in the intermediate group had much longer exposure to informal aural input in Korea than the elementary learners, and thus, they may have become more lenient with the omission of particles in the written form. This speculation was partially corroborated in the post-treatment interviews where some participants, when asked questions about their PA errors explained: "I

4) *mwul-ul masita* (물을 마시다) "drink water" and *mwul masita* (물 마시다) "drink water" can both be accepted with or without object marker *-ul* (을) in the spoken register.

heard many Koreans say it like this," or "Well, Koreans talk this way." Thus, the intermediate learners who have learned, used, and heard Korean input in the immediate environment for over three years, seemed to have gotten used to omitting particles altogether. On the other hand, the elementary level KSL learners' exposure to the aural input is limited, and their language exposure typically started in a classroom environment which in turn may have influenced their higher self-correction rate for PA errors.

6. Conclusion

The current results have shown that providing indirect feedback can be effective for all learners including lower level learners. This stands counter to the widespread assumption that indirect feedback may be beneficial for learners with a fair amount of L2 knowledge. It was also found that indirect feedback may be more effective for treatable errors such as OR and PA errors. Learners in both elementary and intermediate groups showed the lowest self-correction rate for LE errors which suggests that direct corrections may be the best form of feedback for idiosyncratic errors pertaining to lexical choice. This is in line with previous findings (Ferris, 2011; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Park et al., 2016).

Based on the current findings, it may be concluded that indirect feedback can enable students to correct their own errors which allows for deeper cognitive engagement. At the same time, it can also be beneficial for the teachers who, at times, automatically start providing direct corrections on students' errors without much consideration for what the

student intended to express. Thus, providing indirect feedback may be beneficial for both teachers and students in that it can unburden the teachers' obligation of correcting all the errors while at the same time providing students an opportunity to self-correct their own errors. As seen in the current findings, the indirect written corrective feedback can benefit not just learners with a fair amount of L2 knowledge, but also for learners with low levels of proficiency.

Finally, some of the limitations of the current study are addressed. Given the nature of indirect feedback, the errors examined in the study were limited to those that can easily lend themselves to underlining. In other words, only surface errors that could be underlined were examined for the current analysis—an artefact of the feedback method. Another limitation concerns the small number of participants in this study. Future research should target more participants in order to reap more reliable findings. Also, while the current study examined the efficacy of indirect written corrective feedback on L2 Korean, future research should target other L2s so as to shed insights on the utility of indirect feedback on different target languages.

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