

Plenary III

Learning Practical Grammar with Online Practice for Reading and Writing

Won-Cheol Park
(English Mou Mou)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show how L2 learners are able to acquire grammar competence through Prammarr within the context of extensive reading. English MouMou's latest program has learners engaged in extensive reading. Before the level of extensive reading, we give learners grammatical knowledge consistent with EFL situations in Korea. MouMou calls this program Prammarr. Prammarr is the newly invented abbreviation which stands for practical grammar and practicing grammar from English MouMou. It has three programs: parts of Speech, word order, and intensive reading under form-focused input. Each program will introduce the difference in grammar between Korean and English, and show methodologies for L2 learners in Korea.

I. Introduction

To read and write in L2, lexical and syntactic knowledge are necessary for L2 learners. According to Choi & Jun (2006), learners' linguistic knowledge for target languages are lexical and syntactic knowledge. Korean L2 learners have a difficult time understanding the reading and writing in L2. Different English backgrounds and vocabularies are a difficult problem when learning in L2. There are many texts for learning and memorizing the lexical knowledge. But lacking syntactic knowledge still leads L2 learners to face difficulties on different and more complicated reading and writing in L2. Learners need to learn accurate and practical syntactic knowledge because syntactic knowledge allows learners to arrange the words properly and establish a sentence that makes sense (Choi & Jun 2006). The first step in understanding the meaning of the text correctly is to understand the components of sentence structure in L2, and learning the parts of speech is the first step in Prammarr, just as learning the letters of the alphabet is the first step.

II. Theoretical Background and Methodology

1. Parts of Speech

Knowledge of a first language can lead learners to make incorrect guesses about how the second language works, and this may result in errors when making sentences in L2. Through learning the parts of speech, L2 learners begin to understand the use or function of words and how words are joined together to make meaningful communication. When the learners study the parts of speech, they need to learn the difference between Korean and English. This difference can cause difficulty during

their education. For example, one difference between Korean and English is that Korean nouns must always co-occur with appropriate classifiers for purposes of counting, whereas in English, the use of classifiers is required if nouns cannot normally bear plural marking directly (Song, 2005). Because of this difference between English and Korean, L2 learners use pictures as methodology when they distinguish the parts of speech in Pramar.

L2 learners have already learned explicit structured grammar tasks in Korean at school. Therefore, learners' L1 knowledge of words can help learners understand the same meaning in L2. According to Park (2008), if the two language systems involve similar lexical processing requirements, then the L2 readers should be able to take advantage of their L1 experience in developing L2 lexical inference skills in comprehending sentences. With this L1 knowledge, L2 learners use pictures to understand the accurate meaning of words. For example, in Figure 1 below, L2 learners look at the picture first, and then circle the words that present nouns in the L1 sentence. They read words in L2 first and check the definition in Korean L1.

FIGURE 1

Read Koreans below the picture and circle all Korean words that present men, animal, place, and thing from the picture. (아래 그림을 보면서 그림 아래 있는 우리말을 읽고 사람, 동물, 장소, 물건 등의 이름을 나타내는 우리말 단어를 찾아 모두 동그라미 하세요.)

Sam 과 Jane 은 공원에 있습니다.

Sam 과 Jane 은 강아지와 고양이를 데리고 있습니다.

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Presenting pictures can help learners better comprehend the parts of speech in L2, and L2 learners may need their L1 knowledge to understand the picture as well. L2 learners avoid putting the wrong words in the wrong place in a sentence because they acquire the accurate information to find the noun, verb, and the predicate. After this word recognition from the parts of speech activity, L2 learners find a verb and divide a sentence into two parts, the subject and the predicate. They develop basic knowledge of sentence structures.

2. The basic sentence structure and translation.

L2 learners may need an ability to translate Korean into English, but the linguistic differences between Korean and English makes it difficult for Korean L2 learners to translate. Without understanding basic sentence structure, Korean L2 learners may lack translation abilities. Consider the following example.

FIGURE 2



English: "Mike drinks juice."

Korean: "Mike(**Ka**) juice(**Lul**) mashipnida."

Like the example above, English sentences are very specific on the position of subjects, like “Mike.” In the Korean sentence, the subject “Mike” needs subject case postposition like /*Ka*/. According to Park (2008), Korean uses postpositional markers to indicate the grammatical roles of sentence components. This difference may cause confusion when studying Korean and English. Postposition of each noun in a sentence causes confusion, and different sentence structures also cause L2 learners confusion. In English, Subject + Verb + Object is a common sentence structure. Aside from interrogative sentences, the subject always comes at the very front of the sentence. In Korea, S+O+V or O+S+V is the common sentence structure (Byon, 2009). Consider the following examples which can be confusing

FIGURE 3

Example of word order between Korean and English

1. Korean: *geu so-nyuneun ice cream-ul joahhapnida.* (O)
English: The boy the ice cream likes. (X)
2. Korean: *geu so-nyuneun joahhapnida ice cream-ul.* (O)
English: The boy likes the ice cream.(O)

In Figure 3, all the Korean sentences give the correct meaning, but in English only the second sentence is grammatically correct. In the first English sentence, Korean L2 learners faced confusion with the subject 'ice cream', although they knew the postpositions and the word order. Therefore, they will need the following practice activity to avoid the difficulties from the different word order and postposition between Korean and English.

FIGURE 4

Example of translation exercise (L2 to L1)

Ex. 1	<i>geu so-nyuneun ice cream-ul joahhapnida.</i>		
	Subject(<i>nun</i>)	Verb(<i>da</i>)	Object(<i>rul</i>)
Step 1	<i>Geu so-nyuneun</i>	<i>joahhapnida.</i>	<i>ice cream-ul.</i>
Step 2	The boy	Likes	the ice cream
Step 3	The boy likes the ice cream.		

In this activity, the Korean sentence is given first. Students rearrange the Korean word order to the English word order. After rearrangement, they change the English word order into the English sentence. Through this activity, Korean L2 learners can gain basic knowledge of differences in word order between Korean and English and increase their ability to understand meaning, grammar, and the basic sentence position.

3. Intensive Reading under form-focus input

Intensive reading provides an opportunity to increase a learner's knowledge of language features and improve their comprehension skill (Nation, 2009). It helps to increase knowledge of the language features of each word in a sentence. Through intensive reading, L2 learners decrease the time spent on each word in order to become an extensive reader. In Korea, intensive reading in school is based on text based curriculum focusing on comprehension of text (Choi & Jun, 2006). Curriculum focused only on understanding meaning will limit L2 learners' ability to solve the more complicated parts of a text. Spada has mentioned that learners need an instruction that focuses on form in their language development (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006). Therefore, Korean L2 learners should receive instruction to improve their grammatical knowledge of the different parts of a sentence.

FIGURE 5
Example of intensive reading exercise – verb checklist
 Ex. 1 Columbus arrived on an island.

Verb Explanation	<i>Arrived</i>	
Tense	<i>O</i>	<i>(present/past)/original(arrive)</i>
Subject	<i>O</i>	<i>Columbus</i>
Object	<i>X</i>	<i>.</i>
Complement	<i>X</i>	<i>-----</i>
Modifier	<i>O</i>	<i>on an island</i>

Figure 5 is the checklist for the verb. Using the checklist above helps L2 learners receive instructions and practice at the same time. L2 learners may also have the effect of input enhancement because this checklist makes looking at the grammatical structure easier for L2 learners (Hwang, 2011). Learners fill in the checklist which is related to the sentence. This checklist focuses on the use of the verb. On the left corner of this checklist, five verb-related features are written. Learners fill out what word is linked to which feature. Through this activity, learners understand which grammatical function they should use during their reading. They can apply the rules of the checklist to any sentences because learners begin to understand the function and role of each word in understanding the meaning of the sentence. For developing extensive reading, learners will read the whole story at the end of the activity.

4. Learning environment

Environment affects learners during their study. In MouMou's language course, students need to learn and speak more than the teachers. The following environments are required:

1) Learner-centered environment

At the learning center, students focus on becoming self-directed learners. Also in the learner centric environment, teacher should be the helper, and guide. Teachers should give learners reason by respecting and understanding learner's prior experiences, knowledge, what each student want, what each student is capable of. MouMou encourages students to take an active role in learning English by working independently with a variety of stimulating materials on a daily basis.

2) Knowledge-centered environment

Instructors should fully understand the contents of the syllabus. Teachers must always pay attention to what is taught (information, subject matter) and how and why it is taught (understanding)

(Bransford & N.R.S., 2000). Instructors must be ready to acquire knowledge from new content in order to help learners. Indeed, they also need to know why certain contents are needed for learners.

3) Assessment-centered environment

Through assessment, learners see their own progress and the contents they learned. Teachers assess learners' knowledge and decide how they can be helped thereafter. (Bransford and N.R.S.,2000). But, assessment should not be designed to suppress learners, and it does not need to be a complicated procedure for learners. All three environments and programs must be coordinated systematically as a whole. If they are, they will lead to self-directed learning. Regarding a learner's age, self-directed learning will be difficult without the help of the teacher. The role of the teacher is to guide students under these environments instead of teaching students directly.

5. Conclusion

Korean L2 learners have had a difficult time studying grammar. They tried to memorize every grammar concept, but the result was that they could not use and apply grammar in practical reading and writing. Compared to the difficult approaches of the past that only addressed memorizing grammar, L2 teachers and educators now recognize the importance of grammar instruction for accuracy in the target language.(Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) Therefore, an essential and important grammar that is applicable to reading and writing for learners may be the practical grammar. English MouMou calls it Prammar. L2 learners can apply Prammar in any type of text and understand naturally. They can learn Prammar through studying parts of speech, basic sentence structure, and intensive reading under form-focused input step-by-step. Learners do not just learn grammar, but they learn the difference between L1 and L2 to avoid confusion as well. The learning environment is an important factor for learners. Teachers' guidance and a learner-centric environment will show positive results when learning and applying Prammar.

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About the Presenter

Won-Chul Park is one of the members of private English franchise company English MouMou. He has been involved with English education in the education team of the company. Currently, his interests about English education lead him to the different kinds of conferences.

Won-Chul Park
English MouMou
134-644 ChunHo-Dong, Gang-Dong Gu
Tel: (02) 2240-9925/H.P: 010-9668-0579
Email: wpark1@moumou.co.kr