This study empirically investigates how L2 learners acquire the Korean imperfective aspectual marker –ko iss- in respect to verb type (i.e., activity, accomplishment, telic achievement, stative achievement). The Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996) claims that (a) progressive marking is acquired first with activity verbs because the inherent lexical aspect of the activity verbs is better compatible with the progressive meaning, and that (b) overgeneralization of using progressive marking with stative verbs does not occur in the acquisition of aspect. However, it is problematic to apply the Aspect Hypothesis to Korean because of language specific features of the Korean aspectual system.

I conducted an experiment using a picture-based contextualized cloze test (Lee & Kim, 2007). Participants were asked to provide the target verb form using a given verb stem while looking at a picture. The task consists of 25 target items (5 items per verb type) and 20 fillers. Data was collected from 45 English-speaking learners of Korean and 10 native speakers of Korean as a control group. Based on in-house assessment results, learners were divided into three levels: (a) beginning level (n=15), (b) intermediate level (n=15), and (c) advanced level (n=15).

The results show that there is no significant difference in the frequency of the progressive –ko iss- when –ko iss- is combined with activity verbs and accomplishment, and the frequency of the resultative –ko iss- with stative verbs is the lowest. These results support my hypothesis that L2 learners show language specific patterns in the acquisition of the Korean imperfective aspect, which is contrary to the Aspect Hypothesis. The results of this study have the implication that there are cross-linguistic variations in how L2 learners acquire imperfective aspect.

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Task-based language teaching has often utilized complexity-accuracy-fluency (CAF) measurements and looked at the effects of task repetition. While these measures are often handled in a global-fashion, a problem arises in the case of Chinese complexity measurements. Jin (2006, 2007) and Yuan (2009) find that global measures of complexity such as ‘mean length of T-unit’ and ‘mean length of clause’ are not valid for measuring Chinese complexity due to their failing to adjust for typological differences such as Chinese topic prominence. In addition, approaches to task repetition are often limited to repetition overtime but less studied immediate repetition is more likely in a classroom setting.

The first part of this study, in consideration of an organic approach to CAF investigation (Norris & Ortega, 2009), proposes a series of eight measures for Chinese syntactic complexity derived from ‘topic-comment chains.’ Data collection consisted of the spoken output from speakers of various proficiency levels —L2-Low, L2-High, and L1-Native (N=114) —via a timed online Chinese-speaking test. Via a discriminant function analysis, this study validates that the proposed Chinese syntactic complexity measure, mean length of terminal Topic-Comment unit, can clearly distinguish between low, high, and native proficiency Chinese speakers.

The second part of this study, applying the validated measure, looks at the effects of immediate repetition on Chinese complexity performance across proficiency levels. The three groups of speakers were tasked with a video-based storytelling, and an immediate re-telling which acts as a rehearsal, and a post-test questionnaire was given to elicit immediate retrospective accounts of participants. Analysis of the Chinese language complexity of both tellings revealed no clear effect on the Chinese syntactic complexity. Almost equal numbers of people increased their Chinese syntactic complexity as decreased their syntactic complexity on the retelling. However, the difficulties or concerns of Chinese speakers varied by their different proficiency levels.

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Over the years a breadth of research has explored narrative discourse, with recent trends focusing on small stories which constitute a ubiquitous pragmatic resource in everyday talk. Yet, only a narrow amount of work addresses the pedagogical implications of narrative discourse, let alone small stories, and these studies tend to focus on non-beginning learners. The present study pilots an approach for the introduction of Japanese small stories in the Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) classroom. It examines the extent to which explicit meta-pragmatic instruction and activity verbs and accomplishment, and the frequency of the resultative –ko iss- with stative verbs is the lowest. These results support my hypothesis that L2 learners show language specific patterns in the acquisition of the Korean imperfective aspect, which is contrary to the Aspect Hypothesis. The results of this study have the implication that there are cross-linguistic variations in how L2 learners acquire imperfective aspect.

The study adopted a standard pretest-treatment-posttest design, and participants consisted of university learners from two intact beginning-level (first-semester) JFL classes (four skills)—one as the control group (CG; n=10) which followed normative curriculum-based instructional practices, and the other as the experimental group (EG; n=11). The experimental treatment was conducted over eight weeks and consisted of five instructional sessions which entailed a brief instructor-led metapragmatic-focused training and the recurrent observation, journaling, and meta-discussion of native-speaker models. Results of EG and CG pre- and post-test data demonstrated that many learners from both groups exhibited an initial propensity for attending to and recognizing target features. EG findings further demonstrated, however, that the treatment allowed EG learners to tune into and raise their pragmatic awareness of nuances and/or moment-to-moment developmental sequences and contingencies of an interaction. EG learner journal data further revealed select learners’ increasing pragmatic awareness of features and sequence, as well as developmental processes and patterns both similar and idiosyncratic to each select learner. While findings suggest the potential of the current approach for introducing learners to Japanese small stories, they further suggest several revisions to the instructional methodology.

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