

# Development of Two Young Korean Learners' English Grammar: A One-year-long Case Study\*

In Lee

(Jeonju National University of Education)

**Lee, In. (2017). Development of two young Korean learners' English grammar: A one-year-long case study.** *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 25(3), 25-50. The purpose of this study was to find out how young Korean learners of English developed their English grammar. One boy in G6 and his sister in G4 were selected as language informants. Their spontaneous utterances were collected for one year from February 2015 to January 2016, at intervals of a month, and analyzed with respect to the following criteria: (i) the total number of Tokens, (ii) the total number of Analysis of Speech units (AS-units), (iii) changes in the use of NPs and VPs, and (iv) changes in the use of AS-units. To trace each informant's developmental process, NPs and VPs s/he used at three points were classified as well-formed or ill-formed while AS-units were grouped into three: well-formed, ill-formed, and incomplete. The analysis of their spontaneous utterances showed that both learners' English grammar improved not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. Especially, the girl's grammar remarkably improved.

**Key Words:** AS-units, narrative, wordless picture book, tokens

---

\* Part of this study was presented at the 2017 KAPEE International Conference held at Seoul National University of Education on January 14, 2017. Comments from the audience helped me develop this paper into a full version. I also thank anonymous reviewers for their precious comments. Any remaining errors, however, are my own.

## 1. Introduction

It has been 20 years since English as a regular subject was implemented to elementary schools in Korea. The national curriculum for elementary English education in Korea has focused on the spoken language rather than the written language. It has been researchers' main concern to find out an efficient way of helping Korean young learners improve their communicative competence; thus, various teaching methods or techniques have been applied to English classes. The following are some of recent studies: using chunks (Jang, 2017), giving an ESA(Engage, Study, Activate)-based instruction (Kim, 2017), using English picture books (Lee, 2017; Jung, 2014), using a portfolio (Jung, 2016; Park, J. 2016), using Show & Tell activities (Lee & Choi, 2016); using story-telling or story-based activities (Park, M. 2016; Cha, 2015; Jeong, 2015; Kim, H.S. 2015; Kim, J-Y. 2015; Lee, 2013; Jung & Kim, 2012), using animation movies and/or role-plays (Park, J. E. 2014; Park, J. 2014; Kim, 2013), and so on. According to the results of these studies, elementary school students' speaking ability improved when each of these methods was adopted. Most of the experiments were conducted for about four months and their conclusions were based on the results of pre- and post-tests. Nonetheless, elementary school students and their parents want to know how well Korean young learners of English speak the target language. Some researchers have dealt with the assessment of elementary school students' oral proficiency (Kim, 2006; Yang, 2010), but they conducted quantitative or cross-sectional studies. Longitudinal studies on Korean young learners' oral production are needed to find out what characteristics their Interlanguage shows and how their English grammar develops. Using a wordless picture book in a production task is a promising tool because language samples collected reveal the language informant's current level of proficiency. Language informants use their mental lexicon when they are asked to tell the story of a wordless picture book in English. The analysis of their narratives will show how big their vocabulary size is and how accurately and fluently they speak English (Lee, 2015). To find out how Korean child L2 learners' English grammar develops, the researcher of this study has conducted some longitudinal studies based on Korean young learners' spontaneous utterances (Lee, 2008; Lee,

2010; Lee, 2011; Lee, 2013; Lee, 2014; Lee, 2015; Lee, 2016).

It is desirable that learner differences be controlled in doing an action research. However, it's very difficult or even impossible to completely control them when a researcher collects language informants' spontaneous utterances in a longitudinal study. We should collect language samples in various contexts if circumstances permit; hence the need for this study. One boy in G6 and his sister in G4 were selected as language informants for this study and their spontaneous utterances were collected for one year. The purpose of this study was to find out how these two language informants' English grammar developed and how their proficiency improved.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Research Paradigm

According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, pp. 10-11), research paradigms in SLA are classified into three: normative, interpretative, and critical. Research in normative paradigm tests whether there is a relationship between an independent variable and a dependent one. Researchers in this paradigm believe that conducting research on L2 acquisition is similar to doing a scientific experiment which tries to identify cause and effect. L2 acquisition in interpretive paradigm, however, is seen as a result of the complex interplay of psychological and social factors. Researchers in this paradigm try to describe and understand some aspects of L2 acquisition subjectively. Finally, L2 acquisition in critical paradigm is seen as rooted in the tensions and historically determined social structures. Researchers in this paradigm conduct a case study in an authentic context where L2 learners interact with native speakers.

This research was conducted in interpretive paradigm. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) pointed out, learner language serves as the primary data for the study of L2 acquisition. If L2 learners are asked to perform a narrative task, describing a wordless picture book, their spontaneous utterances will show the size of their vocabulary and the current levels of their proficiency.

## 2.2. Collecting Language Samples

If we want to find out how learners acquire a second language (L2), we may try one of the following two ways: (i) to study how they use it in production or (ii) to ask them to report on their own learning (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 15). Ellis and Barkhuizen argue "that competence can only be examined by investigating some kind of performance and that ... what learners know is best reflected in their comprehension of input and in the language they produce" (p. 21). SLA researchers have collected samples of speech and writing. Studies based on Korean L2 learners' writing samples have been reported, but only a few researchers have been concerned with child learners' oral production (Jung, 2011; Kim, 2006; Lee, 2008; Lee, 2010; Lee, 2011; Lee, 2013; Lee, 2014; Lee, 2015; Lee, 2016; Yang, 2010).

How can we collect valid and reliable information about Korean child learners' oral production in English? Dr. Elaine Tarone at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, proposed that wordless picture books should be used (personal communication in 2006). If we ask L2 learners to describe (or narrate the story of) a wordless picture book, we can collect their spontaneous utterances. The analysis of their oral production, if it was collected at regular intervals, will help us understand how their L2 grammar develops because no one can repeat what s/he said a moment ago. If we use the same book in a longitudinal study, we can trace the changes not only in the language informant's vocabulary, but also in the complexity of her/his sentences.

## 2.3. The AS-unit

Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth (2000) introduced the AS-unit after they compared other measures proposed since Brown (1973), and their terminology was adopted in this study. Foster, *et al.* (2000) defined the AS-unit as "a single speaker's utterance consisting of *an independent clause or sub-clausal unit*, together with *any subordinate clause(s)* associated with either (p.365)" [emphases are original]. What do they mean by 'an independent clause', 'a sub-clausal unit' and 'a subordinate clause'? The following are the definitions they provided along with some examples.

*An independent clause* will be minimally a clause including a finite verb.

13. | That's right |

14. | Turn left |

...

*An independent sub-clausal unit* will consist of: either one or more phrases which can be elaborated to a full clause by means of recovery of ellipsed [sic] elements from the context of the discourse or situation:

17. A: | how long you stay here |

B: | three months |

or a minor utterance, which will be defined as one of the class of 'Irregular sentences' or 'Nonsentences' identified by Quirk *et al.* (1985: 837-53.)

18. | Oh poor woman |

19. | Thank you very much |

20. | Yes |

*A subordinate clause* will consist minimally of a finite or non-finite Verb element plus at least one other clause element (Subject, Object, Complement or Adverbial).

21. | I serves in in a organization government organization in Bangladesh :: which is called er department of agricultural extension | (2 clauses, 1 AS-unit) (pp. 365-366)

### 3. Research Design and Procedures

#### 3.1. Language Informants

Two young Korean learners of English provided their narratives as raw data for this study. They were siblings living in Jeonju, Korea, and attending the same school in 2015: one boy in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and his sister in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The boy was named HS and his sister, YJ for anonymity. Their parents were the researcher's acquaintances. The researcher explained the purpose of this study and the procedures of language sampling to their parents, and then asked them to respond to a questionnaire about two language informants' background of English learning. According to the questionnaire, HS began to learn English in

the 3rd grade, but YJ was first exposed to English in the kindergarten. HS and YJ were attending *hakwon* and also studying English under a tutor at the onset of language sampling.

Table 1 shows in what context and how long each language informant has been exposed to English. Here PEL stands for Private English Learning, which means "learning English in *hakwon* 'a language institute' or studying English under a tutor."

Table 1. Information about the Informants

		<b>HS</b>	<b>YJ</b>
Onset of English Learning		G3	K
Current PEL	<i>Hakwon</i>	No	Yes
	Tutoring	Yes	Yes
Duration of PEL	<i>Hakwon</i>	0	3 years
	Tutoring	5 months + 2 months in G3	3 months
Content of PEL	Listening/Speaking	✓	✓
	Reading/Writing	✓	✓
	Vocabulary	✓	✓
	Grammar	✓	✓
	Conversation		✓
Instructor	Korean	✓	✓
	English Native Speaker		✓
Duration of Studying English at Home		10 hrs/wk	14 hrs/wk

### 3.2. Data Collection

Two language informants were asked to perform a narrative task in English with a wordless picture book by Giora Carmi (2003), *A Circle of Friends* [referred to as *ACOF*]. They provided the researcher with their spontaneous utterances for one year from February 2015 to January 2016, at intervals of a month: February 2, March 3, April 17, May 18, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, October 30, November 24, December 31, 2015 and January 26, 2016. Each sampling session was abbreviated to S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, and S12,

respectively. The researcher met language informants at his house after school on pre-arranged dates, and data collection was conducted in a study one after another depending on each informant's readiness. During the first language sampling session, each child was allowed to thumb through the pages of *ACOF* before they started to narrate the story. However, they immediately started to narrate the book from the second sampling session to the last one. Two language informants did not have any chance to study *ACOF*; the researcher kept the book and presented it to each child at the moment of sampling. Each informant's narratives were recorded with a digital voice recorder (Model: SVR-S820). Recording time was not fixed; if each child finished describing the storybook, the researcher stopped recording. After recorded files were saved onto the computer, the researcher transcribed the audio files and then analyzed each transcript.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Two language informants' oral production was analyzed in terms of the following criteria: the total number of AS-units, the total number of Tokens, changes in the use of NPs and VPs at three points (the first sampling session, the sampling session whose value is approximate to the average, and the last one), and changes in the use of AS-units at those three points. Changes in the use of AS-units were taken into account because an AS-unit shows the accuracy and complexity of each informant's grammar. Changes in the use of NPs and VPs were considered because every clause in English consists of an NP and a VP. NPs and VPs each informant used at three points were categorized as well-formed or ill-formed while each informant's AS-units were classified into three categories: well-formed, ill-formed, and incomplete. If an AS-unit consists of grammatical components, it is regarded as 'well-formed'. Each informant's violation of a rule such as the S-V Agreement or Tense marking was disregarded because Korean young learners of English most frequently do not pay attention to these rules.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Findings from HS's Oral Production

#### 1) Changes in the total number of AS-units

Figure 1 shows the changes in the total number of AS-units HS used in each sampling session. He started with 31 AS-units in S1, reached the maximum number of 45 in S9, and ended with 34 in S12. An average number of AS-units he used was 33.8, which is close to the value of S4, S5, or S12.

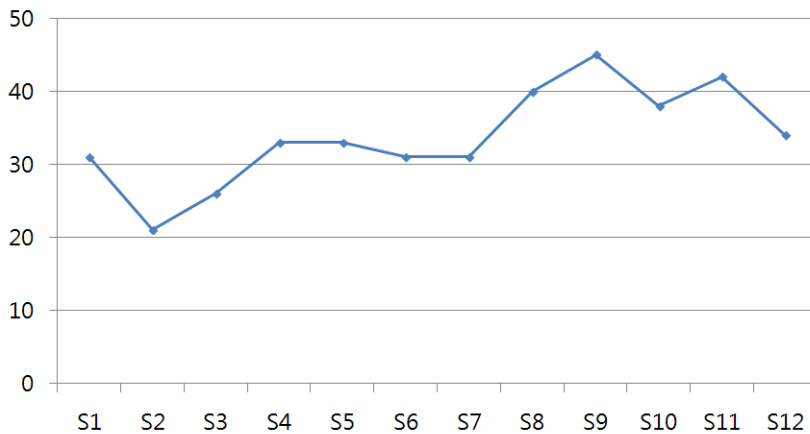


Figure 1. Changes in the total number of AS-units HS used

#### 2) Changes in the total number of Tokens

HS started with 57 Tokens in S1, reached the maximum number of 74 in S9, and ended with 58 in S12. An average number of Tokens he used was 56.8, which is approximate to the value of S1, S5, or S7. Figure 2 shows the changes in the total number of Tokens he used in each sampling session.



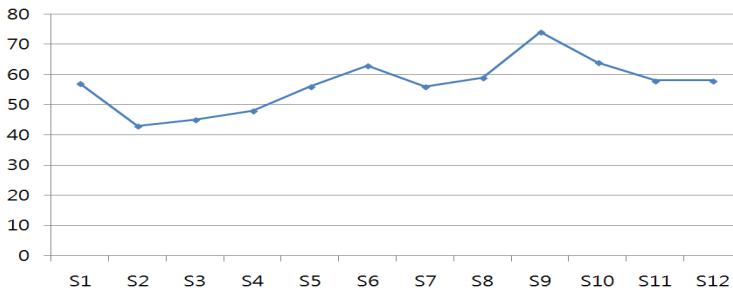


Figure 2. Changes in the total number of Tokens HS used

### 3) A typical example of HS's oral production

HS showed a fluctuating pattern in his oral production. An average number of AS-units he used was close to the value of S4, S5, or S12 while an average number of Tokens was approximate to the value of S1, S5, or S7. S5 was taken as a typical example of his oral production because it is the common denominator in terms of AS-units and Tokens.

Specific Tokens in each category are shown in Table 2. Here Ns, Vs, As, Ps, Ds, Cs, ProNs, and Fs stand for Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives/Adverbs, Prepositions, Determiners, Conjunctions, Pronouns, and Fillers, respectively.

Table 2. Specific Tokens HS used in S5

<b>S5</b>	
<b>Ns</b>	bakery, bench, bird(4), birds, boy, bread(6), flower, flowers, little bird(2), man(5), money, mother(2), nest, rest, seed(3), trees [16]
<b>Vs</b>	break, buy, call, eat, flying(3), give(4), go, grow(3), have, is(17), look(4), looking, make, put(2), raining, run, it's, surprise, take(2), wake up [20]
<b>As</b>	fast, happy(3), sad, so(8), then [5]
<b>Ps</b>	from, to(2) [2]
<b>Ds</b>	a(7), some(4), the(8) [3]
<b>Cs</b>	and(18), but [2]
<b>ProNs</b>	he(16), him, it's, those [4]
<b>Fs</b>	uh(4) [1]

It seems that he understood the notion of plurality (*bird* vs. *birds*, *flower* vs. *flowers*, *tree* vs. *trees*), but he has not known how to use Present Progressive yet. He used not only a correct form of Present Progressive (*be V-ing*), but also an incorrect form (*is V* or *V-ing*).

#### 4) Development of HS's English grammar

Let's compare HS's three sampling sessions: S1, S5, and S12. He used 16 Noun Tokens each sampling session, while an average number of Verb Tokens was 21. He used Verbs more frequently than Nouns in his spontaneous utterances; the total number of Verb Tokens used in each sampling session was greater than the total number of Noun Tokens. Table 3 shows the changes in the use of Noun and Verb Tokens.

Table 3. Changes in HS's Noun and Verb Tokens

	<b>Noun Tokens</b>	<b>Verb Tokens</b>
<b>S1</b>	bakery, bench(2), bird(8), bread(5), day, flower(2), <i>hwadan</i> 'flower garden', house, man(6), mom, Monday, money, mother, rest, seed(3), window [16]	ate, bite, break, bought, eat, flying, give(3), go(3), grow(5), he's, hide, it's, looking, open, pick, put, saw, sleep, thinking(2), unpack, went [21]
<b>S5</b>	bakery, bench, bird(4), birds, boy, bread(6), flower, flowers, little bird(2), man(5), money, mother(2), nest, rest, seed(3), trees [16]	break, buy, call, eat, flying(3), give(4), go, grow(3), have, is(17), look(4), looking, make, put(2), raining, run, it's, surprise, take(2), wake up [20]
<b>S12</b>	bakery, bird(6), birds(2), bread(4), cloud, flower(2), man(5), money, mother, nest, newspaper, rest, seed(3), soil, trees, window [16]	break, brick for 'broken', buy, call, eat(2), flying(3), give(3), go(2), grow(2), have to, is(9), it's, look(4), looking, saw, sleeping, stop, surprise, take(3), think, wake up, watching [22]

Now let's take into account the changes in the use of NPs and VPs at those three points. The total number of well-formed NPs increased from 18 (in S1) to 26 (in S12), while the total number of ill-formed NPs decreased from 10 to 4. He used 6 subtypes of NPs: [N]<sub>NP</sub>, [Det, N]<sub>NP</sub>, [ProN]<sub>NP</sub>, [Adj, N]<sub>NP</sub>, [Poss, N]<sub>NP</sub>, and [Det, Adj, N]<sub>NP</sub>. Among these subtypes, he used [Det, N]<sub>NP</sub> most frequently (39 Tokens), then [N]<sub>NP</sub> (24 Tokens), and then [ProN]<sub>NP</sub> (12 Tokens). We can assume

that HS became aware of the difference between an indefinite Article and a definite Article (*a bird* vs. *the bird*; *bread* vs. *the bread*; *a seed* vs. *the seed*). His usage of uncountable nouns also improved: *the money* (in S1 & S5) vs. *some money* (in S12); *the bread* (in S1) vs. *some bread* (in S5 & S12). Table 4 shows some changes in the use of NPs.

Table 4. Changes in HS's use of NPs

	Well-formed NPs	Ill-formed NPs
<b>S1</b>	the bakery; the bench; a bird(2); bread; his bread; the bread(2); mom; Monday; he(10); he's(2); it's; a man(6); mother; a seed; the seed(2); she(2); today; the window [18]	the beach[bench]; bird(5); red bird; a bread; flower; house; the <i>hwadan</i> ; the money(2); rest; seed [10]
<b>S5</b>	the bakery; the bench; a little bird; those birds; bread; some bread(5); the bread; flowers; he(16); him; it's; a man(2); the man(2); a seed; the seed; the trees [16]	bird(4); little bird; boy; man; flower; the money; mother(2); rest(2) [8]
<b>S12</b>	the bakery; a bird; a little bird; the bird(2); the birds(2); bread; some bread; the bread; the cloud; the flower; he(13); it; it's; the man; some money; his mother; the nest; a newspaper; a rest; a seed; the seed; she(2); soil; something; trees; the window [26]	bird(2); brick[broken] bread; flower; seed [4]

The following are some characteristics of his VPs. Firstly, an ill-formed VP, \*[is V]<sub>VP</sub>, was frequently used in S5: *is run fast*; *is eat some bread*; *is look a man*; *is wake up*; *is look those birds*; *is give a seed*; *is have rest*; *is put on (?)*; *is look flower*. Secondly, he used [*is*, AP]<sub>VP</sub> appropriately: *is very happy*; *is so sad*; *is so happy*; *is surprised*; *is open*. However, his usage of the following intransitive was inappropriate: *\*went the bakery*; *\*look for a man*; *\*sleep*; *\*looking the bread*; *\*looking a bird*; *\*go house*; *\*flying a man on the beach[bench]*; *\*is looking from the trees*; *\*look bread*; *\*look the birds*. Thirdly, transitive verbs except for *\*pick* and *\*unpack* were used appropriately: *buy the bread*; *bought a bread*; *eat his bread*; *ate the bread*; *break bread*; *break the bread*; *take some bread*; *bite a seed*; *take it*; *have to take a rest*; *hide a seed*; *open the window*. In the use of a ditransitive, however, he often omitted either Direct Object or Indirect Object: *\*give the money*; *\*give some money*; *\*give bird*; *\*give to the man*; *\*give a little bird*; *\*give a seed*. And lastly, it seems that he

had some difficulties using the Verbs *look*, *see*, and *watch*. The Verb *look* was followed not by a PP, but by an NP. When it was followed by a PP, he used an inappropriate Preposition. He used *see* instead of *look at* and replaced *watch* for *read*. The following are some examples of inappropriate usage: *\*is looking from the trees*; *\*is watching a newspaper*; *\*looking for a man*; *\*is look a man*; *\*looking the bread*; *\*look some bread*; *\*look bread*; *\*looking a bird*. Overall, he used ill-formed VPs more frequently than well-formed VPs in each sampling session. If S12 is compared with S1, however, we can say that his oral production improved. While the total number of well-formed VPs increased from 11 (in S1) to 17 (in S12), the total number of ill-formed VPs decreased from 19 to 15. Table 5 shows some changes in the use of VPs.

Table 5. Changes in HS's use of VPs

Well-formed VPs	Ill-formed VPs
<p><b>S1</b> go to Mom; he's very happy; bought a bread; he's thinking; eat his bread; ate the bread; bite the seed; hide a seed; it's raining; grow and grow; open the window [11]</p>	<p>Monday; thinking; give the money; saw the money; went the bakery; looking for a man; sleep; looking the bread; very happy; looking a bird; put to bread; give bird; go house; flying a man on the beach[bench]; pick; unpack; give the seed with bird; go rest on the <i>hwadan</i>; see flower [19]</p>
<p><b>S5</b> is so sad; is so happy(3); go to the bakery; buy the bread; is surprised; eat some bread; break bread; take some bread; it's raining; grow and grow; [10]</p>	<p>is looking from the trees; call him mother; give the money; is run fast; is eat some bread; is look a man; put on some bread; give to the man; is wake up; look some bread; is look those birds; give a little bird; is flying and flying on the bench; is give a seed; is take seed; flying a nest; is have rest; is on rest; is put on (?); make flowers; is look flower [21]</p>
<p><b>S12</b> is looking outside; call his mother; is happy; go to the bakery; buy some bread; saw the man; is sleeping; break the bread; is flying down; take it; go to the nest; have to take a rest; it's rainy; grow and grow; look at the flower; is open; is so happy [17]</p>	<p>look trees; think something; is watching a newspaper; give some money; eat(2); surprise; is wake up; look bread; look the birds; take brick[broken] bread; give a little bird; stop the man; give a seed; is rest; flower [15]</p>

Finally, let's take the use of AS-units into consideration. AS-units he used in each sampling session were classified into three categories: well-formed, ill-formed, and incomplete. The total number of well-formed AS-units gradually increased from 6 (in S1) to 10 (in S5), then to 18 (in S12). On the other hand, ill-formed AS-units decreased from 22 (in S1 and S5) to 15 (in S12) and the number of incomplete AS-units also decreased from 3 (in S1) to 1 (in S5 and S12). Some examples of HS's Interlanguage are shown in (1) - (3).

(1) S1 on February 2, 2015

today, today, Monday  
she, think, thinking? all day  
mother, give, give, the money  
he's very happy  
he, saw, the money  
he went, the bakery  
he, bought a, bread

(2) S5 on June 23, 2015

so, he is, run fast  
and he is, eat some bread  
a man is wake up, and, look some bread  
and man, is look, those, birds  
and, little bird in, is flying, and flying, on the beach, ah, ben- bench  
then he, the man is give, a seed  
bird is, take, seed flying, a nest  
bird, is have, have, rest  
but it, bird is, uh, put, on, uh (unclear)  
uh, it's raining

(3) S12 on January 26, 2016

he is, looking at, outside, looking outside  
he looks, trees  
he think something  
he called, call, his mother, mother  
so she, give, some money

## 4.2. Findings from YJ's Oral Production

### 1) Changes in the number of AS-units

Figure 3 shows the changes in YJ's use of AS-units. She started with 23 AS-units in S1, reached the maximum number of 42 in S10, and ended with 38 in S12. An average number of AS-units she used was 29.8, which is close to the value of S5 or S8.

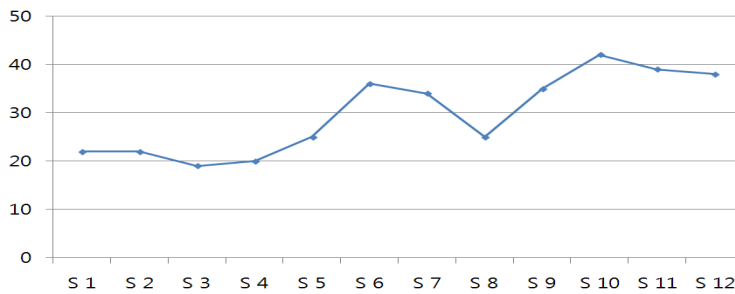


Figure 3. Changes in the number of AS-units YJ used

### 2) Changes in the total number of Tokens

The total number of Tokens YJ used in each sampling session shows a fluctuating but steadily increasing pattern (Refer to Figure 4). She started with 38 Tokens in S1 and ended with 83 Tokens in S12, which is a remarkable increase. An average number of Tokens she used was 55.8, which is close to the value of S6.

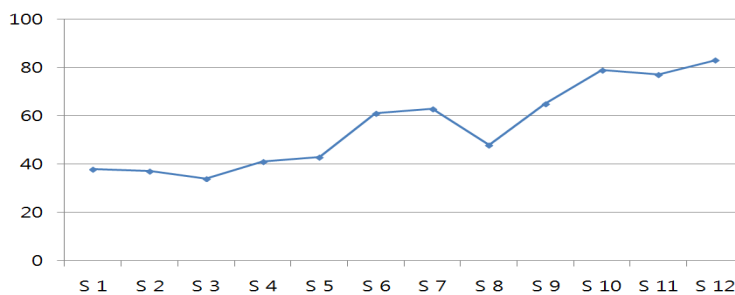


Figure 4. Changes in the total number of Tokens YJ used

## 3) A typical example of YJ's oral production

An average number of AS-units YJ used in her oral production was close to the value of S5 or S8, but an average number of Tokens was approximate to the value of S6. S6 is taken as a typical example of YJ's oral production because it is the midpoint of sampling sessions. She used 19 Nouns, 18 Verbs, 7 Adjectives/Adverbs, 2 Prepositions, 5 Determiners, 3 Conjunctions, 4 Pronouns, and 3 Fillers. Table 6 shows how many Tokens in each category she used in S6.

Table 6. Specific Tokens YJ used in S6

<b>S6</b>	
<b>Ns</b>	baby bird(5), bakery, bench, bird, bird family, boy(12), bread(6), father bird, flower(2), house, man(9), mom(4), mommy bird, money(2), nest, newspaper, problem, seed(4), window [19]
<b>Vs</b>	buy, drop, eat(2), flying, give(6), go(3), grow, have, is(3), look out(2), raining, run, it's, said(2), see(5), sleep, wake up(2), want [18]
<b>As</b>	<i>ani</i> , happy, hungry, not, now, please, why [7]
<b>Ps</b>	on, to(10) [2]
<b>Ds</b>	a(3), a little, baby bird's, one(6), the(24) [5]
<b>Cs</b>	and(20), because, but [3]
<b>ProNs</b>	he, I, it's, me [4]
<b>Fs</b>	ah(2), uh(5), uhm [3]

## 4) Development of YJ's English grammar

Let's compare YJ's three sampling sessions: S1, S6, and S12. Table 7 shows the changes in Noun and Verb Tokens.

Table 7. Changes in YJ's Noun and Verb Tokens

	<b>Noun Tokens</b>	<b>Verb Tokens</b>
<b>S1</b>	baby bird(6), bakery, bird, boy(7), bread(4), chair, chip(?), daddy bird, flowers(2), house, man(5), mom(2), mommy bird, nest, seed [15]	come, coming(3), eat, fly, give(3), go(2), grow up, is, pick(3), ring(?), see(3), sleep, wake up [13]
<b>S6</b>	baby bird(5), bakery, bench, bird, bird family, boy(12), bread(6), father bird, flower(2), house, man(9), mom(4), mommy bird, money(2), nest, newspaper, problem, seed(4), window [19]	buy, drop, eat(2), flying, give(6), go(3), grow, have, is(3), look out(2), raining, run, it's, said(2), see(5), sleep, wake up(2), want [18]
<b>S12</b>	baby bird(3), bakery, bench(2), bird, boy(4), bread(7), days, family, flower(2), man(8), mom(3), money, mother, nest, parents, power, seeds(4), thing, window [19]	are, be, come, coming, don't, drop, eat(3), fly(2), give(4), go, grow, have(2), he's, I'm, is(5), look(2), put, said, see(2), she's, sleep, think, wake up(2), want, want to [25]

The number of Noun Tokens she used in S1 or S6 was slightly greater than the number of Verb Tokens, but the number of Verb Tokens became greater than Noun Token in S12. The following are examples of Noun Tokens she used consistently: *baby bird, bakery, bird, boy, man, mom, nest, and seed*. The number of Verb Tokens increased gradually from 13 to 18, then to 25.

Now let's take into account the changes in the use of NPs and VPs in three sampling sessions. The total number of well-formed NPs remarkably increased from 9 (in S1) to 26 (in S12), but the number of ill-formed NPs she used in each sampling session was almost the same. She used 9 subtypes of NPs: [N]<sub>NP</sub>, [Det, N]<sub>NP</sub>, [ProN]<sub>NP</sub>, [Adj, N]<sub>NP</sub>, [Poss, N]<sub>NP</sub>, [Det, Adj, N]<sub>NP</sub>, \*[Adj]<sub>NP</sub>, \*[Det, Det, N]<sub>NP</sub>, and \*[ProN, Adj, N]<sub>NP</sub>. She used quite a wide range of Pronouns: *I, me, he, his, she, her, it, they, something, and there*. She frequently used [*the* N]<sub>NP</sub> before [*a/an* N]<sub>NP</sub> was referred to. The following are examples of ill-formed NPs: *\*rainy, \*the one man, \*something amazing thing*. Table 8 shows the changes in the use of NPs.



Table 8. Changes in YJ's use of NPs

	Well-formed NPs	Ill-formed NPs
<b>S1</b>	the boy; the house; a boy; mom; the man; bread(4); mommy bird and daddy bird; the flowers; flowers; [9]	the mom; chip(?); boy(5); bakery; chair; man(4); bird(2); baby bird(6); seed; nest; rainy [11]
<b>S6</b>	one boy; the boy(8); the window; mom(2); a newspaper; me; the mom; I; bread(4); the bakery; the bread(2); one man(2); the man; the bird family; mommy bird and daddy bird; he; the seed(3); the baby bird; the nest; it's [20]	a money(2); boy(3); the real [a little bit of bread]; the one man(2); bench; the (?) problem; man(3); bird; baby bird(4); seed; baby bird's house; flower(2) [12]
<b>S12</b>	one boy; the window; he(11); his mother; mom(2); I'm; his mom; money; her; the bakery; there; bread(7); the bench; the boy(4); the man(2); the bread; the bird; a bird's family; they; the baby bird(2); she(4); something; one man; seeds(2); any power; the seeds; the nest; a few days; the flower [26]	something amazing thing; many bread; little [a little bit of bread]; a one man; the one man(3); bird's parents; baby bird; a seeds; rainy; flower [10]

Characteristics of her VPs are summarized as follows. First, the total number of well-formed VPs in each sampling session remarkably increased (8 < 18 < 30) while the total number of ill-formed VPs gradually decreased (13 > 10 > 6). Second, YJ's usage of *give* improved quantitatively and qualitatively. She used 2 somewhat ill-formed VPs in S6 (*give me a money* and *give a money to boy*), but in S12 were used 3 quite well-formed VPs (*give money to her*, *give bread to the bird*, *give bread to the baby bird*). Third, it seems that she understood the intransitive-transitive contrast (*wake up, fly; go to the nest, come home, grow up, look out the window, said to mom, run, go to the bakery, sleep on the bench, look like something, grow into flower* vs. *see bread, pick bread, buy the bread, drop the seed, don't have any power*). Table 9 shows some changes in use of VPs.

Table 9. Changes in YJ's use of VPs

	Well-formed VPs	Ill-formed VPs
<b>S1</b>	see bread(2); wake up; pick bread(2); fly; go to nest; come home; grow up; see flowers; [8]	in the house; coming the mom; give chip(?); go bakery; sleep chair; give baby bird; eat; coming man; give seed to baby bird; pick; coming; is ...; ring(?) [13]
<b>S6</b>	look out the window; said to mom; give me a money; said, 'why?'; give a money to boy; run; go to the bakery; buy the bread; see the man sleep on bench; wake up; see baby bird; have seed; go to baby bird's house; drop the seed; go to the nest; it's raining; is not bored; see flower [18]	bored; look a newspaper; is [said]; want to give bread; eat the real[a little bit of bread]; the (?) problem; flying to one man; give the seed; grow to flower; happy [10]
<b>S12</b>	look out the window; is very hungry; come to his mother; I'm hungry; said; give money to her; be careful; go to the bakery; buy bread; eat little[a little]; sleep on the bench; think + S; is hungry; put the bread on the bench; wake up(2); is very happy; he's very hungry; eat bread; see a bird's family; want to eat bread; give bread to the bird; give bread to the baby bird; look like something; have a seeds; don't have any power; drop the seeds; fly into the nest; grow into flower; is not bored; is beautiful [30]	want something amazing thing; are many bread; see a one man; is fly to the one man; give to seeds; coming [6]

The definition of well-formedness was somewhat loosely applied to her oral production. Some VPs like *go to nest*, *give me a money*, *give a money to boy*, *have seed*, and *see flower* are considered well-formed because the subcategorization of the head V was fulfilled.

Next, let's consider the changes in the use of AS-units. The total number of well-formed AS-units remarkably increased; the value in S12 almost tripled the value in S1 (12 < 27 < 35). On the other hand, the total number of ill-formed AS-units slightly decreased (9 > 7 > 5) and the number of incomplete AS-units also decreased from 2 (in S1) to 0 (in S12). Some examples of YJ's Interlanguage are shown in (4) - (6).

- (4) S1 on February 2, 2015  
uhm, a boy coming, the mom  
baby bird, coming man  
the rainy is, uh, rainy coming
- (5) S6 on July 28, 2015  
and the boy, called, ani, the boy said, to mom,  
'Give me a money, please!'  
baby bird wake up, and flying, to, one man  
uhm, now, it's raining
- (6) S12 on January 26, 2016  
so, he, come, to her mo-, his mother  
she's fly, to the one man  
rainy coming

## 5. Conclusion and Educational Implication

### 5.1. Conclusion

To find out how Korean young learners' English grammar develops and how their proficiency improves, one boy in G6 and his sister in G4 were selected as language informants. Their spontaneous utterances were collected for one year from February 2015 to January 2016, at intervals of a month. Each transcript from recorded data was analyzed in terms of the following criteria: (i) the total number of Tokens, (ii) the total number of AS-units, (iii) changes in the use of NPs and VPs, and (iv) changes in the use of AS-units. NPs and VPs each language informant used at three points were classified as 'well-formed' or 'ill-formed.' On the other hand, AS-units each informant used were classified into three: well-formed, ill-formed, and incomplete.

The following are the findings. HS's oral production is characterized as follows: (i) he seems to have got the notion of plurality (*bird* vs. *birds*, *flower* vs. *flowers*, *tree* vs. *trees*), but did not know how to use Present Progressive. He used

not only a correct form of Present Progressive (*be V-ing*), but also an incorrect form (*is V* or *V-ing*). (ii) He became aware of the difference between an indefinite Article and a definite Article (*a bird* vs. *the bird*; *bread* vs. *the bread*; *a seed* vs. *the seed*), and his usage of uncountable nouns improved (*the money* vs. *some money*; *the bread* vs. *some bread*). (iii) While the total number of well-formed VPs increased from 11 (in S1) to 17 (in S12), the total number of ill-formed VPs decreased from 19 to 15. (iv) While the total number of well-formed AS-units gradually increased ( $6 < 10 < 18$ ), ill-formed AS-units decreased ( $22 > 15$ ) and the number of incomplete AS-units also decreased ( $3 > 1$ ).

The following are some characteristics of YJ's oral production: (i) the number of Noun Tokens she used in S1 or S6 was slightly greater than the number of Verb Tokens, but the number of Verb Tokens became greater than Noun Token in S12. (ii) The number of Verb Tokens gradually increased ( $13 < 18 < 25$ ). (iii) The total number of well-formed NPs remarkably increased from 9 (in S1) to 26 (in S12), but the number of ill-formed NPs she used in each sampling session was almost the same. (iv) The total number of well-formed VPs in each sampling session remarkably increased ( $8 < 18 < 30$ ) while the total number of ill-formed VPs gradually decreased ( $13 > 10 > 6$ ). (v) YJ's usage of *give* improved quantitatively and qualitatively. She used 2 somewhat ill-formed VPs in S6 (*give me a money* and *give a money to boy*), but in S12 were used 3 quite well-formed VPs (*give money to her*, *give bread to the bird*, *give bread to the baby bird*). (vi) It seems that she understood the intransitive-transitive contrast. (vii) The total number of well-formed AS-units remarkably increased; the value in S12 almost tripled the value in S1 ( $12 < 27 < 35$ ). On the other hand, the total number of ill-formed AS-units slightly decreased ( $9 > 7 > 5$ ) and the number of incomplete AS-units also decreased from 2 (in S1) to 0 (in S12).

## 5.2. Educational Implication

It is desirable that learner differences be controlled in doing an action research. However, it is very difficult or even impossible to completely control them when a longitudinal study is conducted in an EFL context. The findings of this study cannot be generalized because of this limitation, but we can see how each language informant developed her/his Interlanguage. The findings of this

study will help teachers better understand the process of individual learners' L2 acquisition.

Although Korean young learners of English want to know how well they speak the target language, the administration of any formal speaking tests is not allowed in elementary schools. Since someone's spontaneous utterances reveal the size of their vocabulary and the current levels of their proficiency, however, the procedures of this study may be adopted as an alternative method of evaluation in elementary schools. If teachers collect and analyze L2 learners' spontaneous utterances at regular intervals, it will be easy for them to state individual learner's progress.

Using a wordless picture book in elementary English classes will be beneficial for young learners because they may exert their own imagination in their description of the book. Their creative thinking will be enhanced.

## References

- Brown, R. (1973). *A first language: The early stages*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Carmi, G. (2003). *A circle of friends*. New York: Star Bright Books.
- Cha, S-M. (2015). Paeteonbukeul hwaryonghak TPRS sueobi hakseupjauui yeongeohakseube michineun hyogwa: Chodeunghakkyo 3haknyeoneul daesangeuro ('The effects of teaching patterned books through TPRS on elementary students' English learning: Focused on 3rd graders'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Gongju National University of Education.
- Ellis, R., & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analysing learner language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foster, P., Tonky, A., & Wiggleworth, G. (2000). Measuring spoken language: A unit for all reasons. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(3), 354-375.
- Jang, H. M. (2017). Chunk jungsim jidoga chodeung hakseupjadeureu yeongeomalhagi neungnyeoge michineun yeonghyang ('Effects of the use of chunks on English speaking performance of elementary students'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Seoul National University of Education.

- Jeong, M. (2015). Seutoritellingeul hwaronghan sueobi chodeunghaksaengui yeonge malhagi neungnyeoge michineun yeonghyang ('The effects of storytelling-based English classes on elementary school students' English speaking skills'). *Teaching Education Research*, 54(2), 221-240.
- Jung, E. (2014). Chodeungyeongeogyoyugeseo geurimchaegeul hwaryonghan uisasotongneungnyeok hyangsange gwanhan yeongu ('Developing communicative competence through picture books for Korean EFL elementary students'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Daejin University.
- Jung, H. (2016). SNSgiban E-poteupollio unyeong bangsigi hakseupjau malhagi neungnyeokkwa jeonguijeok cheukmyeone michineun yeonghyang ('The effects of SNS-based e-portfolio operating methods on the primary English learners' speaking proficiency and affective aspects'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Seoul National University of Education.
- Jung, Y. H., & Kim, H. O. (2012). Seutoritellingeul hwaryonghan yeonge sueobi chodeunghaksaengui yeonge deudkimalhagi neungnyek mit jeonguijeok yeongyeoge michineun hyogwa ('The effect of storytelling-enhanced English lessons on primary school students' oral skills and learning attitudes'). *Journal of Educational Studies*, 43(1), 63-89.
- Jung, Y. S. (2011). A case study of a Korean ESL child's use of wordless picture books. *Inmunhakyongu ('Research on Humanities')*, 83, 83-117.
- Kim, J. (2006). ESPT Junior test-e natanan chodeunghaksaeng yeonge balhwau jeonghwakseonggwa yuchangseongui teukjing ('Accuracy and fluency in the speech production produced by Korean elementary school students on ESPT Junior test'). *Studies in British and American Language and Literature*, 79(2), 209-230.
- Kim, D. (2013). Danseokadeu jungsim yeokhalmnorieul tonghan chodeung 6haknyeon yeonge malhagi jido bangan ('Teaching English speaking for 6th graders through role-play based on the cue cards in elementary school'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Korean National University of Education.
- Kim, H. S. (2015). Seutori giban malhagi yeonseubi chodeunghaksaeng- ui yeonge malhagi seongchwi mit jeonguijeok yeongyeoge michineun yeonghyang ('A study on the effect of story-based speaking drill on

- elementary school students' English speaking achievement'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Chung-Ang University.
- Kim, J-Y. (2015). *Iyagiwa jeoneoreul hwaryonghan chodeungyeongeo sayong neungnyeok hyangsang yeongu* ('A study of primary students' English ability improvement using stories and journal writing'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Gyeongin National University of Education.
- Kim, S. J. (2017). *ESA giban sueobi chodeunghaksaengui malhagi neungyeok mit jeonguijeok yeongyeoge michineun hyogwa* ('The effects of an ESA based instruction on elementary school children's speaking ability and affective domain'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Jeju National University.
- Lee, E-J. (2013). *Paeteon bukeul hwaryonghan TPRS sueobi chodeunghaksaengui yeongeo eusa sotong neungnyeoke michineun yeonghyang* ('The effects of TPRS (Total Physical Response Storytelling) accompanied with patterned storybooks on elementary school students' communicative ability in English'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Education, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.
- Lee, H., & Choi, H. (2016). *Yeongeo pyohyeonneungnyeok hyangsangeul wihan Show and Tell hwaryong bangan yeongu* ('A study on the use of Show and Tell activities for developing elementary school students' English speaking and writing abilities'). *Primary English Education*, 22(4), 57-90.
- Lee, I. (2008). Development of English *coupla be* in L2 acquisition. *Studies on English Language & Literature*, 34(1), 299-319.
- Lee, I. (2010). *Chodeunghaksaengui yeongeo gusul neungnyeok baldale gwanhan yeongu* ('On the development of elementary school students' narrative competence in English'). *Primary English Education*, 16(3), 7-26.
- Lee, I. (2011). *Urinara chodeunghaksaengui yeongeo eobeop baldal gochal: du haksaengui gusul sarye yeongu* ('Korean elementary school students' development of English grammar: A case study of two children's descriptive narratives'). *Primary English Education*, 17(3), 67-90.
- Lee, I. (2013). Development of a Korean child learner's English grammar: Evidence from her narrative description. *Primary English Education*, 19(3), 137-166.
- Lee, I. (2014). A Korean child learner's acquisition of English grammar: A

- four-year-long case study. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 22(1), 69-110.
- Lee, I. (2015). Comparative analysis of children's narratives in English: ESL vs. EFL and Nonnative vs. Native contrasts. *Primary English Education*, 21(3), 131-155.
- Lee, I. (2016). Young Korean learners' usage of the verb *give*: Evidence from their narratives. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 24(1), 21-48.
- Lee, Y-K. (2017). Yeongeogeurimchaek hwaryonggeul tonghan chodeungyeongeopyohyeonneungnyeok mit changuiseong sinjang bangan ('Effective ways to increase elementary school students ability of express and creativity using English picture books'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Daegu National University of Education.
- Park, J. (2014). Chodeunghakkyo 6haknyeon yeongeogyoyugeseo yeoneo jungsim yeokhallorireul tonghan malhagi neungnyeok hyangsang bangan ('Using collocation-based role play activities for improving 6th graders' English speaking skills'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Korea National University of Education.
- Park, J. (2016). Chodeungyeongeomalhagi sueobeseo poteupollioroseo UCC hwaryong hyogwa ('The effect on use of UCC as portfolio in the primary English class'). Unpublished MA thesis. The Graduate School of Global Business, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.
- Park, J. E. (2014). Aenimeisyeon yeonghwawa yeokhalgeuki hanguk chodeunghaksaengdeureu yeongeoneungnyeok hyangsange michineun yeonghyang ('The effect of animation movies and role-plays in enhancing English abilities for the Korean elementary students'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Busan National University of Education.
- Park, M. (2016). Story geukhwa hwaldongeul hwaryonghan chodeunghaksaeng yeongeomalhagi neungnyeok hyangsang bangan yeongu ('A study on the improvement of English speaking abilities through story drama activities'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Korea National University of Education.
- Yang, D. (2010). Chodeungyeongeomalhagk neungnyeok pyeonggaui siljejeogin jeogyong ('Application of English speaking assessments on elementary school learners'). Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate School of Education, Chinju National University of Education.



## Appendix 1. A sheet of questionnaire

## 설문지

본 설문지는 언어자료 제공자(귀하의 자녀)의 영어 학습 배경을 살펴보기 위해 작성한 것입니다. 답변 내용은 연구 목적으로만 사용할 것이며, 자녀의 이름은 무기명으로 기술될 것입니다. 해당란에 체크(✓)하시거나 간단히 기술해 주십시오.

1. 귀하의 자녀가 처음 영어를 배우기 시작한 시기는 언제입니까?

가. 유치원 \_\_\_\_\_ 나. 초등 1학년 \_\_\_\_\_

다. 초등 2학년 \_\_\_\_\_ 라. 초등 3학년 \_\_\_\_\_

2. 귀하의 자녀는 지금 영어 학원에 다니거나 영어 과외를 받고 있습니까?

예 \_\_\_\_\_ 아니오 \_\_\_\_\_

(설문2에 '예'라고 답하신 분만 답하십시오.)

2-1. 영어 학원에 다닌 기간 또는 영어 과외를 받은 기간을 써 주십시오.

(두 가지 모두 해당되면 모두 기입해 주십시오.)

영어 학원 수강 기간: \_\_\_\_\_년 \_\_\_\_\_개월 또는 영어 과외 수강 기간: \_\_\_\_\_년 \_\_\_\_\_개월

2-2. 영어 학원이나 과외 시간에 학습하는 내용은 무엇입니까? 해당 사항이 많은 경우 모두 체크(✓)해 주십시오.

가. 듣기/말하기 \_\_\_\_\_ 나. 읽기/쓰기 \_\_\_\_\_

다. 단어 \_\_\_\_\_ 라. 문법 \_\_\_\_\_

마. 기타 (구체적으로 써 주세요) \_\_\_\_\_

(설문2에 '아니오'라고 답하신 분만 답하십시오.)

3. 예전에 학원에 다녔거나 과외를 받은 적이 있습니까?

예 \_\_\_\_\_

학원 수강 기간 또는 과외 받은 기간: \_\_\_\_\_년 \_\_\_\_\_개월

아니오 \_\_\_\_\_

(학원 수강 경험이 있거나 현재 수강 중인 경우)

4. 선생님은 다음 중 누구입니까? (또는 누구였습니까?)

한국인 선생님 \_\_\_\_ 영어 원어민 선생님 \_\_\_\_

한국인 선생님과 영어 원어민 선생님 \_\_\_\_

5. 귀 자녀가 가정에서 영어 공부하는 시간(학원 또는 과외 포함): \_\_\_\_ 시간/주

추신: 귀하는 본 연구 결과물을 우편으로 받기 원하십니까?

예 \_\_\_\_

주소: \_\_\_\_\_

아니오 \_\_\_\_

**성실한 답변 감사합니다.**

In Lee

Department of English Education  
Jeonju National University of Education  
Seohak-ro 50, Wansan-gu,  
Jeonju, Jeonbuk, Korea 55101  
Email: inlee@jnue.kr

Received on April 20, 2017

Revised version received on July 8, 2017

Accepted on September 30, 2017