

Lexical Use in Interlanguage of Korean EFL Learners

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning a second/foreign language (L2), learners produce utterances that are noticeably deviant from the language they are learning. Underlying the observable surface utterances produced by L2 learners are cognitive and linguistic processes or strategies for communication and for the construction of internalized linguistic systems. These internalized linguistic systems of L2 learners are viewed as interlanguage (IL) as distinct from the mother tongue and/or the target language (Selinker 1972). At the various developmental stages through which learners pass towards a mastery of the target language, learners constitute linguistic systems based on the data they have been exposed to. It is advocated that interlanguages are rule-governed linguistic systems like all natural languages, which seem to have their own systems of rules and internal organization (Selinker 1972). Interlanguage provides a theoretical framework within which the learner's meaningful performance could be evaluated on its own terms. In this framework, errors are no longer seen as violations of the target language code but as evidence of the learner's developing competence. Errors are accounted for in terms of how the learner formulates the target language system (Cha 2000).

While numerous interlanguage studies have been carried out, most of the studies have treated phonology or syntax to the neglect of lexis. One of the reasons for the lack of research on lexis is that it is an inherently complex and difficult area which does not lend itself as easily as phonology and syntax to quantification and scientific analysis (Zughoul 1991). This is why effective and comprehensive taxonomy models to classify and explain lexical errors are lacking. Furthermore, there is an apparent lack of awareness of the nature and function of vocabulary in most foreign language (FL) courses.