On steady-state interlanguage grammars of Korean English learners: Focused on tense-agreement elements*

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Ahn, Sung-Ho G. 2010. **On a steady-state interlanguage grammar of Korean English learners: Focused on tense-agreement elements.** *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 10-2, 353-387. This paper focuses on the ultimate, steady state of L1 Korean L2 English grammars, specifically on whether stabilization can occur in the tense-agreement system. The researcher interviewed 20 participants who had lived five or more years in an English-speaking country and obtained the following results: With some subjects, first, stabilization seems to have occurred with modal and perfect auxiliaries and in subject-verb agreement involving lexical verbs. Secondly, most cases of incorrect tense marking are seemingly

attributable to the L1 Korean influence with its relative tense marking. The paper then suggests that stabilization may occur as a result of unnoticed overgeneralization, syntactic complexity, and parametric difference.

1. Introduction

The acquisition of an L2 can be viewed as constructing a series of generative interlanguage grammars, the first member of which probably approximates the L1 grammar, and the last member of which will hopefully resemble the L2 grammar to a significant extent (Corder 1967, Selinker 1972, among others). If we call an L2 English that a Korean learner formulates a "Korean Inter-Englishes" (or KIE), the initial KIE grammar will then look more or less like the Korean grammar, the intermediate KIE grammars will look more and more similar to the English grammar. After a period of dynamic changes in them, finally, the KIE development will eventually arrive at a relatively steady state. It is well known, further, that such steady-state KIE grammars will generally be more or less different from the target English grammar (Bley-Vroman 1988). The reason for the "failure" can be best described with Selinker's (1972) "fossilization" which can basically occur globally or locally in various L2 subsystems including syntax. The idea is then that if we can identify where stabilization occurs in steady-state KIE systems, we can raise the success rate in KIE acquisition.

A crucial issue related to this, however, is how we can decide whether a particular KIE grammar has arrived at its steady state. Some took the length-of-residence approach. Washburn (1991) set up "five years" as the dividing line between fossilized and nonfossilized groups. Han (2004: 99) warns that only longitudinal evidence is reliable for a certain feature's fossilization. Klein, Dietrich and

Noyau (1993) evaluate length of residence as an uninteresting variable. There remains a possibility, though, that cross-sectional evidence can supplement the weakness of the length-of-residence approach.

Another potentially interesting issue is whether gender difference is significant in constructing KIE grammars. Ellis (1994: 202-4) discusses various results and/or predictions concerning gender-wise difference in the success ratio of SLA. He even mentions that "Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in L2 English than do Asian women" (p. 204).

What will such steady-state KIE grammars look like? How similar will they be to one another? Proper answers to these questions will be dependent on the nature and/or causes of fossilization. As Han (2004) points out, fossilization can be global or local in scope and arise from various causes. On the one hand, for instance, the process may globally arise because of a biological overhaul of human beings which occurs around the puberty [the critical period hypothesis]. On the other hand, more locally, it may occur because of L1 influences and may put particular (sets of) linguistic features to fossilization.

All in all, Han (2004: 26-9) presents 50 different, surely inter-related causes for fossilization (cf. Ellis 1994: 354): nine external, environmental causes, and 41 cognitive, neuro-biological, and socio-affective ones. This leads us to surmise that even steady-state KIE grammars might be quite different from one another, but there hasn't been a sufficient body of evidence cumulated thus far.

This study has been an effort to contribute to a better understanding of the steady-state KIE grammars, focusing on the past tense and/or agreement morphemes of the inter-English language. Following Long's (2003) suggestion, we will use the term "stabilization" in place of fossilization to talk about features of steady-state KIE grammars.

2. The theoretical background and literature review

2.1. The theoretical framework

To describe and theorize on KIE's, this study adopts a generative grammarian framework including the construct of the Universal Grammar (Chomsky 1957, 1981), where human linguistic knowledge crucially involves a generative grammar or a finite system of linguistic rules and/or principles. The generative grammar of a particular language enables its speakers to speak and understand an infinite set of sentences including those they have never heard before. The generative grammar framework will be a viable option in which to describe the "intermediate" generative grammars that occur in the process of L1 or L2 acquisition [e.g. Guasti 2002 for L1 acquisition, and White 1989, 2003, for L2 acquisition].

2.2. Tense and agreement marking in English and Korean

Korean and English both have tense morphemes: -*ess*- (K) and -*ed* (E) are past tense markers, while {∅, -*(nu)n*-} (K) and {∅, -*s*} (E) are labels for non-past tense. Unlike English, however, Cho (2003) points out that Korean doesn't have a syntactically distinct device to mark the perfective aspect. -*Ess*- is associated with the aspectual sense of perfectiveness as well (1).

(1) ku-nun   pelsse   ku chayk-ul   ilk-ess-ta
    he-Top   already   the book-Acc read-Pst-Dec
    'He has already read the book.'

In this respect, the Korean past tense morpheme -*ess*- is broader in sense than the English counterpart -*ed*.

The Korean non-past tense marker {∅, -*((Nu)n)*-} is broader and more flexible than its English counterpart in use and is more context-dependent (for more detailed discussion, see Cho 2003: 193). This flexibility is perhaps related to the relative tense marking to be discussed in the next sub-section.

Both languages show agreement phenomena. English has the verb

be agree with the subject in person and number (2), but it has a more degenerate agreement system with non-modal auxiliaries and lexical verbs. They are marked with -*s* when it is in the present tense and the subject is third person and singular (3).

(2) a. I am delighted to know that.

b. You are inviting too many people!

c. He is taking a walk along the river now.

d. They/You are very pleasant to work with.

(3) a. He swims three times a week.

b. I/You/They swim every day.

Notice that in (3a) agreement properties are fused with tense properties and are realized as -*s*, a single morpheme.

Korean also has a system of agreement. The subject agrees with the verb in honorification (Hon) (4), but not in person or number.

(4) a. Halapeci-kkeyse   olla o-si-ess-ta

grand father-Hon+Nom up come-Hon-Pst-Dec

'(Your/ My) grand father came up.'

b. Chelswu-ka   olla o-ess-ta

Chelswu-Nom up come-Pst-Dec

'Chelswu came up.'

Unlike in English, the agreement property surfaces as a separate morpheme from tense morphemes.[1]

In learning English, therefore, Korean learners must notice and acquire that the morphosyntactic categories of tense, person and number are fused and realized quite variedly on verb *be*, but quite restrictedly on lexical verbs.

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[1]Sometimes, the plural morpheme -tul seems to spread onto non-subject constituents including adverbs and verbal complexes, but it never occurs between the verbal root and the declarative ending. It always follows the latter.

2.3. Tense binding in complex sentences

In English, nominative Case generally occurs along with tense marking in a clause.

(5) a. He is smart.   b. His/Him/*He being in, we can do this.

When the verb is tense-inflected, we have a nominative subject as shown in (5a); otherwise, we cannot have a nominative pronoun as the subject as illustrated in (5b).

Korean does not have this correlative property. Even when tense marking is not allowed, an embedded clause may have a nominative subject.

(6) ku-ka   wa-se,   na-n   maywu kippu-Ø-ta
    he-Nom come-because I-Top very   be+happy-Prs-Dec.
    'Because he has come, I am very happy.'

The Comp -*se* 'because' in (6) doesn't allow an overt T label. In a similar way, in a verb phrasal conjunction with -*se* 'and then', the tense is marked only on the last verb.

(7) C-ka   kukes-ul sa-(*ess-)-se]   [e]   Y-eykey cwu-ess-ta
    C-Nom it-Acc   buy-(*Pst)-and+then   Y-to   give-Pst-Dec
    'C bought it and then gave it to Y.'

English sentence (8a) means that Sam's leaving preceded Max's reporting (the shifted reading, Enç 1987). In contrast, (8b) means that the period of Sam's living in Seoul overlaps with or includes that of Max's reporting (the simultaneous reading, Enç 1987). This is the so-called sequence of tense phenomenon (Comrie 1985). This simultaneous reading can be obtained between tenses in a matrix and a relative clause as in (8c). Their Korean counterparts reveal one of its significant crosslinguistic differences from English.
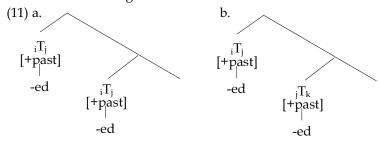
(8) a. Max said that Sam left.

    b. Max said that Sam lived in Seoul.

    c. Max attended the school that Sam attended.

(9) a. Max-nun   Sam-i   ttena-ess-ta-ko   malha-ess-ta.

      Max-Top Sam-Nom leave-Pst-Dec-C say-Pst-Dec

    b. Max-nun   Seoul-ey sa(l)-{n, *ess}-ta-ko   malha-ess-ta.

      Max-Top Seoul-in live-{Prs, *Pst}-Dec-C say-Pst-Dec

    c. Max-nun Sam-i   tani-n-un   hakkyo-ey tani--ess-ta

      Max-Top Sam-Nom attend-Prs-C school-to attend-Pst-Dec

When an embedded past tense has a shifted reading as in (9a), no crosslinguistic difference shows up in morphological marking, but when it has a simultaneous reading as in (9b-c), Korean must use a present-tense form.

How can we analyze the tense marking configurations considered thus far? In Ahn (to appear), I adopted Enç's (2004) theory to characterize the English-Korean difference in past tense interpretation. First, All Ts carry two temporal indices: $_iT_j$, i is the reference time (RT) index and j is the event/state time (ET) index. Second, all Ts must be temporally anchored, so the matrix T will have its RT equated with the utterance time (UT). When a T occurs in an embedded context, it is temporally anchored if and only if:

(10) a. it is bound by the local c-commanding T, or

    b. its RT index is bound by the ET index of the local c-commanding T.

(11) a.

$_iT_j$
[+past]
|
-ed

$_iT_j$
[+past]
|
-ed

b.

$_iT_j$
[+past]
|
-ed

$_jT_k$
[+past]
|
-ed

(11a) depicts the binding by a locally c-commanding T (10a), which

produces a simultaneous reading in (8b) above. (11b), in contrast, depicts the binding of the RT index of the embedded T by the ET index of the locally c-commanding T (10b), which produces a shifted reading in (8a) and (9a). As shown in (6), (7), and (9b-c), on the other hand, the lower [+past] must be [u past], realized null morphologically, or [-past] to get a simultaneous reading in Korean.

This contrast was captured in Ahn (to appear), applying Enç's suggestion, by means of the following micro-parameter in Table 1:

Table 1. A Micro-Parameter in Tense Binding

	+past	-past (i, j)
English	can be bound	i = UT; i∈j
Korean	cannot be bound	i∈j

This means that the English past tense can be bound by a higher past tense so (8b) can have the simultaneous reading, and that the Korean past tense cannot be bound by a higher past tense so (9b) cannot have the simultaneous reading with the embedded past tense. Further, the English present tense must have the UT as its RT while the Korean counterpart is freer in that respect.

Summarizing the English-Korean comparison thus far in the tense system, we can identify the following points that L1 Korean learners of L2 English must internalize. First, they have to learn that in English tense and agreement properties are fused and realized as a single morpheme on a lexical verb or in various forms of the verb *be*. Second, they must reset the micro-parameter (Table 1) from the Korean setting to the English setting.

2.4. Studies on L2 tense and agreement

An important issue in L2 acquisition studies has been: Does Universal Grammar constrain SLA? If yes, to what extent? Some argued that UG is unavailable in SLA [the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis; Bley-Vroman 1989, Clahsen 1988, etc.]. Others claimed

that UG is partially unavailable: (i) no parameter resetting (e.g., Tsimpli & Roussou 1991); (ii) the so-called Failed Features Hypothesis (Hawkins & Chan 1997) that only L1-activated formal features can be acquired in SLA. Still others presented evidence that UG is fully in operation in SLA (Flynn (1987, 1989, 1996), Grondin & White (1995), and White (2003), among others). Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) and Schwartz (1998), in particular, claimed that every L1 feature or value is transferred to the initial L2 grammar and is reformulated to be compatible with new data from the target language.

Kumpf (1984) observed that an L1 Japanese L2 English user, who lived in America for 28 years, used the past forms of auxiliaries and the copular verb *be* quite accurately, but used lexical verbs in their bare forms. That is, his grammar was fossilized in the way that only auxiliary verbs are inflected for tense, but no non-copular main verbs. What is amazing is that this particular way of fossilization can be accurately described in terms of his inter-English grammar. For example, his grammar does not have the rule of Affix Hopping when auxiliaries, but no non-copular main verbs, are understood to raise into the Infl node (Auxiliary Raising).[2]

Noteworthy in this respect is Lardiere (1998a,b, 2007). She analyzed inter-English data from an L1 Chinese and L2 English user who had resided in American for more than ten years, and made the following interesting observations: Auxiliaries and the copular verb *be* are mostly used correctly in obligatory present-tense agreement contexts, whereas lexical verbs were used incorrectly in bare forms in 95% of the time. That is, she found out that her L1 Chinese subject's IL grammar is similar to Kumpf's subject's in the syntactic discrepancy between auxiliaries and main verbs.[3]

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[2]This fact is also compatible with Lasnik's (1999) hybrid hypothesis that only auxiliaries are introduced fully inflected into syntax.

[3]Lardiere (1998a) didn't distinguish auxiliaries and main verbs when she considered past tense marking. The informant marked the past tense correctly in only 34% of the obligatory contexts.

Against the general issues on SLA, to summarize, these two case studies are about two inter-Englishes which are related to different L1's: Japanese and Chinese, which are well known to be different in grammatical tense marking. Nonetheless, we notice that fossilization seems to occur in a strikingly parallel way, and further that its consequence seems to be simply describable by means of availability of a grammatical operation. This leads us to predict that a similar phenomenon may be observed in steady-state KIE's.

2.5. Studies on acquisition of tense and agreement in KIE's

A systematic empirical study on the abstract tense-agreement head in KIE's began quite recently with Hahn (2000a,b, 2005) and Shin (2000, 2001, 2004, 2006). Undertaking longitudinal and cross-sectional studies with young learners, they observed that tense-agreement inflection appears rather late in KIEs' developmental stages (cf. Radford 1990, Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994).

In a one-year-long longitudinal study of KIE's of 5-year-olds and 10-year-olds, in particular, Shin (2004) observed an asymmetry between auxiliaries and lexical verbs in KIE's reminiscent of the same division observed by Kumpf (1984) and Lardiere (1998a,b): With 75% of the subjects, inflections occurred only on copular *be*-verbs but not with lexical verbs.

There was also an observation on asymmetric performance between the past tense and the perfective aspect use in L2 English. Park (2004) observed that adult KIE users performed better with the past tense marking than with the perfective aspect, and related it to the fact that unlike English, Korean doesn't have a separate device for that aspect (cf. Lado 1957).[4]

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[4]Kim (1998, 2001) administered experiments on ten KIE users who lived in America for 2.2 years on average and noticed that the past tense morpheme tends to strongly correlate with telic verbs like wash (the vase) or pour (the water), and that the progressive -ing strongly correlates with action verbs, generally supporting Antinucci & Miller's (1976) Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis. stabilization might occur along this line, but Hahn (2005) observed that KIE beginners used the past tense

Hahn's (2005) results pointed to more or less difficulty that the English past tense system imposed on L2 English learners. Based on diary entries by university students (with novice-mid or novice-high proficiency levels in the ACTFL guidelines for speaking), she observed that students who didn't use overt subjects consistently or showed errors in the SVO order provided past tense forms in about 50% to 80% of the obligatory past contexts.

Lee (2005) made a similar observation with other ranges of L1 Korean L2 English learners. She recruited 60 intermediate KIE users (Group 1), 10 advanced KIE users (Group 2), and 10 very advanced KIE users (Group 3). Providing bare-verb cues and sentence meanings in Korean, she administered a fill-in-the-blank task which included the following three items in the category of past tense.

(12) a. My father (was) a teacher when he was young.
    b. He usually (got up) at five o'clock in those days.
    c. After he (finished) supper, he began to read the novel.

She observed that Group 1 committed errors in 52% of the obligatory contexts; Group 2, 50%; and Group 3, 27%.

Based on the details of the errors given in Lee (2005), Ahn (to appear) observed that many divergencies are related to the distinction between the past tense and the present perfect aspect, echoing Park's (2004) result. First, *has been, has gotten up, and has finished* were chosen in place of past forms. Secondly, with regard to (12c), the bare form *finish* in (13c) was chosen by 22% of Group 1, and the present-tense form in (13a) was preferred by 12% of Group 1. Thirdly, (13b) was favored by 48% of the same group, and by 60% of Group 2. What is significant is that all these are indorsed neither in their L1 Korean nor in their L2 English. This indicates that Korean learners of English develop novel tense systems which are not directly found in their L1 or L2.

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irrespectively of the Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis. We will leave this issue for future research.

(13) a. My father is a teacher when he was young.
    b. He usually get(s) up at five o'clock in those days.
    c. After he finish supper, he began to read the novel.

To see whether that group-based tendency was found in spontaneous writings by a single KIE user, Ahn (to appear) examined nine writings that a third-year student wrote during a semester in 2005. He showed that the third-year college student was correct in providing past tense forms in about 90% of the obligatory contexts, but that his remaining 10% revealed a systematicity in divergences. In a nutshell, past tense forms were not provided in contexts where the past-time information was provided in other ways. He interpreted this as resulting from the micro-parameter in tense-binding presented in Table 1. This study revealed another aspect of the KIE tense system which may be susceptible to stabilization: tense binding.

To summarize, in this section, we have seen that lively research and discussion have been being done related to L2 English tense acquisition. We have noticed that stabilization may occur in tense marking with regard to the distinction between auxiliaries and lexical verbs, to the distinction between past tense and perfect aspect, or to the parametric difference in tense binding.

3. Method

The review and discussion of the literature thus far has led us to check whether the length-of-residence approach can produce valid results when supplemented by a cross-sectional character, and to check whether gender can be a significant determinant for KIE features prone to stabilization. More linguistically, we also have identified two aspects of the KIE tense-agreement system which are prone to stabilization: the auxiliary-lexical verb distinction and the

relative-absolute tense marking system. Related to these, the present study has set up the following research questions.

1. Is the length-of-residence approach still a viable option for stabilization studies?
2. Does gender have anything to do with linguistic features vulnerable to stabilization?
3. Do steady-state KIE's show any asymmetry between auxiliary and lexical verbs in tense-agreement marking?
4. Do steady-state KIE's show any evidence for stabilization in tense binding?

To answer these questions, the present study has been designed as follows.

3.1. Participants

The researcher recruited 10 KIE users who had lived in an English-speaking country between five and less than ten years, and 10 KIE users with 10 or more years of residence in an English-speaking country. This was to check whether the difference in length of residence can be any determinant of stabilization. In both groups, he balanced the gender factor, recruiting five male (M) and five female (F) participants. This was to see whether there are any gender effects on steady-state KIE grammars regarding verbal inflections.

The 20 subjects were consequently divided into four groups by gender and length of residence in an English-speaking country: five in each. The participants in Group F1 were females of the age of 26 to 37 (mean: 33) and lived in an English speaking country for 5;3 to 7 years (mean: 6.4). Two of them were homemakers with American husbands, and the others were graduate students single or married to Korean husbands. Four of them thought they were using English in 15 to 70% of daily activities (mean: 34%).[5] Those in

Group F2 were also females aged 41 to 48 (mean: 44), and exposed to English in natural settings for 12 to 25 years (mean: 17.6). Two of them were homemakers (one with a British husband, the other with a Korean husband), and the others were working for a college, for the city municipal, or for her own business with British or other employees. They thought they were using English in 20-80% of their daily activities (mean: 52%).

Those in Group M1 were males aged 21 to 49 years (mean: 40), and exposed to English in natural settings for 5;3 to 8;7 years (mean: 7). Four of them were students (one undergraduate, three graduates), and the other was a researcher at a British company. They thought they were using English in 5-50% of their daily activities (mean: 35%). Those in Group M2 were also males aged 42 to 57 years (mean: 54), and exposed to English in natural settings for 12 to 27;1 years (mean: 21.2). Four of them had their own business or company, and one was a pastor for a non-Korean congregation. They thought they were using English in 10-40% of their daily activities (mean: 28%). These profiles are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Group Profiles

Group	Case	Age (Mean)	Length of Residence	Jobs	English Use (%)
F1	5	26-37 (33)	5;3-7 (6.4)	2 homemakers 3 grad students	34
F2	5	41-48 (44)	12-25 (17.6)	2 homemakers 3 employees	52
M1	5	21-49 (40)	5:3-8;7 (7)	1 undergrad, 3 grad students 1 researcher	35
M2	5	42-57 (54)	12-27;1 (21.2)	4 businessmen 1 pastor	28

[5]I failed to ask one homemaker the question on her extent of using English, but I guess her case wouldn't change the picture much because she was in the Korean sub-community involving the other homemaker and was attending the same Korean church as she was.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The researcher interviewed the participants in an informal setting in two approximately thirty minute sessions with 5 to 10 minutes in the interval. He asked the participants about their personal experiences in learning or practicing English, about important events such as marriage in the past, or about people they were familiar with, such as family members. He provided the participants with 15 pounds as incentive. When a participant had driven to come to the site of interview, he gave him or her additional 5 pounds to partially supplement the transportation fee.

For this research, an about five minute recording was extracted from both of the sessions for each participant, respecting speaking turns. Consequently, approximately 10 minute's KIE data was transcribed per a participant by an assistant and double-checked by the researcher.

After that, obligatory contexts for past tense marking were identified by the researcher with regard to three types of verbs: (i) lexical verbs, (ii) auxiliary verbs excluding the progressive auxiliary verb *be*, and (iii) the copular and auxiliary *be*-verb.[6] The identification of obligatory contexts was based on the relevant discourse flows of contextual meanings. He asked two English teacher trainers, Dr Kara MacDonald and Dr Martin Endley, who had been teaching Korean students for more than three years at a TESOL program, to review independently all the contexts he was not sure of. He then had sessions with them together to discuss their responses.

The instances of verbs were then counted that occurred in the correct past form. Identical repeated verb forms were counted as only one case, unless they were intervened by significant amount of words (usually by more than two words). Verbs such as *put* and *hit* which have identical suppletive forms for the present and past tense

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[6]We grouped the be-forms together because a cursory review showed that different types of the verb be are not distinctive in terms of tense-agreement inflection.

were excluded from the counting. Verbs whose past tense morpheme might have lost its phonetic content contextually, as before *to*, were also excluded. When an auxiliary and a lexical verb were both in the past tense form, as in *didn't banged*, only the occurrence of the first, auxiliary verb was counted. Modal auxiliaries were counted only in their past tense forms. The contracted form of *gonna* was counted as faulty unless it was preceded by an occurrence of *be*, phonetically unclear cases were also excluded.

In terms of subject-verb agreement, cases were counted only when they exhibit morphological distinctions. Lexical main verbs and the perfect aspect auxiliary *have* and the dummy auxiliary *do* were counted only in the present tense and with a third person singular subject. Occurrences of the verb *be* were counted in both the present and past tense forms whether they were used as the progressive aspect auxiliary or as a copula.

After the basic frequency data were obtained, the ratios of suppliance in obligatory contexts were calculated in percentage and the results were compared based on the gender and length of residence factors.

4. Results and discussion

In this section, the results on the KIE verbal morphology will be discussed in relation first to the methodological issue and the external factor of gender and then to stabilizability. Lastly, potential determinants of stabilization will be identified and discussed.

4.1. Length of residence

Is the length-of-residence approach still a viable option for stabilization studies? To answer this first research question, we will examine the general ratios in which lexical, auxiliary, and BE verbs were supplied in correct inflections in their obligatory contexts. The

frequency results from the present study of the past tense marking is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequencies of Past Tense Marking

Groups	V, past			Aux, past			BE, past		
	S	OC	%	S	OC	%	S	OC	%
F1	190	233	82	53	76	70	99	109	91
F2	109	147	74	35	50	70	79	96	82
F	299	380	79	88	126	70	178	205	87
M1	127	148	86	34	40	85	107	121	88
M2	112	143	78	27	37	73	68	89	76
M	239	291	82	61	77	79	175	210	83
Total	538	671	80	149	203	73	353	415	85

In this table, S represents the instances of correct forms supplied in their obligatory contexts (OC). "%" represents the ratios of suppliance, and F and M are female and male sub-totals.

Observe that in both male and female KIE user groups, the younger groups performed better than the older groups. Except for the auxiliary verb category, Group F1 outperformed Group F2 by about 8-9%. In all three cases, M1 performed better than M2 by about 10%. This result is rather surprising because long-term residence doesn't seem to guarantee a better acquisition of L2 English tense system. Their self-reported extents of using English don't seem to be a convincing factor either, because in the case of females the long term residence group (F2) was apparently using more English than the other while with males, the other way around is the case. The result is line with Plege and Liu's (2001) result that when the amount of exposure to English was not controlled, the length of residence did not significantly correlate with English proficiency.[7]

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[7]I am grateful to a Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics (KJELL) reviewer who has drawn my attention to the result from Flege and Liu (2001). These scholars also showed that when learners were sufficiently exposed to English, their length of residence came to correlate with their proficiency in the language. Our sporadic

The level of formal education seemed to be a more reliable predictor of the result that the younger, shorter residence groups performed better than the older, longer residence groups. The shorter residence groups had more graduate students pursuing doctorate or master's degrees, but the longer residence groups had only one (female) PhD holder, with two males potentially holding MA degrees. Another relevant factor might be the quality of school education back in Korea when we presume that it has improved as the country has advanced in economic and other sectors. In either case, this result might imply the importance of school education in EFL situations.[8]

What is clear is that a long term of residence does not guarantee language acquisition if emersion occurs in adulthood, congruent with previous reports, e.g., by Johnson & Newport (1989), Kumpf (1984) and Lardiere (1998a,b).[9] This tends to indirectly support the thesis that at least the long term residence groups have attained steady-state grammars of L2 English. Given this, if the "long-term residence" groups show symptoms of stabilization, they will have significant implications for EFL education.

4.2. Gender differences and potential lexical/auxiliary asymmetry

Concerning the second research question, first, gender differences are meager in the areas of lexical verbs and the verb BE (both within a 3% difference). A striking fact is that a rather clear gender

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data don't produce any significant results comparable to that.

[8]A KJELL reviewer argued that the quality of formal English education is perhaps not be a convincing predictor of the result because properties of the English tense-agreement system are dealt with at the initial stages of English education in Korea by an explicit grammar explanation method, but we should be reminded that students tend to show different levels of proficiency and accuracy from the very beginning stages of English education in Korea.

[9]Though not quite certain, it may be accepted as a vague sign of backsliding, or a decrease in L2 accuracy, which Selinker (1972) identified as the prime phenomenological manifestation of stabilization.

difference (by about 9%) is observed in the area of auxiliary verb use. Female KIE users were correct in 70% of the time, but male users, in 79% of the time. Although it is obtained only in a specific area of the KIE grammar, this result is interestingly parallel to Ellis's (1994) report that Asian males attain a higher level of English proficiency in Britain. As Ellis surmises, perhaps, this difference is related to their difference in social involvement.

Concerning potential asymmetry between lexical and auxiliary verb use, first, the steady-state KIE users most correctly used the verb *BE* out of the three types of verbs. They were correct about 85% of the time in using past *be*-forms. Next, they were correct in about 82% of the time with lexical verbs. So no significant asymmetry was found in the area among the gender groups. They, however, seemed to have greatest difficulties with non-*BE* auxiliaries including modal auxiliaries, the perfect aspect auxiliary *have* and the dummy auxiliary *do*. They were correct only around 73% of the time. This tendency might be related to the fact that modal auxiliaries express most complex ideas, users' attitudes toward the propositional content, and the fact that their L1 Korean doesn't have a distinctive past-tense marker separate from the perfect aspect marker.

To see whether there is any sign of stabilization, the researcher examined individual cases. Three subjects were extremely low in correct use of past auxiliaries. Participant 1 in Group F1 was correct in only 9 out of 24 instances (38%); Participant 6 in Group F2, only 2 out of 8 instances (25%); and Participant 7 in Group F2, only 4 out of 9 instances (44%).[10] Their details are summarized in Table 4.

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[10]Male Participants 11 and 16 used non-be auxiliaries in 50% of the time, but we do not consider them in detail because their obligatory contexts were too small, six or below.

Table 4. Participants Weak at Using Auxiliaries

Grp	Prt	Past Tense Forms	Divergent Forms	S/OC (%)
F1	1	did, didn't (x8)	can (x4), can't (x4), cannot (x3), don't (x4)	9/24 (38)
F2	6	did, didn't	will (x5), cannot	2/8 (25)
	7	he'd been, would, did, couldn't	I've got, I've been (x3), cannot	4/9 (44)

It is striking that Participant 1's 9 correct instances of past auxiliaries were all instances of *did(n't)*, but that 11 out of the 15 divergent cases (73%) were of modal auxiliaries. Though the frequency of the auxiliaries that Participant 6 used is rather small to provide a significant insight into this matter, it is not disregardable that all the six divergent cases were of modal auxiliaries. That is, their use of modal auxiliaries showed a high propensity to stabilization. On the other hand, Participant 7 used the perfect auxiliary *have* incorrectly in 75% of the time.

Consider first the following examples taken from Participant 1's data.

(14) a. we gotta you know hold you know the safety rock but I **didn't.** I <u>think</u> I <u>can</u> do it (   )... I <u>can</u> climb on top. So one time I **did.** That **was** a mistake

   b. that **was** a really dangerous so I... long time I, I <u>can't</u> I **didn't** mm climb again

The present-tense forms have been underlined. The words in thick fonts indicate that it is a past-tense environment. In (14a), the present-tense instances of *can* are surrounded by past tense clauses, suggesting their divergent status.[11] (14b) seems to bear parallel

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[11]Notice that the present modal forms in (14) occur along with other present tense forms of verbs in present tense clauses, so a principle of discourse organization might also be called in to explain the tense marking alternation. Perhaps, we are witnessing here an interaction between a propensity for stabilization and other facets of use of tense marking.

evidence. Here, the participant used the present tense form of *can't* in the clause immediately following a past tense clause. Further, she self-corrected the present tense form with the past tense form of *didn't*. This self-correction allows us to have a glimpse into her grammar where the present-tense form of the modal might be in the process of being "stabilized" to cover all the time scale including the past.[12]

The possibility that modal auxiliaries are prone to be stabilized is also strongly suggested by Participant 6's use of *cannot* and *will*. Even though their frequency is quite low, the fact is pregnant of implication toward their stabilization: that she never used any past-tense instances of modal auxiliaries at all. Consider an actual example from her transcript.

(15) I **had** to study so hard to understand every single pages, and I, I <u>will</u> highlight it highlight it ... and then at the end my whole book **was** a highlighted as a yellow book!

The present-tense modal *will* occurs in the clause that is coordinated with and surrounded by past-tense clauses. In view of the fact that Participant 6 lived in English-speaking countries for 25 years, this also strongly indicates that modal verbs are stabilized in her KIE to cover all the time scale including the past. This is reminiscent of the fact that *must* is used in that way by L1 English speakers, hence perhaps such a stabilization may be understood as an overgeneralization in constructing L2 English lexical entries for modals by some KIE speakers.

Next, let us turn to Participant 7's major remaining divergences. She used four instances of the *have*+Past Participle sequence. Let us

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[12]A KJELL reviewer pointed out that this self-correction seems to allude to the possibility that the incorrect form is subject to a future correction. Perhaps, but my point was that when the corrected do-auxiliary was used correctly in the past tense form, the modal was used incorrectly in the present tense form.

consider her actual examples.

(16) I **was** collapsed ... then ambulance **came** and I never <u>come</u>
     back, so that **was** really all my classmates and, and lecturers
     <u>are</u> very... um sorry for me, and then but <u>I've been</u> hospital
     for two years and then <u>I've been</u> home and then hospital
     you know, all like that, and then fo...r yeah another five
     years so nearly seven, eight years <u>I've been</u> at home

When she stated a certain state held in the past for a certain
period of time, the participant used the three instances of the
present perfect aspect. Simple past forms must have been used in
those places, but weren't. This cannot be an accidental performance
error, and she resided in England for 19 years. It suggests that the
sequence in question has been stabilized for expressing 'a state
obtaining for a long time in the past'.

Thus far, we have discussed two cases of stabilization: modal
verbs and the *have been* sequence. Next, we need to examine
whether there is any overall difference in stabilizability between
lexical verbs and auxiliaries. The ratios of suppliance of past lexical
verbs in obligatory contexts can be summarized as follows:

Table 5. Ratios of Past-tense Lexical Verbs in Obligatory Contexts

SOC	0-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-100
Freq	2	3	1	0	1	3	4	2	4

5 participants were correct in less than 65% of the time. All of
them belonged to different groups: Participants 1, 7, 8, 11, and 17.
Notice also that the first two participants showed symptoms of
stabilization discussed thus far in this subsection. We can say that
the four participants are more or less in the line of Kumpf's (1984)
subject. Their IL grammars must have a shaky rule of Affix
Hopping or its variants. They showed the notorious optionality that

is widely observed in SLA.

Excluding the five participants, 14 (or 70%) participants were correct in 75% or more of the time. Six (or 30%) participants were correct in 90% or more of the time. This result is not compatible with predictions from Bley-Vroman's (1989) Fundamental Difference Hypothesis, but supports the other approaches where UG is rather fully available in SLA as well. It is also compatible with Hawkins and Chan's (1997) Failed Feature Hypothesis as well because the participants's L1 Korean entertains past-tense marking.

Generally speaking, therefore, we can say that KIE learners must handle past-tense marking with no much difficulty, but we cannot answer the question why the first five participants seem to have such difficulties in dealing with past-tense marking of lexical verbs. Perhaps, we have to examine the verbs' membership in their classification in lexical aspect, but we will leave this for future research.

Let us now turn to the results in subject-verb agreement. The group-wise results are presented as Table 6 here.

Table 6. Group-based Results in Subject-Agreement

Group	Lexical Verb			Auxiliary Verbs			BE		
	S	OC	%	S	OC	%	S	OC	%
F1	17	34	50	9	10	90	227	230	99
F2	2	18	**11**	3	3	100	225	226	100
F	19	52	37	12	13	92	452	456	99
M1	12	17	71	4	4	100	191	194	99
M2	9	13	69	3	3	100	229	236	97
M	21	30	70	7	7	100	420	430	98
Total	40	82	49	19	20	95	872	886	98

First, observe that the participants had no problem at all in using the *be*-verb whether as an auxiliary or as a copula. They were correct in almost 100% of the time. The results, however, don't contain sufficiently large number of cases in the other

areas, of lexical verbs and auxiliaries. Consequently, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion based on the results. Nonetheless, it is strikingly outstanding that Group F2 was extremely low in using lexical verbs in obligatory subject-verb agreement contexts. Its participants were correct only in 11% of the time! For a more detailed examination of this result, we need to check their individual results.

The low result of Group F2 comes from Participants 6 and 7's low performance only. Participant 6 used none out of 5 instances correctly in subject-verb agreement involving lexical verbs. The other participant used none out of 10 instances! Let us examine Participant 7's actual utterances.

> (17) ... my **mother's** still ali,alive but **she's** just a housewife like me yeah... but she <u>look</u> after grand children and then she **living** very life [ASH: Exactly] she **helping** lots of people I think I come after my mother for that matter she always <u>help</u> other people who need her, she never <u>refuse</u>

The participant was describing her mother's general character and behavior. She used the 3 lexical verbs without agreement marking.[13] We believe this is a concrete sign for stabilization. In Participant 7's KIE, lexical verbs are also stabilized for absence of agreement marking.

Group F1's general SOC ratio was 50%, at a chance level. In this group, Participant 1 is in sharp contrast with the other members. She showed only 24% of correctness while others generally did almost 100% correctly.

> (18) a. she just <u>graduate</u> uh, she... cannot uh study ...
>   b. he <u>pay</u> all himself

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[13]In the remaining two cases, she used lexical verbs in present participle forms: living and helping.

c. he still <u>keep</u> studying

In this section, we have examined the results on past tense marking and subject-verb agreement marking, and noticed three types of local stabilization in the areas of modal auxiliaries and the perfect aspect auxiliary with regard to past tense marking, and in the subject-verb agreement marking on lexical verbs. What is striking is that three participants are generally, sometimes extremely, low in accuracy. Stabilization perhaps seems to be more global in their cases.

4.3. Tense binding

As Lee (2005) and Ahn (to appear) showed, developing KIE users tend to use their inter-Englishes with their tense binding properties transferred from their L1 Korean grammar. For the task of checking such L1 influence, we have selected the participants whose SOC ratio in past tense marking are below 70%: Participants 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, and 17. Excluding the auxiliary cases of Participants 1 and 6, who were regarded as showing effects of stabilization in the area of auxiliaries, then, we have collected and examined the lexical and sometimes auxiliary verbs that were incorrectly used.

First, most of the incorrect cases found in Participant 1's transcripts can be classified into the following three categories: (i) when a coordinate clause is marked as past tense; (ii) when the matrix clause is marked as past tense; (iii) when a temporal adverb indicates a past time. Consider the examples below.

(19) a. ... anyway she **did** it really hard she just <u>graduate </u>uh, she... <u>cannot </u>uh study   uh keep doing, ...

b. When I <u>get </u>uh, my job I, I <u>can </u>make my salary so I um... first thing I **did** like you know the uh **bought** um... uh, scub, scu, scuba diving suit? ...

c. You know, **one time**, I <u>have </u>no gas. [P1]

In (19a), the past time is indicated by the verb *did* in the first coordinate clause, then *graduate* and *cannot* in the following clauses are not marked as past. It is as if the effect of the past tense marking holds over the following clause as well. Although opposite in linear ordering, it was pointed out in section 2.3 that a similar situation is found in Korean as well (cf. the discussion around example (7)). In (19b), the matrix clause has a past-tense verb *bought*, while the temporal clause is in the present tense. Even though this is not generally allowed in English, again, it is a frequently observed configuration of tense marking (cf. (6)).

In (19c), the past time is indicated by the temporal adverbial *one time*, while the sentence contains a present-tense verb. This is not allowed in participant 1's L1 Korean or target English. It is a new feature of her KIE.[14] As Lee (2005) observed, and Ahn (to appear) tried to explain, the feature is commonly witnessed in KIE's (see Ahn to appear for a detailed discussion on that matter).

Participant 1's transcripts, however, contain a number of cases that are difficult to be assigned to any of the preceding three categories. Examine the following utterances.

(20) a. ... but I **didn't.** I <u>think</u> I <u>can</u> do it like you know the... I <u>can</u> climb on top. So one time I **did,** that **was** a mistake...

   b. ... first thing I **did** like you know the uh **bought** um... uh, scub, scu, scuba diving suit? ... P1: Because I <u>love,</u> I always <u>wanna</u> go under the sea not in just you know the... I <u>live</u> you know the... close to ocean, but I never <u>see</u> like under the sea I always wan, <u>wanna</u> do that?

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[14] A KJELL reviewer points out that this feature occurs in inter-Englishes developed by learners not only from L1 Korean background, but also with all the other L1 backgrounds, and suggests that it seems to be an intralingual error. This topic deserves a more thorough investigation.

The portion of the transcript (20a) that is marked with the present tense seems to be concerned with an explanation of what happened in the past. The clauses are embedded within a present-tense, matrix clause. In (20b) the present-tense clauses are introduced by the connective of reason and cause, *because*. This type of discourse organization is interesting and needs detailed description, but it is beyond the scope of this research, so we will leave it for future research. Our hunch is, though, that it seems to be present in the relevant KIE discourse grammar because of an influence from L1 perhaps because Korean is more flexible in using the present-tense clauses.

In fact, all the remaining cases of incorrect past-tense marking can be analyzed in a parallel way to those for (19), if we add the following cases of subordinate structure.

(21) a. ...he **helped** lots of the poor student who <u>cannot</u> start carry on studying yeah [P7]

 b. I **didn't** know what k, what kind of course's um <u>will</u> be um... <u>will</u> be going on [P16]

Notice that past-tense sentences have a present tense relative clause in (21a), and a past-tense complement clause in (21b). These examples are reminiscent of the Korean sentences with a similar tense marking configuration in (9).

4.4. Potential determinants of stabilization

On the basis of the results discussed thus far in sections 4.1-4.3, we can notice that stabilization can happen at least in the following cases. First, stabilization can occur when overgeneralization goes unnoticed by the KIE learner. In some KIE's present-tense modal auxiliaries clearly have been overgeneralized and cover the entire scale of time. In another KIE, the *have been* sequence has been overgeneralized to cover a state in the past as well as the state

leading to the present moment. This might have resulted from absence of corrective feedback (Vigil & Oller 1976) or some other socio-educational reasons. Linguistically perhaps, it may be related to the semantic complexity of modal meanings. In fact, Schachter (1988: 24) observed that most proficient ESL users are unaware of the subtle meanings of modal auxiliaries.

Secondly, our results that some of steady-state KIE users have difficulty with inflecting lexical verbs suggest that with regard to acquisition of English verbal inflection, the lexical/auxiliary distinction exerts a negative influence on learners with wider L1 backgrounds (cf. Kumpf 1984 and Lardiere 1998a,b for learners with L1 Japanese or L1 Chinese). This is related to the unique status of Affix Hopping or one of its variants. It is a rare syntactic species of lowering operation or involves an abstract LF operation (Chomsky 1995). stabilization can occur when the learner fails to construct the rule of marked nature.

Since participant 7 completely failed to inflect lexical verbs for subject-verb agreement and was quite sloppy in inflecting them for the past tense, we must conclude that her KIE grammar must have a problem with regard to that part of verbal inflection. This, further, seems to constitute a basis on which to argue against Chomsky (1995: ch. 4), who discarded the Agreement head from the syntax of English. Perhaps, we must go back to his system in chapters 2-3, where Agreement and Tense make up separate syntactic heads. Recall that participant 7 never inflected lexical verbs for agreement features in the present tense, but only partially with the past-tense morpheme.

A third big source of stabilization seems to be the parametric difference between L1 Korean and L2 English. With regard to this aspect, the results obtained from the present research might look sympathetic with Tsimpli and Roussou (1991). The tense marking parameters look very difficult to change. Since there are participants who seem to have mastered past tense marking

almost perfectly, however, the present research is not compatible completely with their proposal. Is it then supportive of Hawkins and Chan's (1997) Failed Feature Hypothesis? Perhaps, yes, because their hypothesis predicts that unless a formal/uninterpretable feature is involved, acquisition of new features or categories are allowed under the guidance of UG. Under our current view, the distinction in tense binding is only a matter of morphological realization of the tense feature. Then, are they compatible with Schwartz and Sprouse's (1996) and others' Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis? Basically yes, again, but negative transfer of the tense binding parameter value seems to be quite influential so that it may cause stabilization with some KIE learners. The Full Access part is, in fact, not interpreted as guaranteeing 100% success in SLA. Where is the dividing line between success and failure? As one *KJELL* reviewer suggests, noticing can be explored as a plausible answer to the individual variability. This psychological process involves paying conscious attention to meaning and to form and helps internalize the underlying rule (Batstone 1996). We may say that parameter resetting will also need lots of noticing. In other words, the three potential sources of stabilization supply relatively higher levels of linguistic difficulties which can be overcome only through "sufficient" noticing.

Apart from those whose KIE grammars were discussed with regard to potential stabilization, most other participants were generally quite successful in having acquired English verbal inflections. This is in line with the thesis that UG principles are available directly or through their L1 settings when KIE learners acquire English verbal inflection.

5. Summaries and conclusion

In section four, first, we have shown that the length-of-residence approach can lead to meaningful results for determining stabilization especially when the period of residence exceeds 10 years. Curiously, further, we have witnessed that gender is relevant to the acquisition of non-BE auxiliaries. Male participants outperformed female participants, even though this might be related to their potential difference in social involvement.

In section 4.2, further, we have found out that gender is not a determining factor for stabilization. In both gender groups participants were found whose KIE grammar seem to have some signs for stabilization. We have also seen that when the KIE learner subjects who lived more than ten years in an English-speaking community generally showed lower performance than those who lived less, and have taken it as evidence that they arrived at steady-state grammars of L2 English. Later, then, we have also found that participants whose grammars are prone to stabilization have been found in both the "short-term residence" and "long-term residence" groups. This might suggest that the dividing line of ten year's residence is not very meaningful, and that five years of residence might be sufficient for reaching a steady-state grammar (Washburn 1991).

Some symptoms for local stabilization have also been detected. First, two participants (P1 and P6) seem to have developed a grammar where modal auxiliaries have been overgeneralized so that their present-tense forms also cover the entire temporal scale. Second, one participant (P7) has developed a grammar where the present perfect aspect can indicate a state in the past. Third, the same participant (P7)'s KIE grammar also has lexical verbs unmarked for subject-verb agreement. In the next subsection, it has been shown most of the lexical verbs that are incorrectly marked for tense can be related to the tense binding configurations that are

found in the participants' L1 Korean, and also that the new feature of marking explanation portions of the discourse may be related to the flexible use of the present tense in L1 Korean.

Discussing those findings, in section 4.4, we have suggested that unnoticed overgeneralization, complex syntactic operations, and a parametric difference can be potentially detrimental sources of stabilization.

One promising fact is that the symptoms of stabilization are not quite prevalent. They show up with a limited number of KIE users. This means that if input is systematically provided for KIE learners so that they can easily notice the cases of overgeneralization, complex syntactic rules and parametric differences, such cases of stabilization as discussed above may be further reduced. Even in those few potential areas of stabilization, we can conclude that KIE learners seem to be quite successful in constructing appropriate rules for verbal inflections. What other sources of stabilization can be identified? How can such input be prepared? These questions await future research, so that we can catalog grammatical features of L2 English which are relatively more difficult for L1 Korean learners of English to notice, and which will demand more careful treatment in preparing L2 English input.

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