

○ LEARNER BACKGROUND AND THE ACQUISITION OF DISCOURSE FEATURES OF KOREAN IN THE AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL CONTEXT

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This paper explores how learner background shapes learner performance on discourse features in writing by analysing data produced as part of the Student Achievement in Asian Languages Education project (Scarino et al., 2011) by Year 10 (mid-secondary school) students learning Korean as a foreign or heritage language. Five participants were in their second year of learning Korean as a foreign language at an Australian high school, whereas four Korean-speaking participants were learning their mother tongue in Saturday community schools and had varied experience of learning Korean and English, the language of mainstream schooling in Australia. Participants' performance on two writing tasks—one independent and one integrated—is examined in terms of two assessment categories—"forms and structures" (i.e., morpho-syntax) and "discourse" (i.e., coherence and cohesion). Results reveal that participants' performance within each group varies according to task types and that the pattern of within-group variation also differs between the two groups. It appears that the two types of learners respond differently to different types of tasks and that their learning is different in nature. It is concluded that this difference needs to be taken into consideration in teaching and assessment in languages education at the secondary school level.

KEY WORDS: learner background, discourse features, Korean as a second language, Korean as a heritage language, task familiarity

INTRODUCTION: THE LEARNING OF HERITAGE LANGUAGES

One of the challenges that teachers of languages currently face is how to meet the linguistic needs of learners from increasingly diverse backgrounds. While the categorisation of learners is complex (Elder, 2000; Elder, Kim & Knoch, this issue) and has been variously labelled according to research contexts, pedagogical considerations and the language learning environment relative to the language taught, learners studying a language which is not the medium of communication outside the language classroom have traditionally been regarded as "foreign language (FL)" learners. However, with a growing number of immigrants and their children settling in many countries, including Australia, a new group of learners who

learn the language of their country of origin as the target language (TL) in instructional settings is making its presence felt. These learners are not FL learners as they are likely to have already acquired some proficiency in the TL in their home and/or community, or prior to their arrival in the host country, albeit in vastly varying degrees. Nor are they comparable to monolingual first language (L1) learners whose L1 acquisition takes place both in natural settings and through formal schooling provided entirely in L1 in their countries of origin. The TL for such learners is often referred to as the heritage language (HL) in order to differentiate from both FL and L1, and this term will be used hereafter in this paper.

While HL learning is yet to be established as a field of inquiry in its own right (Montrul, 2010), studies on bilingual speakers often characterise the interlanguage of their HL as ‘incomplete acquisition’ and ‘attrition’ (Montrul, 2004). Their HL learning process is often considered to partially resemble both L1 acquisition and adult L2 learning and to involve processes of relearning linguistic items affected by attrition or remaining incomplete since their partial acquisition (S. H. O. Kim, 2007; Montrul, 2002; Oh, Jun, Knightly & Au, 2003). Montrul (2010) attempts to define HL learning from a theoretical perspective, offering several predictions based on theories of child L1 acquisition and adult L2 learning. For example, from a Universal Grammar (UG) perspective (Chomsky, 1986), it is predicted that children in HL-speaking families will acquire the HL as L1 through innate mechanisms that allow access to UG as happens with monolingual children, given their initial early childhood exposure in the naturalistic home environment (see for example White, 2003). However, this acquisition process is later interrupted due to a maturation effect and increasing exposure to an L2-dominant environment, resulting in incomplete acquisition. As such, their subsequent HL learning also involves processes similar to adult L2 learning, where learning of new HL items may rely on the knowledge of the other dominant language and other general cognitive skills. It is also predicted that exposure to a natural environment will allow acquisition of implicit knowledge of the language. However, this type of knowledge will also be only partially acquired among HL-speaking children due to maturational constraints. Moreover, as is also true for adult L2 learning, post-pubertal HL learning will rely largely on explicit knowledge of the language with a decline of procedural memory and implicit cognitive mechanisms (see Montrul, 2010, for a more detailed comparison between child L1 acquisition and adult L2 learning in relation to HL acquisition). From the perspective of language attrition, the HL knowledge which has already been acquired or is yet to be stabilised is prone to attrition under extensive exposure to the other dominant language. Furthermore, the HL input such children receive would be an already attenuated version of the language given that the adult HL speakers in their community are already likely to have gone through language attrition (S. H. O. Kim, 2007; Yăgmur, 2004).

Due to greater opportunities for TL exposure, learners from an HL background may be more proficient (at least orally) and more advanced in linguistic and cultural knowledge than

traditional FL learners, while nevertheless falling short of their monolingual counterparts given the gap in their L1 development. However, empirical studies investigating this issue show that these learners do not necessarily perform better in all respects than their FL learner counterparts at a comparable level of general proficiency (e.g., Kanno, Hasegawa, Ikeda, Ito & Long, 2008; H.-S. H. Kim, 2008). For example, in Kanno et al.'s (2008) study, among advanced learner groups from various backgrounds, classroom FL learners' written accuracy was greater than that of a bilingual group, whose TL use outside the classroom involved mainly informal spoken usage. Furthermore, studies also point out that the two types of learners process the language differently (see below for a review of H.-S. H. Kim, 2008; see also Montrul, 2011). In her study of the issue of language background in Australian national examination settings, Elder (1996, p. 266) further notes that learners from an HL background may have a '(sometimes false) sense of knowing the language' resulting in lack of self-monitoring and a higher error rate when they encounter language that is slightly beyond their level of competence.

Given the differing linguistic needs and learning processes of these two groups of learners, who are often placed in the same "foreign" language classrooms, research to aid understanding of their linguistic ability and to inform pedagogical practices has been called for (Kondo-Brown, 2005, 2008; Montrul, 2010). To date, however, such studies deal with primarily post-secondary learners. This paper, on the other hand, offers new empirical evidence from a secondary school context, by systematically examining the performance of Year 10 (mid-secondary school) learners of Korean as an FL (KFL learners hereafter) and learners of Korean as an HL (KHL learners hereafter)ⁱ on two different writing tasks. Drawing on data from the more broad-ranging *SAALE* project (Scarino et al., 2011; see also Elder et al., this issue, and Scarino, this issue), it reports specifically on how learners from different backgrounds respond to discourse/pragmatic constraints through their use of morpho-syntactic features of Korean.

LEARNING THE KOREAN LANGUAGE

Korean is an agglutinative language with rich morphology. The syntactic and semantic functions of constituents in a sentence are realised by various case-markers/particles or affixes agglutinated to noun and verb stems. Korean is also a discourse-oriented language where grammatical phenomena often occur beyond sentence level. Discourse-related features intertwined with morpho-syntax (e.g., conjunctive suffixes; honorifics) largely determine the coherence and cohesiveness of Korean discourse (for more details, see Sohn, 1999). Therefore, from the beginners' level, learners of Korean must acquire its morpho-syntactic features as well as the discourse pragmatic constraints attributed to those features in the context of concern.

Given the general paucity of research on language learners in either FL or HL settings particularly at the secondary school level and the lack of empirical studies of adolescent school-age learners of Korean conducted in contexts where English is the medium of general education, the brief review of literature provided below is necessarily confined to studies conducted with KFL/KHL learners in tertiary instructional settings. The review focuses on studies investigating the specific features of learner performance relevant to the present study (for a more general review covering learners of other languages, see Elder et al., this issue; Scarino, et al., 2011). The few studies investigating the performance of KFL/KHL learners typically measure learners' receptive knowledge on such grammatical features (e.g., E. J. Kim, 2006; H.-S. H. Kim, 2008; O'Grady, Lee, & Choo, 2001), with only one published study to date comparing the written performance of the two types of learners of Korean (J.-T. Kim, 2001). All of these studies focus on students enrolled in undergraduate Korean courses in North American universities and attempt to differentiate learners from different backgrounds with respect to particular features of their performance.

O'Grady et al. (2001) compared the performance of heritage and non-heritage learners of Korean on a task which involved matching a series of pictures to their corresponding descriptions presented aurally in the form of a head noun and its relative clause. This task required the ability to determine the case of the relativised nouns within that relative clause. Results showed no significant differences between the two groups in their ability to process relative clauses. A study by J.-T. Kim (2001) likewise examined the difference between learners from an HL background and those from an FL background, but focussed instead on their ability to produce *wh*-questions and sentences with *pro-drop* conditions. While this study distinguished itself from most others in the HL research paradigm by using production measures, the findings were similar to those of O'Grady et al. (2001) in that they yielded no significant difference between KHL and KFL learners, suggesting no advantages for KHL learners over KFL learners in learning these specific features of Korean. These findings are however difficult to generalise given the small number of participants in J.-T. Kim (2001) and the limited information about the participants in O'Grady et al. (2001).

H.-S. H. Kim (2008) partially replicated O'Grady et al.'s (2001) study by expanding on the original materials with a more sophisticated methodology. She defined participants' L1 backgrounds and the degree of exposure to TL more clearly by classifying HL learners according to their childhood L1—i.e., Korean, bilingual or English—and FL learners according to their reported L1s—i.e., Japanese, which is often regarded as a close sister language to Korean (H.-M. Sohn, 1999), and other languages which are genetically remote from Korean. She also employed a native speaker (NS) control group. She found that variability in learner performance was determined by learners' L1 backgrounds (see also Iwashita, this issue) and by the degree of exposure to TL rather than their HL/FL status *per se*. In her results, while the performance of both HL and FL learners was significantly lower

than that of the NS controls, HL learners were outperformed by FL learners from a Japanese background on some grammatical features. She also found that, while there was a clear difference in error types between the two types of FL learners, the patterns shown in HL learners' errors were far less predictable. She concludes that FL learners' errors were largely attributable to either interference from L1 (in the case of learners with L1s other than Japanese) or incomplete learning (in the case of Japanese learners), while HL learners had a natural tendency to focus on content rather than to notice linguistic features, producing a more complicated pattern of errors.

E. J. Kim (2006) conducted a survey-type questionnaire on second-generation KHL learners at tertiary level to investigate a number of social/background variables in relation to TL proficiency. While the study included only KHL learners and its primary concern is with their language maintenance, rather than with the linguistic features they acquire, it deals with variables that potentially contribute to variability in TL proficiency among this group. The variables investigated are those typically used in sociolinguistic investigation, such as age of immigration, length of residence in US, schooling in Korea, attendance in ethnic schools in US, experience of taking a tertiary Korean language class, language use, cultural identity and motivation. Participants' TL proficiency was measured using an existing Korean language proficiency test developed by KICE (Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation). In line with other studies on language maintenance/attrition, E. J. Kim (2006) found TL proficiency was significantly correlated with most of the language background variables and that TL use was the strongest predictor of test scores (cf. Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992; S. H. O. Kim, 2005, 2007; S. H. O. Kim & Starks, 2010). She also analysed the participants' comments on their language needs and identified a discrepancy between what they (believed they) had acquired and what was formally taught as the greatest challenge for KHL learning in instructional settings.

Of the findings from E. J. Kim's (2006) study, particularly noteworthy is that variables related to ethnic schools did not show a significant relationship with TL proficiency. While she comments in passing that Korean instruction at ethnic schools may not successfully meet the language needs of KHL learners, it may be that instruction at some ethnic schools is oriented to cultural aspects rather than specifically enhancing proficiency (Sohn & Merrill, 2008). Byon (2003), in his study on language socialisation in KHL classrooms in Hawaiian Saturday schools, notes that the majority of second-generation Korean adolescents attend these schools because their parents demand them to and, as a result, have weak motivations for learning Korean. He also reports that they tend not to use Korean for communicative purposes among themselves nor even with teachers unless they are explicitly forced to. In line with these studies, Liddicoat et al. (2007) also remark on the limited role of ethnic schools in complementing mainstream languages education in the Australian context.

The brief literature review provided above has revealed a number of issues to be further investigated, confirming that, while KHL and KFL learners differ not only in the starting

point for their learning but also in their process of learning the language, learner background is a complex variable which cannot be defined in simple terms. The review reiterates the urgent need for better understanding of the different needs of FL and HL learners and confirms that Korean is no exception particularly in secondary school settings. While Korean is not widely taught in secondary schools in English-speaking countries (see for example Lee & Shin, 2008), the Australian situation deserves attention in that Korean is taught in the public education system where, although it suffers from a small number of enrolments and other problems (for details, see Shin, 2010), it is identified as a national priority language and supported by various government-led initiatives. In this context, this paper attempts to aid understanding of learner needs in secondary school instructional settings by drawing on data from the *SAALE* project and poses the following research question: what patterns of performance are observable among KFL learners and KHL learners completing the same writing tasks?

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

Five KFL learners and four KHL learners at Year 10 level were drawn from the *SAALE* project (see Elder et al., this issue, for information about the larger sample). With respect to the selection of the KFL data for the purpose of the current study, it was decided to use data from these five whose performance was in the “high” rangeⁱⁱ since the KFL group (labelled “second language learners” in the larger project) were beginners and many lower-ranking participants in this group were not able to produce sustained written discourse. The four KHL learners were those with the most limited exposure to formal education in Korea among those labelled either “background language learners” or “first language learners” in the project. They were deemed to have the least opportunity of the KHL group to develop literacy in Korean and hence the greatest linguistic needs in written Korean. Background information on the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant profile: background information and home language use

Name ^a	Country of Birth (Age on Arrival)	Gender	Education in Korea	L1 before schooling	Korean learning in Australian schools	Home language use (listen; speak; read; write)	
						English	Korean
KFL learners							
Dana	Australia (NA)	F	0	Cantonese	2	All	Listen
Jack	Australia (NA)	M	0	Cantonese	2	All	Listen
Tina	Germany (11)	F	0	Vietnamese	2	All	Listen
Jane	Australia (NA)	F	0	Vietnamese; Cantonese	2	All	Listen
Amy	Philippines (1)	F	0	Vietnamese	2	All	Listen
KHL learners							
Jin	Australia (NA)	M	0	Korean	10	All	Listen; speak; read
Pete	Australia (NA)	M	0	Korean; English	6	All	Speak
Hyun	Korea (9)	M	2	Korean	2	All	All
Hong	Korea (10)	M	3	Korean	7	Read; write	Listen; speak

^a Pseudonyms are used in order to protect participants' identity.

As shown in Table 1, the background of the KFL learners is fairly uniform in terms of their exposure to formal TL learning. They were all in the second year of a beginners' course for Korean in a public high school at the time of data collection. Also, it turned out that their L1 background was either Cantonese or Vietnamese, although L1 background was not considered for their selection. In the KHL learner group, two were born in Australia, and hence had no exposure to education in Korea, while the other two had received 2-3 years' formal education in Korea prior to their arrival in Australia. While these four KHL learners may be classified into two distinct subgroups in terms of birthplace and formal education in Korea, all four had different experiences of learning Korean in Australia--ranging from 2 to 10 years in an after-hours/community language/ethnic school and/or by attending a primary school that taught Koreanⁱⁱⁱ--and were currently attending a Saturday Community Language School. The extent of their current exposure to TL use also differed between the KFL and KHL groups. While all the KFL learners engaged only in listening activities (perhaps involving Korean pop/folk songs^{iv}) outside the Korean class, all four KHL learners show different patterns of home language use. It is noteworthy that Jin, who was born in Australia, reported using three of the four macro-skills in Korean (i.e., with the exception of writing), while Hong, who arrived latest amongst the four, reported using Korean only for listening and speaking). Although gender was not considered in the selection of these participants, most of the participants in the KFL group were girls while all the participants in the KHL group were boys.

TWO WRITING TASKS

The nine participants' responses to writing tasks were drawn from the *SAALE* project. The writing tasks developed for the project consisted of one independent task and one integrated task (for details, see Scarino et al., 2011). The independent task (Task 1) required the participant to write a self-introduction using topics such as name, age, birthday, family, hobbies, sports and pets. In order to assess the ability to produce text according to the discourse/contextual constraints of Korean and give some situational authenticity to the task (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), the participants were instructed to assume that they were applying to join a Korean culture club in Australia. The integrated task (Task 2) required the participant to respond to input material in the form of a blog posted by a Korean student planning to visit Australia during the school holiday. The task had more contextual constraints and participants were required to include both specific information requested by the hypothetical blogger supplemented with as much additional information from the input text (whether related to its content or grammatical features/structures) as they desired.

Of the five categories used for assessment (see Elder et al., this issue), only Forms/Structures and Discourse are considered for the purpose of this paper. Forms/Structures encompass morpho-syntactic elements including grammatical features salient to Korean, such as case-markers, particles, suffixes for various functions, sentence-enders, the SOV word order. The

category Discourse was used to measure the participant's ability to construct the discourse coherently using appropriate cohesive devices at the sentence and text levels (e.g., appropriate use of honorifics and maintaining the level of politeness) and level of awareness of the intended audience and the purpose of the text (e.g., use of appropriate register). Given the discourse-oriented nature of the language, many elements that contribute to the cohesiveness/coherence of Korean discourse are grammatical items such as honorifics and conjunctive suffixes. Details of morpho-syntactic and discourse features considered in the project for assessment purposes are provided in the Appendix (see also Scarino et al., 2011).

DATA ANALYSIS

The emerging patterns in the learner data are explored by considering the language use profile of the selected participants provided in a self-report questionnaire from the *SAALE* project (see Elder et al., this issue) and cross-referencing this information with the morpho-syntactic and discourse features identified in the participants' writing samples. This paper does not attempt a direct performance comparison between the two groups, but instead focuses on the variation within each group.

RESULTS

OVERALL TRENDS

The patterns of performance of the two groups against each assessment category are displayed in Figures 1 and 2. The overall trends emerging from these results are considered below in terms of learner status (i.e., KFL vs. KHL), the performance categories (i.e., Forms/Structures vs. Discourse) and task types (i.e., independent vs. integrated). First, there is a difference between the two groups in the extent of variability: the performance of KHL learners generally displays more variability than that of KFL learners. This is an expected result given the greater variability in the former group's exposure to the TL and language learning experience. Second, within this overall trend, Figures 1 and 2 reveal that, within each group, performance on Discourse is more variable across participants than that on Forms/Structures. This greater variability in Discourse can be explained by the nature of the assessment category Discourse and the linguistic nature of Korean discourse *per se*, which encompasses other lower level linguistic features, including grammatical elements also considered in the category of Forms/Structures. Further scrutiny reveals that, in both groups, each participant's performance on Discourse is less consistent between the two tasks than is the case for Forms/Structures.

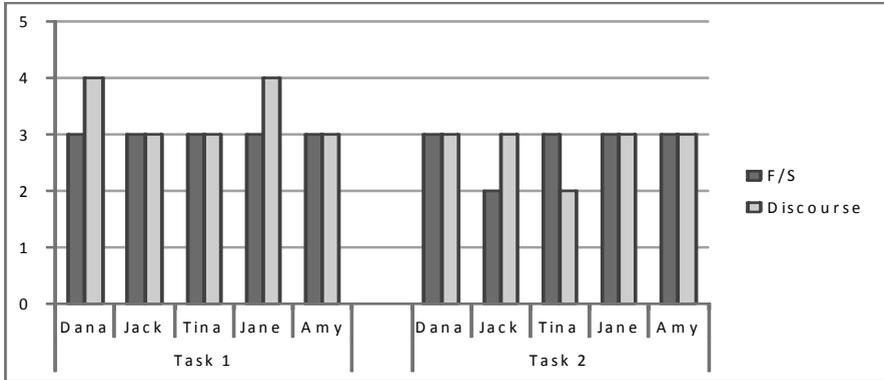


Figure 1. KFL learners' performance on two tasks

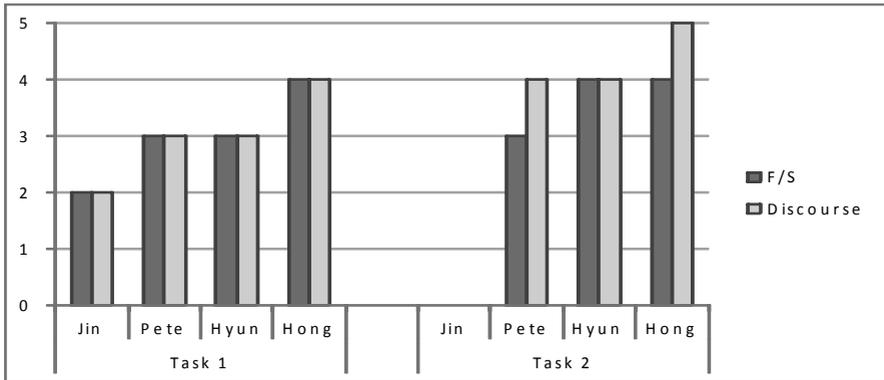


Figure 2. KHL learners' performance on two tasks

The third trend relating to task types involves very different patterns between the two groups. That is, while the individual performance of KFL learners on Forms/Structures was fairly consistent between task types, they generally performed better on Task 1 in terms of Discourse, whereas KHL learners, notwithstanding their generally greater variability compared to KFL learners, performed better on Task 2 on both categories although with a greater variability than on Task 1. In short, the two groups of learners show very different patterns of performance when both the two assessment categories and difference of task types are considered. These patterns are discussed below drawing on the data the participants produced and their language use profile.

THE KFL GROUP

As shown in Figure 1, the KFL group generally performed better on Task 1 than on Task 2 and this tendency is more marked for the Discourse category. Of the two tasks, it is evident Task 1 (a self-introduction) was more familiar to the high-performing KFL learners than Task 2 (a blog response) and allowed them to use in their responses what they had learned for less than two years as beginners. While these students were able to produce familiar well-rehearsed structures in Korean with relative accuracy using basic case markers, particles, suffixes, and sentence-enders in their polite forms, it was beyond their capacity to elaborate grammatical elements to meet discourse-level constraints.

As they produced more or less similar types of sentence using similar grammatical elements for both tasks, there was little variability among participants in terms of the Forms/Structures category. Although they had limited capacity to use grammatical items to address discursial constraints at the textual level, what they could produce within this capacity (i.e., the use of the polite first person pronoun ‘저’ and the polite forms of sentence-enders ‘-아/어요’, ‘-ㅂ/습니다’) was more appropriate for Task 1, which was set in a more formal context. Given the more or less uniform level of ability of this group to use known grammatical elements, additional ability to use linguistic elements with fewer morpho-syntactic constraints—such as conjunctive adverbials (e.g., 그리고, 그래서, etc.) and qualifying adverbs (e.g., 정말로, 아주, etc.)—contributed to enhancing the coherence of their texts while individual differences in this ability led to a greater variation in performance on Discourse than on Forms/Structures (see the Appendix and Scarino et al., 2011, for detailed information of morpho-syntactic and discourse features considered for assessment and student writing samples).

With respect to Task 2, it is evident from their language use profiles that these KFL learners had not had exposure to writing activity of this kind in Korean (see Table 1). They were able to provide information requested by the hypothetical blogger in the input material (such as about the weather in Australia) using the structures and other information provided in the material and already known to them. However, as beginner language learners for whom the classroom was often the only source of TL input, it was beyond their capacity, without rehearsal, to provide such information using cohesive devices appropriately and addressing discursial constraints at a higher level—such as writing in a more casual way. Although they were likely to be aware of this kind of constraint through their experience of using English on the internet, attempts to address these constraints using their knowledge derived from English often undermined what they achieved on this category. For example, although Jack managed to maintain the cohesiveness to a certain degree by consistently using polite endings (“-아/어요” and “-ㅂ/습니다”) for sentence-final verbs, his attempt to close his blog response as he would do in English by writing “안영[sic](bye-INT)^v, 미나 (Mina)” (Bye, Mina) without any honorifics, led to an abrupt change in politeness level resulting in

substantial disruption in cohesiveness. Furthermore, his subsequent use of an unrehearsed grammatical structure borrowed from English grammar in writing “*로부터 (from) 잭 (Jack)”^{vi} (from Jack) had the effect of reducing the overall coherence of the text.

THE KHL GROUP

One of the social variables traditionally considered to have effect on L2 learning and maintenance/attrition in L1 proficiency is education in the home country prior to exposure to an L2 environment (e.g., Cohen, 1989; de Bot & Stoessel, 2000; Hakuta & D’Andrea, 1992; Halmari, 2005). Therefore, it may be assumed that the performance of Australian-born KHL learners will differ from that of Korean-born KHL learners who have received a certain amount of formal education in Korea before arriving in Australia. Of the four KHL learners considered in this paper, Jin and Pete were born in Australia, whereas Hyun and Hong arrived in Australia after 2-3 years’ education in Korea (see Table 1). However, Figure 2 shows very different patterns of performance between Jin and Pete. While Jin scored consistently low on both categories in Task 1 and did not attempt Task 2, Pete’s performance is similar to that of the other two late arrivals with higher scores achieved on Discourse for Task 2. Further scrutiny of their self-report data revealed that, contrary to what might be expected given his lower overall performance, Jin had more formal exposure to Korean and used it for a wider range of functions in the home than Pete did. This requires a further examination of Jin’s case, which is provided below.

As shown in Table 1, Jin had studied Korean in Australian schools for 10 years. While it is not clear whether his Korean study had always taken place in the Saturday community language school he was currently enrolled in or elsewhere, a close examination of Jin’s home language use reveals that writing was the only function for which he did not use Korean at home. This partly explains why he did not attempt Task 2 and why his response to Task 1 was very limited and consisted of short five simple sentences. At a glance, his performance resembles that of beginner FL learners. Although a limited range of grammatical forms were used, he used them accurately while tending to keep to a formal polite ending for each sentence and using the polite form of the first person pronoun referring to himself, which contributed to a certain level of coherence of the short text. However, there was no evidence of more complex forms or the ability to meet higher level discursal requirements, and a colloquial form *-이*꾸요* [be-CONJ. Colloq-POL]^{vii} disrupted the minimum level of coherence which could otherwise have been maintained through the use of honorifics. Furthermore, unlike KFL learners’ response to Task 1 where they tended to keep to Korean script, Jin code-switched to English and used English-like expressions on several occasions in his prose: e.g., “나이는*16입니다” (“[my] age is 16”); “제 생일은*25/03/93이구요” (“my birth date is 25/03/93”). Perhaps the limited emphasis on literacy skills both at home and also in the context of his 10years of Korean learning created the habit of “writing as it sounds or comes to mind” evident at times in his production.

The remaining three KHL learners appeared to have a larger repertoire of forms/structures and greater mastery of discourse devices than Jin. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to Jin, Pete, who was also born in Australia, did not have experience of formal education in Korea and used Korean at home only for speaking, performed almost on a par with Hyun, who had two years' formal education in Korea before arrival. The three KHL learners' better performance on Task 2 as shown in Figure 2 suggests they found informal writing easier than producing a formal text of which they had little experience. Although they might have been less familiar with the kind of context (Korean club application) set for Task 1, they managed to maintain the level of formality and politeness to some degree by using the same strategies as the KFL learners and Jin used. The difference between these three KHL learners and others examined above is that the former tended to use a formal ending -ㅂ/습니다 rather than an informal one -아/어요. The three KHL learners' texts, on the other hand, used a richer array of grammatical forms and other discourse devices such as conjunctives or qualifying adverbs. While it is evident that these KHL learners have more developed skills in grammar and discourse than both the KFL learners and Jin, it is also evident that their learning of some rules is incomplete and/or has fossilised, as shown in several idiosyncratic forms they produced. These, combined with the habit of using speech-like forms in writing similar to what is described for Jin above, interfered at times with the coherence and grammatical accuracy of the (for more information, see descriptions of achievement and annotated exemplars provided in Scarino et al., 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has explored the complex interaction between learner background, discourse features and task types by investigating the writing performance of two distinct types of young learners of Korean in Australia—namely KFL learners and KHL learners. Although the small sample prevented any statistical comparison between groups, there was a trend towards greater variability in performance among the KHL learners with limited opportunities for formal education in TL than among the high-performing KFL beginners, in keeping with the findings of many previous US studies on adult learners of Korean or other languages (Kanno et al., 2008; H.-S. H. Kim, 2008; Montrul, 2011). Underlying this trend is the task familiarity variable that appears to interact with the two aspects of performance—forms and structures, and discourse—differently for each learner group.

With respect to the KFL group, task familiarity contributed to better performance by some individuals and therefore, by the same token, to a greater variability in performance across the learners within the group. However, this applied only to Discourse as their limited mastery of the narrow range of grammatical structures available to them levelled their performance on the two tasks, resulting in less variability in terms of the Forms/Structures

category. Moreover, because what they could produce accurately happened to be more appropriate for the familiar task (Task 1), their Discourse results were also better on this task.

The effects of task familiarity on KHL learners' performance were more complex than was the case for KFL learners. They too generally performed better on Discourse in the task familiar to them (Task 2) and showed little task-specific variation in Forms/Structures regardless of task familiarity. However, in contrast with the KFL learners, there was also variability of performance across participants with respect to Forms/Structures. The KHL learners, with the exception of Jin, had a relatively large repertoire of grammatical elements and discourse devices, presumably as a result of their greater exposure to TL outside the classroom and/or prior education in Korea. Their use of these elements was, however, sometimes incorrect and compounded by errors with other aspects of the TL or their habit of using informal speech-like forms of the TL for writing. When they used these elements to create a text in a familiar context, the selected items were sometimes appropriate from a discourse perspective. However, at other times, because many discourse devices are intertwined with morpho-syntax in Korean, the KHL learners produced idiosyncratic forms that were neither appropriate at the discourse level nor accurate at the morpho-syntax level. In sum, the different environments to which KHL learners have been exposed and the different processes underlying their acquisition of the TL appear to have resulted in more complex and idiosyncratic patterns of performance.

Generalisation of the findings from this study is not warranted given the small sample that does not permit the use of inferential statistics. The limited information about participants (such as affective and socio-economic information) also prevents rich characterizations of the factors potentially contributing to their performance. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the KFL and KHL groups in this study are by no means representative of the respective types of learners in the entire population. Therefore, findings from this study should be applied to other contexts of Korean learning with caution, and it should be taken into account that, in the current study, data from English speakers or speakers of other European languages for the KFL group are absent, while in the KHL group there is no data from those arriving in Australia prior to starting formal education. Nevertheless the findings presented here, tentative as they are, have a number of implications for research on and teaching of language learners from FL and HL backgrounds. With respect to research, the findings from this study point to some difference both in the nature of performance and in language learning needs between the two groups of younger learners in the context of Australian languages education, reiterating previous findings on adult learners of Korean in other contexts (E. J. Kim, 2006; H.-S. H. Kim, 2008). Although the study has provided a fine-grained account of some aspects of this difference, future research should aim for a carefully controlled cross-group comparison with a larger sample of both types of school-age learners.

With respect to teaching, the analysis undertaken for this study allows for a level of elaboration beyond what has been produced in the descriptions of achievement developed for the larger *SAALE* project (Scarino et al., 2011; see also Scarino, this issue and Elder et al., this issue). The more detailed account presented above has implications for how to teach and assess the different types of learners in terms of task familiarity. It emerged from the analysis that limited exposure to different types of task inhibited the performance of both types of learners. We may speculate that the source of difficulty for KFL learners was largely developmental—incomplete learning—whereas for KHL learners the challenges arose from the complex interaction between incomplete learning, fossilisation of orally/implicitly acquired items and attrition (H.-S. H. Kim, 2008; see also Kanno et al., 2008; S. H. O. Kim, 2007; Montrul, 2011). Added to this, KHL learners' habit of "writing as it sounds or comes to mind" appears to have contributed to their difficulties. Given these differences, KFL learners may need more exposure to different types of tasks which require them to respond to discourse requirements by using and further elaborating grammatical elements they have already acquired, whereas the teaching of KHL learners would benefit from a more analytic understanding of their error sources and also from awareness-raising regarding the difference between the language for informal/oral interaction and the language for writing. While the sources of writing difficulty should be approached differently for learners from different backgrounds, both types of learners may benefit from learning the potential consequences of the disruption they displayed at the discourse level. In these regards, the above findings, combined with the broader descriptions of learner achievement provided in the *SAALE* project report (Scarino et al., 2011), offer a useful starting point for teachers not only in understanding the current levels of achievement among Korean learners from different language backgrounds in this particular age group but also in fostering their future language development.

The present study has demonstrated that the prevailing assumption in languages education regarding the "advantages" for language learning of being from an HL background needs to be tempered with reference to data on actual achievements of HL learners. It has shown that experience of formal education (either in the country of origin or through attending an ethnic school in Australia) does not guarantee better achievement in language learning. The apparent struggle in learning shown by a participant who had been learning Korean throughout his schooling in Australia is particularly noteworthy. Given that mother tongue learning is largely confined to learners' homes and their communities and that instruction in ethnic schools varies widely in quality and may have only limited role in mother tongue maintenance (Liddicoat et al., 2007; Pauwels, 2005), there may be many such children who struggle in vain to maintain their mother tongue due to the absence of appropriate attention to their particular learning needs. The resultant language loss represents a lamentable diminution of the language resources of the entire nation.

However, research efforts and teacher commitment is to little avail if they are not supported by policy. Language education policies in Australia have not thus far been highly conducive

to promoting optimal learning among students coming from either FL or HL backgrounds (Clyne, 2006; Elder, 2000; Liddicoat et al., 2007). While “Heritage Language Courses” have recently been implemented in NSW for the four priority Asian languages including Korean at senior secondary level, the success of this isolated initiative is uncertain given confusion about who qualifies as heritage language learner, the lack of incentive to self-identify as such (Elder, 1996, 2000), the absence of sustained funding to support the implementation of such initiatives (Lo Bianco, 2005), and the volatile situation for Korean education at lower levels of schooling (Shin, 2010).

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APPENDIX

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR FORMS/STRUCTURES AND DISCOURSE (SAALE YEAR 10 WRITING—KOREAN) (Scarino et al., pp. 341-344)

FORMS/STRUCTURES (FOR BOTH TASKS 1 AND 2)

Mark Examples

- 5 An extensive range of structures used to express/elaborate some complex ideas.
- 4 A good range of structures used with some errors. Use of some of the following items: connectives (e.g., -고, -아/어서, etc.); auxiliary verbs (e.g., -고 싶다, -러 가다, etc.); honorific forms of particles (e.g., -께서) and/or verbs (e.g., 계세요, 하세요); complex sentence structure; adjectival form of descriptive verbs (e.g., 예쁜); relative construction (verb stem + 은/는).
- 3 A good range of structures is used with some errors. Basic structures are used correctly. Use of verbs (e.g., come, go, like, have, etc.). Use of basic particles (e.g., -은/는, -이/가, -을/를, -와/과(-하고)) The basic word order is observed.
- 2 Limited use of forms. Noun/adjectives + copula, simple verbs. Some sentence enders and/or particles are missing.
- 1 Very limited use of forms and short simple sentence (e.g., Noun + Copula—12살이에요.).
- 0 No response. No sentence. A few words.

DISCOURSE (TASK 1)

Mark Description

- 5 Ideas developed/elaborated coherently across all topics required using a range of cohesive devices at sentence and text level (e.g., use of conjunctives such as 그런데, 그리고, -지만, -아/어서, -고, etc.; agreement in the use of honorifics; consistency in the level of politeness and formality.). Use of appropriate register with awareness of the intended audience and the purpose of the text.
- 4 Development of ideas is sound with some cohesive devices at sentence and text level. Some inconsistency in the use of honorifics and/or the level of politeness/formality. Some evidence of awareness of the intended audience and the purpose of the text.
- 3 Ideas sequenced adequately with some attempts to use cohesive devices
- 2 Ideas isolated at the sentence level across the text.

- 1 One single sentence or some phrasal/lexical items.
0 No response/Insufficient evidence

DISCOURSE (TASK 2)

Mark Description

- 5 Ideas developed /elaborated coherently across all topics required using a range of cohesive devices at sentence and text level (e.g., use of conjunctives such as *그런데*, *그리고*, *-지만*, *-아/어서*, etc.; consistency in the level of politeness and formality.). Use of appropriate register; awareness of the intended audience and the purpose of the text (blog—use of colloquial forms).
- 4 Development of ideas is sound with some cohesive devices at sentence and text level. Some inconsistency in the level of politeness/formality. Some evidence of awareness of the intended audience and the purpose of the text.
- 3 Ideas sequenced adequately with some attempts to use cohesive devices
- 2 Ideas isolated at the sentence level across the text.
- 1 One single sentence or some phrasal/lexical items.
- 0 No response. Insufficient evidence.

ENDNOTES

- i While a three-way distinction has been adopted for learner groupings in the SAAL project with various learner variables taken into account as described in Elder (this issue), for the purpose of this paper, learners are distinguished only in terms of their two distinct learning contexts, with the basic meanings of the “foreign” language—the language “foreign” to its learners-- and the “heritage” language--the language of the learners’ country of origin, which they are not currently residing in.
- ii See Elder et al. (this issue) for the process taken for the decision of proficiency levels.
- iii For the types of language programs offered in Australian schools, see Scarino et al. (2011; see also Liddicoat et al., 2007).
- iv This is based on the content of the written texts produced by the four participants in this group—three stated that they liked Korean music/songs and one that she did Taekwondo—a Korean marshal art.
- v There is also a spelling mistake here and the correct form of this is “안녕”; INT stands for the “intimate speech level”.
- vi The correct form of this phrase should be: “잭(Jack)으로부터(from)”.
- vii CONJ= Conjunctive suffix; Colloq = Colloquial form; POL = Polite form.