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PUSHING PAST THE PLATEAU: A DIARY STUDY OF A NOT QUITE

INTERMEDIATE KOREAN LANGUAGE LEARNER

by

Jonathan D. Wilson

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When I first came to Korea seven years ago, I was excited to learn the language, and studying and practicing the language socially was one of my main pastimes. However, as one year in Korea became two and two became six, my study habits, motivation to learn, and my language progress all petered to a near halt. I could attribute this to multiple situational factors, but the overall transition could be generalized as this: the young graduate embarking on an adventure on the other side of the world, excited to learn the language, make new friends and be immersed in the culture became an older man, an owner of a retail shop in Korea, settled in his routine, satisfied with his circle of expat friends, and comfortable navigating the familiar surroundings of his now not-so-foreign home away from home—in short, a fossilized expat in Korea. My linguistic fossilization seems just a natural extension of the more general stabilization or stagnation of my lifestyle and identity here in my second home of Korea. But I am still relatively young and energetic and am ready to start exercising my universal grammar muscles again. I kept telling myself that I would begin studying again after I finish my degree, and now it seems a perfect chance to do both at the same time by focusing on the process of "pushing past the plateau" for my capstone research. This chapter explains the background and motivations of the researcher and introduces some of the topics relevant to this study.

Fossilization is a term that has been thrown around a lot as a catch-all for cessation of progress, but as discussed in the next chapter, it is a controversial term and may not be applicable in my case. Further, as a learner, the analogy to million-year-old, harder-than-stone dinosaur bones is less than encouraging. On these grounds, I have chosen to adopt the more colloquial term *plateau* and the more technical term *stabilization* (discussed in chapter 2) and use them interchangeably. However, I will continue to use the term fossilize when appropriate, to refer to a more permanent state.

To me, plateau paints a positive analogy of language learning as a journey up a mountain, with periods of steep accent gained through concerted effort, followed by periods of relative ease or rest. There is a large body of research in general psychology concerning *memory consolidation* (e.g., Dudai, 2004), a process in which newly acquired, unstable information is stabilized, enhanced, and integrated into a more stable, permanent memory (Stickgold, Hobson, Fosse & Fosse, 2001). This is seen as an "off-line" form of processing that occurs while the mind is no longer consciously focusing on the new information or task but engaged in other activities or at rest—especially during sleep.

Having not studied actively for several years, I had plenty of time to integrate what I had previously learned and become very familiar with the terrain. Though my ability was quite limited, and Korean was in many ways still a very foreign language, in other ways, my own personal interlanguage (IL) was very comfortable and familiar to me. The question then became, could I leave the comfort and familiarity of my IL, to push past my plateau?

Motivation for this Study

One motivation for this study was that plateauing seems to be a very common experience. Many of the people I know and work with here in Korea have a similar story as mine: They embarked on their teaching abroad adventure with high interest in learning the language, but most learned no more that the basic survival phrases they need to get around. Some, who were more committed in their study, got to a conversational level, but very few people I know have reached advanced levels, let alone near-native ability.

Another motivation for this study was the simple and obvious fact that I live here and am a language teacher. My original plan was to come to Korea and teach for a year, then go back home. At first, it was easy to be neither a good language teacher nor good at the Korean language. Originally, any modest attempts at using Korean were met with surprise and praise: "Oh, you speak Korean so well" people would say. However as time went on, and my status here began to morph into one less transitory, expectations accordingly changed, "Oh, you've been here six years; you must speak Korean very well." to which I must admit, "No, not that well." However, mostly it was my own expectations. As my time here stretched on and teaching became a profession, I felt that my ability to understand my students and the language of my host country must also progress.

The Plateau: Climbing and Resting

Plateauing is a useful metaphor as it describes an experience that seems to be universal to all learning endeavors, growth, and life in general. In this section, I describe

my background situation, potential factors that may have contributed to my language

stabilization, and my language learning background.

<u>Background and Factors Surrounding Language Stabilization</u>

After living in Korea for three years, I went back to America for a year to start

my degree. When I decided to return to Korea, I became excited to continue studying

Korean. However, after a couple months, I did not seem to be making visible gains. I

felt I was putting the time and the effort in, but that the language wasn't sticking; I didn't

seem to be progressing. I had packed up camp and headed for the peak, but the view

didn't seem to be changing. Then, because I was working on my degree and teaching

full-time, I stopped studying.

Besides these situational factors, a changing orientation toward Korea and my

identity in it seemed to play a role in my stabilization. On my return trip to Korea, the

culture and people were no longer so fresh and interesting, and my orientation as a

curious visitor—getting to know the people and language—began to change, and my

identity as an expat—living *in*, but not *of* my adopted country—began to take hold.

Finally, my motivations for learning the language have no doubt undergone significant

changes over the course of my time here, and this was likely a significant factor in my

language stabilization.

<u>Language Learning Background</u>

In accord with diary study procedures as outlined by Bailey and Oschner (1983), this

section presents an account of the learner's personal language learning history. In high

school I took two years of Spanish to fulfill the language requirements for university

entrance. I gained a more personal interest because my family ended up hosting an exchange student from Spain. After one year of Spanish class, I went to Spain for the summer to stay with him. I don't recall speaking much Spanish then, but I'm sure it gave me a lot of exposure, more interest, and a handful of swear words.

I had no classes or further exposure to Spanish in college, but after graduating I was able to use Spanish on a trip through Central America. I tried to brush up on my Spanish before I left, and ended up feeling pretty good about my ability to understand and be understood in basic survival situations during my trip. From my experience with Spanish, I felt I was a capable language learner, but I never made it past a certain beginner-level barrier. I always felt on the "outside" of the language looking in. For example, I could never understand much of a conversation in a Spanish film—just fragments of recognizable words here and there.

My motivation for studying Korean was different. I had a strong intrinsic interest in the language and language learning process, as well as a strong integrative motivation to immerse myself in the culture. I was excited to learn the alphabet and a few of the most basic words and grammar structures before going to Korea. When I arrived, my mind was prepared to absorb the language that surrounded me—reading signs, looking up words in my dictionary, trying out survival phrases in daily life, and sending text messages to friends in Korean.

However, listening comprehension was a long, slow progression. Those wonderful cognates in Spanish and other European languages—not fully comprehensible, but comfortably familiar—are entirely absent in Korean (though, a prevalence of English

loan words is one source of accessibility). As with Spanish, I had never made it past that barrier of feeling outside the language. A conversation between strangers next to me in a coffee shop was mostly incomprehensible. However, in my own exchanges, because of the understood context, I couuld usually follow pretty well, despite large gaps.

My general learning method was to learn vocabulary, grammar structures, or set phrases and commit them to memory with flash cards—being sure to try to use them in real-world situations as much as possible. Once the pattern was well in my head, I could extend it to new situations. I enjoyed this style of learning, and looked forward to studying during any bits of free time on the subway or at coffee shops on the weekend.

At the outset of this study, based on the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012* (Swender, Conrad, & Vicars, 2012), I judged my Korean speaking and listening ability to be at the "Novice High" or "Intermediate Low" level. Borrowing words from the guidelines, I could use the language to accomplish uncomplicated tasks and conversation on familiar topics related to personal information, daily activities, preferences, and common survival situations. I relied heavily on combining and recombining what I knew and heard from my interlocutors to get my point across. I used short discrete statements and questions that included frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections, and which may have been filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies. I was usually able to get my point across, possibly after some reformulation or circumlocution (p. 8). My listening ability was quite limited except for situations in which the context was familiar or clear. Even then, there may have been large gaps in my understanding, but I felt that I could adequately navigate interactions by guessing meanings, eliciting

restatements or glossing over what I thought was not important. I believed that due to my limited amount of formal study but ample real-world practice, my productive vocabulary size was at the novice level, and my actual communicative ability closer to intermediate level. Though I believe reading and writing skills are important, my overall language learning goals were primarily oral communication, so unless otherwise stated that is the general focus of this study.

Prior to this study, I had had a long period of rest with continued exposure to the language. During this time, I didn't have many in-depth interactions in Korean, but I used and was exposed to the language every day. My experience convinced me that without explicit study and practice, my Korean ability would improve very little. I felt that explicit practice was necessary to improve, and in assessing my own language needs, vocabulary acquisition seemed to be of primary importance going into this study.

I was very interested in Jones's (1994, 1995) proposition that once a core vocabulary of about 2,000 "word families" (a cluster of words with the same lexical root-e.g. simple, simplify, simplicity, etc.) has been gained, through studial (textbook-centered) strategies, authentic materials become accessible sources of input. This is not a new idea. Browne, Culligan, and Phillips (2013) estimate that their list of 2,683 high frequency word families cover 92% of general English texts. Hirsh and Nation (1992) in looking at the amount of vocabulary needed for pleasurable reading of novels, substantiated that the most frequent 2,000 word families would cover 90-95% of an average unsimplified text, but concluded that this is not enough for pleasurable reading and concluded that a vocabulary size of 5,000 of the most common word families was the

threshold for pleasurable reading of a novel leveled for teenagers, giving 98-99%

coverage.

Assuming that similar numbers will carry over into Korean, I decided to

investigate my Korean vocabulary size. Based on a list of the 6,000 most common

Korean words (National Institute of Korean Language, n.d.), I estimated that I knew

approximately 2,700 out of the 6,000 words and that my vocabulary size was between

3,000-5,000 words (see Appendix A) if words not found on the list are included.

Though a vocabulary of 3,000 words seems substantial and should get one in the

range to access over 90% of common spoken and written language, from my experience,

I did not seem to be close to that. A children's picture book would have been a real

challenge for me, and a Korean movie, novel or newspaper, would have been mostly

inaccessible. This mismatch suggested to me that there were large gaps in either the

breadth or the depth of my basic vocabulary, and it was hoped that this study could shed

some light on this.

<div align="center">Guiding Questions & Summary</div>

The purpose of this study was to explore self-directed language learning in the

naturalistic immersion environment of my host country, Korea. I had lived and taught

English in Korea for six years and acquired the language to a level that let me

comfortably navigate my daily life. However, my language learning had stabilized for

several years and seemed in danger of permanent fossilization. With this in mind, I

wanted to explore the process of getting back into language learning and moving beyond

my plateau to benefit my own language learning as well as my ability to help my students

improve their language learning. My primary guiding question was What factors are important in my language learning experience? with a more specific focus on how to move past my plateau and transition from the beginner to intermediate level. I kept a diary to record my ongoing experience learning Korean and factors important to language learning as they emerged over the course of the study. My hope was to provide insight for other language learners and add to the body of research in this area of second language acquisition (SLA).

Chapter Overviews

In this chapter, I explained my motivations for this study, described my background and the context surrounding it, and introduced some of the topics relevant to this study. Chapter two reviews the literature relevant to this study and identifies gaps in the existing literature. Chapter three outlines the diary study research design and methodology of this study, as well as specifics of the language learning plan and methods of assessment used over the course of the study. Chapter four presents the results of the study, describing how the research plan unfolded, extracting themes from the diary entries, and revisiting the research questions in light of the data collected. Chapter five concludes by summarizing the major findings, discussing implications and limitations of the study, and making suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore self-directed language learning in the naturalistic immersion environment of my host country, Korea. I wanted to learn about the experience of moving beyond my plateau and transitioning from the beginner to intermediate level.

In this chapter, I review literature related to several SLA topics relevant to the present research including fossilization, motivation, acculturation, identity, and independent language learning. I then give an overview of some significant and relevant existing diary studies. I conclude by arguing for the need for more diary studies that probe into the specifics of the individual language learner's experience, and positioning this study within the existing body of research.

Fossilization and Stabilization

Fossilization

The present study was motivated by the author's stagnated L2 learning, which raises the topic of fossilization. In Selinker's seminal paper (1972) he coined several terms that have become cornerstones of the field of SLA, chief among them *interlanguage* and *fossilization*.

Interlanguage can be conceptualized as a changing bridge between the first language (L1) and the target language (TL): a personal pidgin that borrows from both L1

and TL yet has elements found in neither. Interlanguage begins with learners' knowledge of their LI and continually evolves until, ideally, it matches the TL as used by its native speakers.

However Selinker (1972) estimated that only about 5% of adult language learners reach the the level of near-nativeness. Though this figure has been debated and never substantiated, it is often quoted in the general recognition that adult learners fail to reach native proficiency far more often than they succeed (Han, 2004a). To account for this, Selinker (1972) proposed the concept of *fossilization*, which can generally be defined as the phenomenon in which a leaner's interlanguage and/or specific aspects of it cease to develop despite positive motivation, opportunity and exposure to the language.

Fossilization has been observed to exist on a *global* scale, in which an individual's entire IL ceases development, or on a *local* level, in which a particular feature or features fossilize while others continue to develop (Han , 2004b). Further, fossilization can manifest in all aspects of language competence, for example, phonological, morphological, syntactic, or semantic (Wei, 2008).

Causal Explanations

A wide range of explanations for the causes of fossilization have been suggested by numerous researchers in this field. Han (2004b) categorizes proposed explanations into the following categories: external, environmental factors and internal, cognitive, neuro-biological, and socio-affective factors. A few of the explanations more relevant to the present study are mentioned here.

Environmental factors, such as the absence of instruction or corrective feedback are notions commonly held by language learners and instructors alike. Though modern communicative teaching methods have generally moved away from overuse of corrective feedback, some researchers (e.g., Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Valette, 1991; Vigil & Oller, 1976), maintain the common view that a lack of correction can result in fossilization of incorrect forms.

To the extent that fossilization is a phenomenon of adult SLA in contrast to L1 and childhood L2 acquisition, many researchers have focused on cognitive and neuro-biological explanations, especially related to potential maturational constraints of age. For example, Schachter (1996) suggest that adults lose access to the *universal grammar* mechanism, while others take a less strict stance, saying adults do not lose access to universal grammar, but may fail to reset certain parameters (Eubank,1995). Similar to this view is the view that we lose sensitivity to language data with age (Schnitzer, 1993), or that there is a decrease of cerebral plasticity for implicit acquisition (Paradis, 1994). A final line of thinking is that a host of L1 influences negatively impact L2 acquisition, including the idea that the neural entrenchment of the L1 resists restructuring for the L2 (Ellis, 2002 as cited in Han, 2004b).

Finally, a number of socio-affective factors have been indicated in the literature. Several (Higgs & Clifford, 1982) have pointed out that in situations of authentic communication, there is a natural tendency to utilize various communication strategies to overcome shortcomings in L2 ability, and that successful use of these strategies may have the unfortunate result of actually inhibiting acquisition. Similarly, a number of

researchers (Corder, 1978; Ellis, 1985; Selinker & Lamendella, 1978; Schumann, 1978b) agree that a frequent contributor to fossilization is the satisfaction of one's communicative needs. In other words, when most of one's basic needs for the L2 have been met, many learners will have no motivation to continue developing further, and their IL will fossilize. Klein (1986) further hypothesizes that some learners may even be aware of non-target forms in their IL, but make no attempt to modify them because they and adequately serve their needs. In Schumann's acculturation model (1978b, 1986) learner's social and psychological distance from the L2 culture is tied to their acquisition of the language, and fossilized language forms are closely linked with a cessation of acculturation.. Preston (1989) shares Schumann's view and further distinguishes a sociolinguistic factor in which the learners' will to maintain their native identity leads to a deliberate failure to progress at the L2.

Debate

Despite the ubiquity of the term fossilization in the field of SLA, its theoretical position, scope, and even its definition remain unclear. This phenomenon has been referred to by other names: *plateau*, *fossilized variations*, *permanent optionality*, *endstate*, *incompleteness* and so forth (Han, 2004a) but *fossilization* is the term that stuck and is most widely used. Selinker's own definition has changed over time. His original conception of fossilization (1972), focused on individual fossilized structures (i.e., linguistic items, rules, etc.) that are persistent and resistant to change. Later his view widened to a global and permanent cessation of learning (Selinker,1978), and then still more to an inevitable and global cessation of learning among all adult language learners

(Selinker 1996 as cited in Han, 2004a, p. 216). Besides Selinker's various definitions, variations abound in the literature. Lowther (1983), characterizes fossilization as the "*inability* [emphasis added] of a person to attain native-like ability in the target language" (p. 127). The most common notion is that fossilization refers only to non-target-like forms; however, some (Ellis, 1985; Vigil & Oller, 1976) suggest that *target-like* structures as well as non-target structures can undergo fossilization. In other words, correct language forms can fossilize too.

Long (2003) talks at length about the ambiguities of definition and methodology in the fossilization literature, and points out that a major unresolved discrepancy is that fossilization is sometimes used as *explanandum* (the phenomenon to be explained), sometimes *explanans* (the explanation for the phenomenon), and sometimes both. Han (2004a) sums up the central issues of conceptual diversity that have emerged: (a) whether fossilization is global or local; (b) whether L2 ultimate attainment is isomorphic with fossilization; (c) whether fossilization is a product or a process; (d) whether stabilization and fossilization are synonymous; and (e) Should empirical studies of fossilization span five years or more? (p. 204)

This discussion may be of theoretical interest, but may not be of practical importance to the educator or language learner. Yet, the phenomenon of fossilization (i.e., cessation of further progress) is of primary importance for any language learner, whether it occurs in a formal educational setting or informal independent learning. The literature indicates that almost every language learner will experience fossilization at

some stage in their learning. However, maybe the idea of fossilization as permanent

cessation is less useful to the learner than the more familiar idea of plateaus in a journey.

Stabilization

  Stabilization, a term first proposed by Schumann (1978b) and used by Selinker

(1993), is distinguished from fossilization by describing a *temporary* stalling of learning.

If a learner's interlanguage is stabilized long enough, it can be described as a more

permanent fossilization. As such, stabilization and fossilization can be seen stages along

the same process with stabilization being a precursor to fossilization. As Long (2003)

points out, stabilization is an observable and largely uncontroversial phenomenon;

however, fossilization is essentially an untestable proposition. First, after how long does

stabilization become fossilization? Five years has often been cited, but this and any other

threshold seem arbitrary. Second, in order to observe and confirm the phenomenon of

fossilization, in theory, one would need to observe a stabilized language structure until

the learner's death to be sure destabilization did not occur (Jung, 2002).

  Though Long (2003) does not deny the possible reality of fossilization, he

concludes that fossilization, as a theory, is beset with methodological difficulties and that

researchers would do better to focus on the phenomenon of stabilization as a more fruitful

avenue of inquiry. Following this position, my use of the more metaphorically evocative

term *plateau* should be seen as equivalent to the term stabilization which is more

common in the SLA literature.

Preventing and Overcoming Plateau

Though much has been written about fossilization/stabilization, the focus has largely been on describing, defining, and explaining the symptoms, but little has focused on preventing or overcoming language fossilization/stabilization.

Valette (1991) argues that a significant factor in fossilization is inaccurate input and uncorrected output at early stages of instruction and therefore it is critical to providing accurate and appropriate input at these stages. This agrees with Higgs and Clifford (1982) and Nord's (1998) contention that the focus placed on communication over accuracy may do more harm than good. Nord (1998) calls for careful and systematic exposure to listening input, and Higgs and Clifford (1982) propose an output hypothesis analogous to Krashen's (1982, 1985) input hypothesis, stating that communicative tasks should be leveled just above student's ability to avoid too many inventive communicative strategies that can lead to fossilized inaccuracies.

More pertinent to the current study is research that looks at overcoming stabilization once it has set in. Richards (2008) provides some detailed suggestions for how to do this particularly for learners plateaued at the intermediate level. Some of his suggestions include the need for learners to add more complex language to their repertoire, to learn to monitor their own language and to notice the gap between their own language and that of more advanced users, and continue to develop their vocabulary in the 5,000 to 6,000 word range. Richards also suggests that classroom environments should seek to incorporate more explicit treatment of grammar, focus on form activities to raise consciousness about grammatical features of input or output, and activities that

require learners to expand and restructure their grammatical system through increased communicative demands.   Johnson (1992) outlines a procedure that she calls the "Tennis Clinic Strategy" in which students are led to identify personal needs while the teacher acts as a coach giving guidance on those specific needs.

In focusing on fossilized pronunciation, Acton (1984) outlines an approach and method to help otherwise proficient users of English as an L2. This somewhat unorthodox multidisciplinary approach relies heavily on modifying rigid beliefs and ideas of self that may stand in the way of change.

<div align="center">Motivation, Acculturation and Identity</div>

<u>Motivation</u>

Motivation has been a major topic in SLA for five decades. Much of the foundation for the study of motivation in SLA was laid by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Their work argued that motivation was a significant variable of language learning success, independent of ability or aptitude. Furthermore they theorized that the motivation to learn a language is distinct from other types of learning motivation by a number of social-psychological factors. Language learners are not just expected to acquire knowledge about the language but to identify with the target language community, the culture, and its distinct behaviors of speech and interaction. As such, learners' attitudes toward the target language community will greatly influence their degree of success at learning the language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed two motivational orientations that have proved to be seminal in the field of SLA *integrative motivation* and *instrumental motivation.*

Integrative motivation refers to the degree of one's desire to integrate with the target language community; for example, interact with, become similar to, and be accepted among members of the community. Instrumental motivation is related to the practical benefits that might be gained by learning the language, such as wanting language for educational, economic, or other benefits.

<u>Alternate Approaches</u>

Of these two, the integrative construct is the most influential and most specific to the field of SLA. While it remains widely cited, it has fallen out of the spotlight of research in the past few decades, being replaced by alternate or more inclusive theories. In the 1980s the focus of research shifted to cognitive perspectives on motivation. Possibly the most influential approaches to emerge from this time are *Self-determination theory* (Deci & Ryan, 1985), *Attribution theory* (Weiner, 1992).

Others have directly challenged the viability of the concept of integrative motivation and as Dörnyei (2009) points out, SLA motivation is being "radically reconceptualized" (p. 1) in light of the the increasingly complex context of globalized English, world Englishes, and widespread bilingualism. Dörnyei (1990) argues that the term *integrativeness* may not make sense in contexts where no target language community is present and where there is no real or even potential integration involved, citing Chinese learners studying English as a school subject in mainland China as an example. As English speakers becomes a more global, abstract community, for many, it may not be meaningful to consider English acquisition akin to membership in an *external* community, but rather, an *internal* representation of oneself (Ushioda, 2006). This has

lead to a currently popular movement to discuss SLA motivation in terms of *possible selves* and the related *ideal self* and *ought-to self* (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009; Higgins, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986)

Acculturation Model

For many English language learners, the importance of integrative motivation in a globalized context has become complex, possibly untenable (as previously discussed). However, for many others living within the target language community, this concept is still a salient issue, especially when the target language *is* closely linked to a definable community and culture, as is my situation in Korea. The significance of the language learner's relation to the TL community is the focus of Schumann's (1978a; 1986) *acculturation model*, another historically important social-psychological model of SLA motivation.

Similar to the integrative orientation, the basic premise of the acculturation model is that learners' success will be proportional to the degree to which they *acculturate* with the L2 community; in other words, the degree to which they are willing to modify their attitudes, knowledge, and behavior towards the L2 community. According to this model, the degree of acculturation is dependent on the degree of *social distance* and *psychological distance*.

Identity and Investment

One more take on motivation is worth noting, as it probes deeper into the complexity of the individual's orientation to the culture and society of their target language. Based on a longitudinal study of five immigrant women living in a dominant

L2 setting (Canada), Peirce (1995) argued for a reconceptualization of the individual in SLA. Closely observing how and under what conditions these immigrant women created, responded to, and/or resisted opportunities to speak English, Peirce observed how inequitable power relationships affect interactions between learners and target language speakers, and she introduced the concept of *investment* as an alternative to integrative or instrumental motivation. She argues that this conceptualization more accurately reflects how a learner's identity and motivations are not fixed attributes, but ever changing and include a complex social history and multiple desires. As such, learners will invest more or less effort into acquiring the L2 based on perceived returns, social or situational factors, and a fluid identity.

<div align="center">Independent Language Learning</div>

With globalization and the increasing ability for people to travel and live all over the world come the need for many individuals to learn new languages that may not have been part of their original formal education. For a variety of reasons, many of these individuals choose or have no other option but to learn a language on their own, without the guidance of a teacher or classroom setting. However, for many, language learning is not intuitive, there is often confusion about how to proceed at learning a language, and there are few resources available to guide the independent learner.

<u>Independent Language Learning, Autonomy and Self Direction</u>

Over the past decades, language education has experienced a shift away from the teacher's role and onto student-centered learning. One outcome of this focus on the student's role in education is independent language learning (ILL) and the related

concepts of learner autonomy and self-direction which became active areas of discussion in SLA in the late 1970s (e.g., Dickinson, 1979; Holec, 1979, 1981). Independent learning is generally based on the philosophy that each learner best knows what he or she needs and if given some control over the direction and method of learning will be more motivated and learn more efficiently. Little (n.d.) suggests a further rationale specific to language learning. As the complex procedural knowledge needed for successful spontaneous communication can be developed only through using the language, a degree of autonomy will aid the learner in seeking out opportunities for real-life language interactions.

In the literature, there seems to be a lack of consensus as to the relationship between independence and autonomy. Lamb and Reinders (2006) even state that a definitive definition of either ILL or autonomy is impossible and White (2008) point out that the two terms are often used as synonyms or near synonyms. However, the distinction between autonomy and self-direction seems to be clearer. As described by Holec (1985), autonomy is the capacity or potential to successfully conduct one's own language learning, while self-direction refers to the skills or knowledge of how to realize that potential.

Autonomy is essentially an ideal state in which autonomous learners have the will, means, and ability to carry out their learning independent of outside direction. Considering the increasing diversity of learning contexts (e.g., continuing education, self-access, distance learning, and online learning) the creation of autonomous learners has become increasingly important. In order to realize this ideal state of autonomy, learners

need some skills and knowledge of how to direct their own learning: Learners need to be able to define and adjust intermediate as well as ultimate objectives; select appropriate and motivating content; indentify available materials and select those most appropriate; choose the best time and place for learning; and self-assess the language acquisition and the learning program itself, and make appropriate adjusts to the program (Holec, 1985). .

<u>Self-Access Learning and Self-Access Centers</u>

Attempts at creating learner autonomy have most often been through the implementation of self-access resource centers, which began appearing at various institutions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. (Benson & Voller, 1997). Generally, these centers are in essence language focused libraries, in which students have access to a wide variety of resources ranging from language dictionaries to photocopied exercises to multi-media listening practice to supporting tutors or advisors. Though self-access centers generally have autonomous learning as their philosophical underpinning, they do not automatically translate to self-directed learning, and may often be used as resource centers for teacher-direct work (Reinders, 2000, p. 17). Gremmo and Riley (1995) point out that the major challenge to the success of these centers is in providing adequate learner-training.

Similarly, the aim of self-directed learning in general is hardly a laissez faire "let the students do what they want" approach; as Holec (1985) points out, learners are often not innately good at directing their own learning, and need to "learn how to learn" (p. 182). As such, most of the literature in this area is directed at researchers or educators, with the aim of helping teachers and administrators foster more autonomous learners and

educational environments.   However, for me and others learning a language truly

independent of teacher or classroom, these resources are often too theoretical or academic

to provide much practical direction in the language learning process.

Successful Language Learners and Learning Strategies

One vein of research related to ILL which is of more direct practical value to the

independent learner, is the investigation of the strategies utilized by learners in ILL

situations. An example of one such study is Rowsell and Libben's (1994) investigation of

ILLs and their independent learning behaviors outside the classroom environment, in

particular how they got communicative practice in isolation. Rowsell and Libben found

that high achievers used more of what they termed *communication making* and *content

making* activities; for example, they created imaginary partners or settings to converse

with and in so doing treated language as a tool of communication rather than just a

subject to be memorized.

Cognitive learning strategies. Such research naturally leads to the question of

what distinguishes successful learners from less successful ones. This is the focus of

Rubin's (1975) study in which Rubin states that good language learning depends on three

variables: aptitude, motivation and opportunity. Similar to Rowsell and Libben (1994),

she concludes that if any of these variables is lacking, a good learner will utilize cognitive

strategies to compensate. Rubin identified a number of these good language learner

strategies, such as being a willing and accurate guesser, having a strong drive to

communicate, and looking for opportunities to practice the language. More recently there

have been a number of attempts at developing more comprehensive lists of such

strategies, notably O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) list of cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies and Oxford's (1990) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL). .

       <u>Different learning styles</u>. Stevick (1989) also focused on the variety of strategies and tactics used by a number of successful learners. His book highlights that learners' various learning styles influence their preferred strategies and that what works for one may not be suitable to another's learning style. These lists of good-learner strategies can be quite useful for the would-be ILL, but still more direction is needed.

<u>Guides for the Independent Learner</u>

       <u>Language specific materials</u>. In the absence of the structure provided by a class or teacher, independent language learners generally need some sort of direction. Most commonly an independent learner will go to the published materials available for their respective TL, for example grammars, dictionaries, phrasebooks, and audio CDs. These are certainly invaluable resources for most ILLs, but are still limited. First, in the case of less commonly learned languages, published materials may be scarce or limited in selection. Second, many for-sale materials may make large claims about their speed and efficacy; however, it is unlikely any single reference or system can successfully guide a learner from beginning to advanced or even intermediate ability. Further, from the array of materials available, knowing which materials to choose and how to appropriately utilize them can be challenging for an inexperienced language learner. There is still the need for information that can help the learner become an autonomous learner, to describe the ins and outs and stages of language learning in general, prepare them for the

challenges and pitfalls that may come, and suggest useful strategies, methods, and resources.

General language learning guides. The body of academic literature on SLA is too large and conflicting for most would-be learners to wade through and draw useful conclusions from. There are a few published books that aim to describe the language learning process to general readership, for example, Rubin and Thompson's book, *How to be a More Successful Language Learner* (1994), which is more grounded in academic research but possibly short on nuts and bolts strategies. Conversely, *How to Learn a Foreign Language* (Fuller, 1987) is a more entertaining read, but anecdotal and lacking in research-based backing. Other examples include Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Farber (1991), Lewis (1999), and Pimsleur (1980).

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) resources. Computer technology is becoming an invaluable tool for ILL, allowing easy access to a growing number of free and paid resources available as computer software, online applications or smartphone apps. Often these do little more than replicate conventional hard copy materials (e.g., dictionaries and phrasebooks); however, others provide capabilities unique to the electronic medium. A few notable examples include the following:

- Social networking sites. These sites allow language learners from around the world to come together and get help from native speakers of their respective TLs. Examples include *Livemocha* (http://livemocha.com/), *Lang-8* (http://lang-8.com/), and *Rhinospike* (https://rhinospike.com/).

- Text-based vocabulary trackers. These applications allow you to find or input your own texts from your respective TL. They provide unique features to highlight and track words as either newly encountered, well known, or partially known. Examples of these applications include *LingQ* (http://www.lingq.com/) and *Learning with Texts* (http://lwt.sourceforge.net/).

- Spaced repetition software (SRS). These are essentially electronic-based upgrades of traditional flashcards, but use an algorithm to optimize memorization by increasing the intervals of time between subsequent review of previously learned material. Also many of these applications allow flashcard data to be audio or image files. Examples include *Anki* (http://ankisrs.net/), *Mnemosyne* (http://mnemosyne-proj.org/), and *SuperMemo* (http://www.supermemo.com/)

- Multimedia. There are many online sources for language-specific multimedia, such as subtitles for movies and TV shows, transcripts for movies and shows, audio podcasts, videos, news articles, cartoons, and games.

- *VELA*. Another interesting computer-based resource aimed directly at the Independent learner is the system is known as the Virtual English Language Advisor (VELA). Developed at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in conjunction with over a dozen other universities, VELA is an interactive online system that aims to give individualized advice to learners based on their specific needs, preferences, abilities and objectives (Oxford, 2008). The obvious short-coming of this system is that it is specific to English language

learning, however if found successful, it could conceivably be replicated in other languages.

<u>The Growing Participator Approach</u>

One very promising development in ILL is the work of Greg Thomson, as described in his various writings (e.g., A. Thomson, A. Thomson, C. Thomson, & G. Thomson, 1999; G. Thomson, 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 2011) as well as on his online informational website (https://growingparticipatorapproach.wordpress.com/). Thomson's method, which has become known as the Growing Participator Approach (GPA), is not only a theoretical approach, but a systematic method with suggested techniques progressing through every stage of the language learning journey.   Possibly, because it is non-language-specific, freely available, and theoretically accessible to the average learner, it is growing in popularity among self-directed learners, especially those learning less common languages with fewer commercially available resources.

The GPA relies primarily upon having a language nurturer (also known as a language informant or language resource person), a native speaker of the TL, who can essentially be an ambassador to the TL, guiding the learner in the ways of the culture and language.   Through a variety of activities involving realia, pictures, and real experiences, the nurturer provides large amounts of comprehensible input that can be tailored to the needs of the learner as their language develops. The GPA draws heavily on Krashen's (1982, 1985) Input and Affective Filter hypotheses and Asher's (1977) Total Physical Response (TPR) method. It is generally aligned with interactionist and sociocultural

theories of SLA with its emphasis on language learning as primarily a process of socializing with and participating in the TL community.

Several diary studies, have explored Thomson's methods. Caasi (2005) studied Indonesian for one month in the U.S. using Thomson's method, and recorded her experience of the process and what factors contributed to her success. She successfully accomplished her goals for stage one of Thomson's method. She reports that she learned over eight hundred expressions, was exposed to a wide range of lexical and grammatical features, worked at conversation around a number of situations and topics, and began a journey into a second culture through friendship with her Indonesian Language Informant. Caasi concluded that Thomson's method is an excellent option for the independent language learner. She identified several aspects of Thomson's method that aided her learning: a relaxed and fun learning situation; becoming good friends with her language informant; controlled input; frequent repetition of target language; the gratification of immediate use of acquired language; and the freedom to progress at her own rate, according to her own desires.

After six years living in the United Arab Emirates with limited success at learning Arabic, Krause (2012) also decided to try Thomson's GPA. Krause also had a very favorable experience with Thomson's GPA and identifies two main advantages of the GPA. First, it is very flexible and can be used at any time, in any place, and with any language—the one restriction being the necessity of finding a willing native-speaking nurturer with whom you can coordinate your schedule and needs. Second, it is at once structured and adaptable. The GPA provides a comprehensive and organized plan with

ready-made lessons for learners who lack the time, desire, or confidence to develop their own curriculum. Yet, for those ready to take more control of their learning, the GPA and its lesson plans are easily adaptable to individual needs and contexts.

<u>Do it Yourself Language Learning</u>

There seems to be a growing movement of "do it yourself" language learning aided by a wealth of practical techniques and advice exemplified by Thomson's GPA (e.g., A. Thomson, A. Thomson, C. Thomson, & G. Thomson, 1999; G. Thomson, 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 2011), and Peter Pikkert's (2013) *Language acquisition for cross-cultural effectiveness* (LACE). This movement is further aided by online informational hubs such as Aaron *Myers's Everyday Language Learner* (http://www.everydaylanguagelearner.com/) and Benny Lewis's *Fluent in 3 Months* (http://www.fluentin3months.com/). All of these sources are provide useful strategies, techniques, methods, and advice that are theoretically and practically accessible to independent learners of languages all over the world. Though these sources and techniques are not a direct focus of the current study, they have no doubt informed my own ideas about language learning and influenced my self-directed learning.

<div align="center">Diary Studies</div>

The diary study research design is a type of qualitative, case study that allows a detailed look at the specific and personal inner experience of the individual language learner. This research design is discussed in more detail in chapter three. Here I present an overview of previous language learning diary studies of historical significance or relevance to the current study.

Schumann, F. M. & Schumann, J. H. (1977)

In this seminal diary study, wife and husband, Francine and John Schumann (1977), conducted a longitudinal case study of their own learning of Arabic in North Africa and Persian (Farsi) at UCLA and in Iran. They used intensive journaling to record their feelings and reactions to the process and found that a number of personal variables affected their language learning. Some of the personal variables they identified include the following:

- Nesting patterns - Francine needed to create a comfortable living arrangement in the foreign country before she could devote energy to language learning.

- Reactions to dissatisfaction with teaching methods - Francine had a strongly negative reaction to a rigid audio-lingual class causing her to withdraw from participation and learning and eventually drop the class.

- Motivation for choice of materials - Francine found that not only the content but the visual design of her published learning materials was very important. She responded negatively to a Persian reader because of its boring content and unattractive design. Instead she, and later John, found that they liked children's books, with beautiful illustrations much more.

- Transition anxiety - Francine found that language study was a good way to offset the anxiety that arose at times of moving to, from, or within a foreign country.

- Desire to maintain one's own language learning agenda - Francine found that often in classroom settings, her learning preferences were at odds with the teacher's, so she preferred teachers who were more flexible.

- Eavesdropping vs. speaking as a language learning strategy - Over speaking, Francine preferred to listen to the conversations of others and take notes as a learning strategy.

Schmidt and Frota (1986)

Schmidt and Frota's (1986) study is considered one of the most thorough and significant examples of the diary study genre. During a five-month stay in Brazil, Schmidt documented his own experience with learning conversational Portuguese. Schmidt's entries cover experiences both in and out of the classroom, and the study addressed issues connected with the role of instruction, interaction, correction, and formulaic speech in adult L2 learning. Frota, a linguist and native speaker of Portuguese, examined Schmidt's progress in numerous areas including conversation, grammar, pragmatics, vocabulary, and formulaic speech. This study is notable for being quite comprehensive and robust, for the detailed linguistic analysis from two researchers, the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and for including actual production data (Duff, 2008). Finally, the main theoretical insight to come from this study is the *noticing* principle, which says that some amount of conscious awareness of target language form or structures is necessary to acquire the language. In other words, learners must consciously notice features of the language, otherwise they may process only meaning and not specific structures.

Bailey (1983)

Kathleen Bailey is one of the primary proponents for the use of diary studies in SLA research (see Bailey, 1990, 1991; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983). In her own diary study,

Bailey (1983) recorded details of her learning experience in a French class. The most salient point to come out of her diary was competitiveness, a factor that both hindered and positively motivated her language learning. She noticed that she was competitive in the following ways:

- comparing or ranking herself as better or worse than other classmates

- feeling anxiety when her comparisons were unfavorable, or joy when her comparisons were favorable.

- a desire to outdo classmates, particularly by racing through exams in order to finish first.

- an emphasis on test grades, especially in comparison to others.

- desiring the teacher's approval

- anxiety during class when her idealized self did not match with reality, i.e., when she made a mistake that she thought she should know.

- withdrawal from learning either mentally or physically, when competitiveness become overpowering

Jones (1994, 1995)

Jones (1994, 1995) kept a diary of his self-study of Hungarian over an 11-month period. Jones prioritized lexical learning and used a variety of course books, dictionaries, realia, and learning strategies. Jones's main insight concerned the need to change one's learning strategies as one's proficiency level progresses. Jones suggests that these changes are not incremental but closer to radical paradigm shifts with new ability levels requiring new methods and strategies. Specifically, Jones recommended studial

(textbook-centered) strategies at beginning levels until a core vocabulary of about 2,000 word families has been acquired. He suggests that there are two crucial thresholds to be crossed, first, the acquisition of enough word-roots to enable the guessing of many newly encountered compound words and second, the ability to read authentic texts. He estimates that these thresholds can be crossed when about 2,000 core word families have been acquired. Learning strategies can then shift to authentic sources of input and output.

Carson & Longhini (2002)

In Carson and Longhini's (2002) study, Carson was the main participant, studying Spanish informally for eight weeks in Argentina. Longhini, bilingual in Spanish and English, served as her teacher and informant. The focus of this study was on learning styles and strategies. Using categories from Oxford's (1990) SILL and the Style Analysis Survey, they found that Carson's learning style remained consistent while her learning strategies grew more variable over time, she had a slight preference for indirect strategies over direct ones, and her learning style influenced her choice of strategies. For example, she often recognized the importance of certain strategies (such as memorizing language forms), but failed to utilize those strategies that did not match with her preferred learning style.

Hanf (2013)

Hanf's (2013) study is of particular importance to the current study; it contains similar situational factors and has directly inspired and influenced the direction of this study. Hanf recorded his experiences with his self-study of Korean while living in Korea. Like me, he was largely motivated by the fact that he had lived in Korea as an

English teacher for several years but had struggled to improve his Korean ability beyond beginning level. His respective goal and strategy were to improve his communicative competence by watching Korean dramas as a regular source of authentic exposure to the language. His original focus was politeness strategies which he picked out of the dramas and then discussed and practiced with his language informant. He found that learning language from the dramas was problematic because they were too advanced for his level. However, for his specific purpose of mining for politeness strategies, he found this method to be successful and useful. Moreover, he found that he started to focus on relationship-related expressions which he enjoyed using with his girlfriend—to her surprise and pleasure.

Similar to Bailey (1983), one initially unexpected factor to emerge from his diary, was competitiveness. Sometimes this was in the form of negative anxiety, but more often, it created a positive motivation for Hanf's naturally competitive nature: first, by receiving positive, reinforcing reactions from others; second, by comparing his language ability to others and the sense of in-group-membership that came with increased ability.

Another unexpected theme that emerged during his study was that he began to lose interest in his original method of study—watching dramas—and for multiple reasons began to prefer a method focused on studying for the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK). He had started to want more concrete feedback on his ability and found that this was a fulfilling and satisfying method of study that provided a structured course of progression, as well as motivation to attain higher levels which appealed to his competitive nature.

The Gap

There is a large body of research on fossilization, but it seems that no one has covered this topic from the personal, introspective perspective allowed by the diary study design. Further, much of the fossilization literature is often too theoretical or abstract to be of practical help to the individual on the frontline of language learning. Another gap and call for research comes from Long (2003) who argues that historically the literature's focus on fossilization has overshadowed that of stabilization, and he recommends a shift of focus to stabilization as a more tenable theoretical model that could yield more practical insight into second language learning. Possibly there has been less research on stabilization or plateauing because it is such a universal, yet at the same time profoundly personal experience. Almost everyone experiences it, but for each case there is a uniquely personal and complex mix of situational and motivational factors at play.

Similarly, in reviewing the SLA literature, information of direct practical value to the independent language learner is lacking, particularly for the growing population of those learning a language while living and working abroad. It is only through a rich bank of personal case studies that learners, educators, and researchers can get greater insight into the wide range of personal factors at play. The diary study format seems to provide one of the more useful and insightful looks at the language learning process. Though an individual diary study may be too specific to be readily generalizable, each study that is added to the available body of studies helps reveal a more complete picture. Furthermore, the bigger this body of research becomes, the more likely it is that one or two studies will contain key bits of insight relevant to any given learner or researcher in the future. With

that in mind, the current body of individual learner diary studies is quite small. Outside of the studies previously reviewed, I am aware of only several more studies that are either not very relevant to my study or that are not easily available. For these reasons, there appear to be large gaps in this area of research, and the field of SLA could benefit from many more language learner diary studies.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

In this diary study, I am exploring self-directed language learning in the naturalistic immersion environment of my L2 host country Korea. I want to learn about the experience and process of moving beyond fossilization and investigate useful learning and motivational strategies for doing this in order to improve my own language learning and my ability to help my students improve their language learning.

Bailey and Ochsner (1983) state that diary studies are guided by one main question: "What factors are important in *my* language learning (or teaching) experience?" (p. 189). More specifically my questions were the following:

1. What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to intermediate levels?

2. What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

3. a. What are the pros and cons of my chosen language learning program, combining test-focused and communicative-focused practice? b. Can this approach help me to improve my Korean language ability?

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the literature concerning fossilization and stabilization, motivation, acculturation, identity, and independent language learning. I have given an overview of some significant and relevant existing diary studies and showed how this study addresses gaps in the existing research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this study I explored self-directed language learning in the naturalistic immersion environment of my L2 host country, Korea. I had lived here for approximately six years with minimal perceived improvement to my language ability for the previous three years. I wanted to learn about the experience and process of moving beyond my current plateau and investigate useful learning techniques and strategies for doing this in order to improve my own language learning and my ability to help my students improve their language learning.

My overarching question was, what factors are important in my language learning experience? More specifically my questions were the following:

1. What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to intermediate levels?

2. What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

3. What are the pros and cons of a test-focused, primarily form-focused and explicit method of learning? Can this approach be effectively combined with communicative practice to help me progress in my language learning?

My primary source of data for this study was my personal reflections upon the language learning process as recorded in regular diary entries. In order to provide a fuller

picture, pretest-posttest assessments using the TOPIK test (see Appendix B) and spoken interviews were included as supplementary sources of data.

This chapter describes the methodologies used in this study. First, a description of the qualitative paradigm and the diary study research design are presented along with the rationale for their selection. The chapter goes on to describe the design of my language learning program, the types of data collected, the procedures used to collect, analyze, and verify the data, and ethical considerations.

<center>Mixed Methods Research Design</center>

SLA research is commonly divided into two categories, quantitative and qualitative research. While these two research approaches are often characterized as diametric opposites, they should be understood to represent two ends of a continuum. It is not always clear that a given study is one or the other, and some such as Ochsner (1979) have argued for benefits of a mixed approach, combining elements from both to complementary effect.

Quantitative research is usually characterized as containing hypotheses which are tested using experimental design including statistical data analysis (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Quantitative research generally strives for random sampling of a large population to produce generalizable conclusions. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, generally do not have an experimental design, predetermined hypotheses, statistical or quantifiable data, or generalizable conclusions (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Rather, a qualitative study seeks to provide a rich interpretive description usually of a single or small number of cases (e.g., an individual student or class) in their natural setting. Qualitative research is

more exploratory in that the researcher does not set out with defined hypotheses, but with a mind open to discovering salient patterns and forming hypotheses as they emerge from the observation. In the ethnographic tradition, qualitative studies are holistic, observing a broad range of sociocultural and behavioral factors in order to gain a deeper understanding of the full context that influences the case. A specific type of qualitative design relevant to the current study is the case study, which is usually longitudinal, looking at change over time. Finally, in the quantitative design, as in standard scientific experiments, the researcher generally strives for objectivity by remaining a removed observer with no influence on the participants. However, in the qualitative design, the researcher may have varying degrees of participation in, and influence upon the study; moreover, the subjective impressions of the researcher and or participants may be included. An extreme example of this is the diary study design in which the researcher and participant are one and the same, as is the case in the current study. To offset the limitations of this subjectivity, I chose to include an element of objectivity in the form of quantifiable data. As such this study falls into the mixed method research design which combines elements from both the quantitative and the qualitative paradigms. Though the diary provided the primary data for answering this study's questions, Because the data for current study is so

Diary Study Research Design

The diary study is another specific category of qualitative research. Bailey (1990) defines a diary study as a "... first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then

analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events" (p.215). A diary study's central characteristic is that it is introspective, allowing the participant to freely reflect on "affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions-facets of the language learning experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer" (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983, p. 189). Following is a description of some of the advantages and disadvantages of the diary study methodology. It should be noted that diary studies can take multiple forms; for example, they can be kept by learners or by teachers, kept in the L1 or L2, used for pedagogical or research purposes, and analyzed by a researcher other than the participant or by the participants themselves. In my study, I was be the diarist and researcher and I kept the diary in my L1 for the sake of research. Accordingly, my discussion is focused on this vein of research.

 My language learning Program: Balancing Approaches

For various reasons, I decided that I wanted to design my own learning program for this study and for my own language learning. Following is a brief description of and rationale for the design of my learning program.

Form-focused/Test-focused learning. In Hanf's (2013) diary study of his own Korean language learning experience, he describes that during the course of his research period, he started to lose interest in his original method of study (watching TV dramas) and for multiple reasons began to prefer a method focused on studying for the TOPIK test.

For similar reasons, this method also appealed to me. First, I thought that studying TOPIK test materials would provide a more structured path of progression, indicating the vocabulary and grammar that "should" be learned at given ability levels.

My study of Korean had always been self-directed and relatively unstructured, and I had often suspected that there may be significant gaps in my foundational language hindering my progress. It was my hope the TOPIK test materials could help me identify and fill these gaps as well as lay out the next level of language for me to study. Second, unlike some, I have always rather enjoyed studial methods, and found memorizing grammar and vocabulary on the subway or in my free time quite enjoyable. This test-focused method would seem to lend itself to this style of learning. Finally, studying for the TOPIK test provides a form of motivation and feedback on progress. I think tangible signs of progress and the associated sense of accomplishment are some of the greatest motivators to continued progress. Studying to get good scores and achieve higher levels on a test can provide ongoing goals and benchmarks to strive for. Further, performing well on the TOPIK test can help one receive a permanent resident visa in Korea, which for myself and other foreigners in Korea provides an appealing instrumental motivation to continue learning.

  <u>Balanced with Communicative focus.</u> A common criticism of language tests is their lack of authenticity in general. More specifically standardized tests often fall short of being able to assess naturalistic communicative competence, particularly speaking. The TOPIK test is no exception, as it lacks a speaking component. While this is a strong argument for the inauthenticity of tests and in-turn test-focused study, perhaps it is unfair to expect everything from one learning method. For this reason, I chose to complement my test-focused method with a communicative-focused aspect. For this communicative-

focused method, I identified three topics of general interest and focused my conversational practice around these.

These two approaches constituted the two halves of my language learning program and assessment. The details of their implementation and assessment are described in the following sections.

Data Collection

Setting and Participant

In this diary study, I was the sole participant and researcher. I am a 36 year-old male from Wisconsin, USA. The study was conducted in Seoul, South Korea where I lived and taught English for a total of six and a half years—two years at a children's English academy, and four and a half years at a women's university in northern Seoul. Additionally, I co-owned and ran a small retail business in Seoul for the past two years.

Two people were indirectly involved as my language informants, and are frequently mentioned in the diary. My first informant was my girlfriend of one year, Jinju. My second informant, Sol, was an assistant in my university department office. She was interested in practicing English, so we agreed to do a language exchange together. Jinju helped me on the form-focused aspect of my study, helping me with my TOPIK materials and answering specific questions I had about language usage. Sol acted as my conversational partner to practice my communicative ability, and she also helped me conduct the pre and post interviews.

Data Collection Technique 1: Language Learner's Diary

My language learner's diary was the primary form of data collection to answer this study's research questions. The diary study research design has a number of potential advantages. Diary studies allow access to the inner psychological, emotional, and motivational experiences of the learner, not easily accessible to an outside observer. Diary studies allow learners to record impressions, free of predetermined categories (Mackey & Gass, 2005), which can provide insight into the learning process, including successes as well as difficulties and pitfalls (Bailey, 1991). The Diary also offers learners a safe venue to vent frustrations, which can lead to valuable insight. For audiences without linguistic training, diary studies may be more accessible as they provide personal, prose examples of language learning (Bailey, 1991). Finally, diary studies provide a uniquely flexible tool for hypothesis formation, revealing new issues and factors to be considered for future quantitative investigation (Bailey, 1991; Bailey & Ochsner 1983).

Diary studies are also recognized to suffer from a number of disadvantages. First, they lack external validity (Nunan and Bailey, 2009), meaning one diarist's perspective and situation may not be generalizable to others. Similarly, many see the results of just one case as unconvincing (Bailey, 1991), but this disadvantage can be offset by accumulating a body of cases. Diary studies are vulnerable to subjectivity and bias (Bailey, 1991; Jones, 1994): What a diarist chooses to record will naturally be subjective, and possibly they will choose to portray themselves in a favorable light. Furthermore, if diary entries are done retrospectively, all of the problems of subjectivity will be amplified (Fry, 1988) However, Jones (1994) counter argues that "how one perceives the process,

what one chooses to record" (p. 444) is and of itself revealing and relevant to the study.

Several have pointed out that recording entries requires dedication and time commitment

on the part of the diarist (Bailey, 1991; Fry, 1988; Nunan & Bailey, 2009). If diary entries

are short, vague, inconsistent, or otherwise lacking in supportive description, then the

diary's ability to reveal important patterns is decreased. One option to offset this

disadvantage is to instruct participants to focus on specific aspects of learning, though

this may limit the free, open-ended advantages described above (Fry, 1988). This issue

of commitment to time and quality is one reason researchers often choose to, themselves,

be the participating diarist. A final disadvantage of the diary study design is that many

language learners are not trained linguists and may have difficulty describing linguistic

processes (Seliger, 1983). Conversely if the diarist *is* a trained linguist, their

metacognitive perception of the language learning process will likely be quite different

from the average language learner and therefore less generalizable.

Acknowledging these disadvantages, the diary study design seems to be the best

choice for the design of this study. Because learning a second language involves a

complex mix of internal variables, including aptitude, affects, learning styles, cognitive

processes, background experience, and motivational factors it is difficult to generalize the

experience of one individual's to another's. Particularly when we are looking at self-

directed learners living highly variable lifestyles, across diverse cultures, the need for the

highly personal, detail rich descriptions allowed by the qualitative diary study design

becomes amplified.   It is by accumulating a large body of individual case studies

encompassing a diversity of personal and contextual factors, that disadvantages can be

mitigated, and the advantages of the language learning diary study fully realized. My desire to investigate the details of my naturalistic language learning context and experience and contribute to the greater body of case studies has led me to choose the diary study design.

Data Collection Technique 2: Test-focused Assessment

I included a pretest-posttest design in order to provide a more objective and quantifiable assessment of my language learning progress and help balance the subjective observations in my diary. Following the design of my learning program, assessment of my progress took two forms: test-focused and communicative-focused. For the test-focused approach, the TOPIK test provided a ready-made instrument, providing assessment of my reading, writing, and listening ability and any progress I made over the course of the study period.

Data Collection Technique 3: Communicative Assessment

For the communicative-focused aspect of my study, I utilized a pre and post-interview design to assess my speaking and listening ability and progress. These interviews were conducted and recorded with my language informant, and then assessed by two Korean language professionals.

<center>Procedures</center>

My language learning Program

My study period lasted for approximately 10 weeks from February 8th to April 29th, 2015. I took a TOPIK pretests on February 8th and began to study from that then, but I did not find a partner for my communicative practice until one month later. One of

the first significant factors to emerge from the study was the perceived need to follow a structured program and the challenge of developing and maintaining that.

A common theme in numerous other diary studies is that plans often change, evolve, or get derailed (Caasi, 2005; Hanf, 2013; Krause, 2012; Peterson, 2012; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schumann & Schumann, 1977). This would appear to be the double-edged sword of self-directed learning in comparison with classroom-based learning; learners can design their own learning program based on personal goals, learning preferences, and circumstances, but their program may end up being poorly designed or difficult to stick to without the structure and guidance provided by regular attendance in a classroom.

Anticipating the stress and sense of failure that might be caused by planning every detail of my learning program in advance only to have to modify or abandon it mid-course, I decided it was best to keep specific details of my program loose until beginning the study period. Soon after beginning, I developed clearer goals, objectives, and procedures which were later made more specific and organized into weekly objectives. For this reason the first week and a half of study was a rather disorganized trial period as I figured out how to best carry out my plan.

My perceived need to follow a clear and structured program quickly led me to lay down defined, concrete goals. Guided by the general goals to "pass level 4 of the TOPIK test," and "improve my communicative, conversational ability in the chosen topics," I wrote a set of more specific objectives in the front cover of my language notebook. It quickly became apparent that these objectives were too ambitious and were cut back.

Though these were rather clear and tangible objectives, one month into the study I realized I was progressing too slowly to complete them in my allotted three-month study period, and I realized that I needed a clearer schedule. At this point, I broke down the material I wanted to cover into weekly chunks. These goals, objectives, and weekly schedule can be found in the language learning program described in Appendix C.

In the end, I fell far short of these objectives, and my inability to keep up with my weekly schedule was a regular source of discouragement. My failure to complete my objectives was likely due to overly ambitious objectives, decreasing motivation, and the interference of upcoming life changes as described later. Toward the end of the study period, as these upcoming life changes started to come to the forefront of my attention, it became difficult to concentrate on language learning, and my study habits suffered. Similarly, the diary entries devolved, decreasing in frequency and quality. Fry (1988) mentions this very situation when critiquing the diary study design: "Diary-keeping is time-consuming and initial enthusiasm may give way to fatigue. And lack of consistency will diminish the potential usefulness of the data" (p. 161). Because of my quickly declining attention, I ended up stopping the study period about two weeks earlier than originally planned and took the TOPIK posttest on April 24th.

A Typical Day of Study

Most days I studied alone, either from questions I got wrong on my initial TOPIK pretest or from my vocabulary and grammar books. To study the test questions, I would highlight new words from the passages and then look them up in a dictionary and write them down in my deck of flashcards. I would also highlight, in different colors, words I

had recently been introduced to and was currently studying, as well as words that I was partially familiar with from past exposure but did not seem to recognize or remember well. Often this technique of looking up unknown words was enough to allow adequate comprehension of the passage. At other times understanding all of the individual words did not add up to comprehension of the passage, and I had to mark the passage for review with Jinju during our next meeting. In either case, I much preferred to study the passages with Jinju. It was much quicker, more enjoyable, and my comprehension was more complete than when studying alone.

For the listening portion of the test, I would repetitively listen to the audio passages on my smartphone. Luckily, I had access to the audio transcripts, so I could go through them and target unknown language as with the reading passages.

For writing practice I would take essay prompts from other past TOPIK tests and practice writing responses. During my next meeting with my language informant, I would go through the essay with her and have her write down corrections and suggestions. Later, I would rewrite the essay with the corrections.

In my vocabulary book, I would study one or two units (30 words each) at a time. Often 30-40% of the words were already known to me, so I would focus on new words and copy them onto my flashcards. The vocabulary book included an example sentence for each word and sometimes morphological derivatives and/or useful collocates. Often these left something to be desired, so I would look in the dictionary to find more useful collocates or example sentences to include on my flashcard.

In my grammar book, I would study one unit at a time—three to six grammar structures with related functions. With these I would review the book's explanation and examples and then try to make a number of my own example sentences in my language notebook. I would have my language informant check my sentences and then copy them into my grammar log to commit to memory in a similar manner to flashcards.

One failing of my program was that I was not able to meet my language informant Jinju as often as planned because of scheduling difficulty. For this reason, questions I had about vocabulary and grammar piled up and studying the TOPIK questions by myself was arduously slow.

During my communicative sessions, we would freely converse on one of my three chosen topics. I spent two weeks (four one-hour sessions) on each topic. Sometimes Sol would prepare questions related to the topic. I also asked her questions as they arose naturally. If I had trouble understanding her, I would often ask her to repeat herself, slow down, or explain. Luckily, she was not very comfortable speaking in English, so usually negotiation for meaning was conducted in Korean—though we would occasionally switch to English or use a dictionary as necessary. In my language notebook, I often wrote down new words as they came up in conversation or had Sol help me formulate ideas that I did not know how to express.

Data Collection Technique 1: Language Learner's Diary

The primary source of data in this study was my language learner's diary. As Bailey and Ochsner (1983) describe, in the diary, diarists provide introspection and self-observation into their own learning processes, thereby revealing perceptions of the

language learning experience which are normally hidden or inaccessible to an external observer.

With this as a guide, my diary was intended as a place to record primarily meta-level (non-language specific) observations of my experience. Following Fry's (1988) suggestion to focus diary entries on predefined categories, I kept in mind my three research questions as I wrote in my diary; however, I did not exclude other observations that arose as significant to my language learning. In carrying out this diary study, I followed the procedures, as outlined by Bailey and Ochsner (1983, p. 190).

1. I provided an account of my personal language learning history (in chapter one).

2. I recorded regular events, details, and feelings about my current learning experience in my diary.

3. The diary was revised to clarify meaning and make it appropriate for public viewing.

4. Following the study period, I analyzed the diary, looking for patterns and significant events.

5. I interpreted and discussed my findings (in chapter four and five).

The diary contained 56 entries from February 8th to April 29th, 2015. In total the diary contained 12,238 words for an average of 220 words per entry. Diary entries were of two general types: regular introspective observations following my study sessions and random observations that came to me during my daily life or were triggered by real-life interactions.

Diary entries were typed and kept in the *Simplenote* app (developed by Automattic Inc.), which is freely available as a web-based or mobile app. This app is designed as a simple way to take, organize, and syn<u>chronize</u> notes. I also utilized my smartphone's built-in speech-to-text dictation capability to record <u>my</u> diary entries. These technologies were an invaluable aid to this language diary process, allowing me to easily record regular diary entries and spontaneous thoughts as they occurred, rather than wait until I had time to sit down<u> and type them </u> at my computer.

<u>Data Collection Technique 2: Test-focused Assessment</u>

For my TOPIK pretest-posttest I used copies of previous TOPIK tests, available for free download, including listening files and answer keys (Test of Proficiency in Korean, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). I chose to use past test papers rather than taking the actual proctored test because the tests are only offered at specific dates throughout the year which did not coordinate well with my study period.

To get baseline data on my ability, I took a pretest before beginning my language learning period. This was the first time I had ever taken the TOPIK test; however, before taking the test, I looked over a sample test with my language informant, to familiarize myself with the format of the test, the types of questions on it, and the instructions given for various questions, which are written in Korean. When taking the test, I followed the standard testing procedure, allotting 90 minutes for part 1 (vocabulary, grammar, and writing), and 90 minutes for part 2 (listening and reading).

I began my official study period on February 8 by taking the beginner-level TOPIK test #20. Because of my relative success on the beginner-level test, I decided to

focus my study efforts and assessments on the intermediate-level test, and I did not take a beginner-level posttest.

The next week, I took the intermediate-level test #20. I was also caught off guard when I got to the end of the writing section and realized that there is a written essay which I had not left time to complete. To complete the essay, I ended up spending an extra 80 minutes beyond the 90 minutes allotted for that section of the test. Obviously, this invalidated the accuracy of my score, but I decided that for the time being, I was more concerned with the pretest/posttest comparison, than an accurate estimation of my performance under real testing conditions. I therefore followed the same procedure on the posttest taking an additional 80 minutes to write the essay; although, I finished after 60 minutes.

Data Collection Technique 3: Communicative Assessment

A pre-interview was conducted prior to the beginning of my study period as a baseline indicator of my ability, and a post-interview conducted at the end of my study period as an indicator of my progress. These interviews were conducted with my language informant Sol. For my communicative-focused learning I chose three common conversational topics to study with my language informant: a) childhood, family, and background; b) travel; c) life and experiences in Korea. Accordingly, I designed the assessment interviews to focus specifically on these three topics. So that I would not be aware of the content of the interview, I asked a colleague to create and compile a group of questions related to each topic which were then translated into Korean by my informant, Jinju (Appendix D). The questions were cut into separate slips of paper, and

during the interviews, my interviewer randomly chose one or more of the questions to prompt the interview. However, to simulate more natural conversation, the interviewer was instructed to let the interviews progress naturally, and return to the questions when there was a pause in conversation.

Materials Used in the Study

Published materials. For my test-focused study approach, I utilized several published resources. Most important among them were copies of actual past TOPIK tests (Test of Proficiency in Korean, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), which I used not only as an assessment tool (described previously), but also as a resource from which to study. I also utilized two books specifically designed around studying for the TOPIK test: *TOPIK in 30 days - Intermediate vocabulary* (Kim, Moon, Yoo, Lee, & Choi, 2012), and *TOPIK: Essential grammar 150 - Intermediate* (Kim, Moon, Yoo, Lee, & Choi, 2010). Both the vocabulary and grammar texts claim that the target language items were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence in previous TOPIK tests of specific levels (in this case the intermediate level). There are a good number of such books by different publishers. I selected mine by browsing through a number of books at a bookstore and choosing the ones that seemed to have the best content and organization for my personal preferences. The vocabulary book contains around 2200 words listed in order of more to less frequency. The grammar book contains 150 grammar structures categorized by function, and with star ratings indicating importance or frequency of occurrence on the test.

Language Notebook, Vocabulary Flashcards, and Grammar Log

I also utilized several language learning tools: a language notebook, vocabulary flashcards, and a small grammar log. Because my research questions do not focus on formal language issues, these tools were not intended as primary sources of research data, but as aids to my own language learning, and are therefore treated separately from the data collection techniques.

The language notebook was a standard lined notebook which I used to take notes. It was organized into the following sections: (a) a writing section in which I practiced writing short essays in Korean as prompted by the TOPIK test; (b) a section for making practice sentences using new grammar structures I was learning; (c) a section for taking notes on new language encountered during meetings with my conversation partner; (d) and a section in the back of the book to jot down questions that I wanted to remember to ask my language informant later.

The vocabulary flashcards were my chosen method for memorizing new vocabulary I was exposed to either through my vocabulary text, practice TOPIK tests, or conversations with my language informant. I researched various electronic and smartphone flashcard applications and briefly tried one out; however, I ended up going back to a traditional index cards method. For me, this method seems more convenient and tangible than electronic means. I found that the act of writing the target language by hand creates a stronger physical and visual impression that aids recall and retention.

The grammar log was a pocket-sized memo book, in which I recorded chosen grammar structures along with sample sentences. As with the vocabulary flashcards, the

process of organizing grammar structures in one concise location and writing them by hand with my own sample sentences creates a much stronger impression than just studying directly from the textbook.

Data Analysis

Data Collection Technique 1: Language Learner's Diary

After the language learning period was finished, the diary was revised and analyzed. I organized diary entries into themes in relation to the three primary research questions, eliminating observations that seemed to fall outside of these or to be of little significance. My specific process for this organization involved cutting out sections of my printed diary and pinning them to a bulletin board divided into my three research questions. This allowed me to easily rearrange and cluster related observations. The most salient themes were then chosen and compared to the diary studies and literature reviewed in chapter two. The results of these analyses are detailed in chapter four.

Data Collection Technique 2: Test-focused Assessment

Scoring the TOPIK tests was relatively straightforward as all questions except a few writing questions are multiple choice. Five questions from the writing portion of the test require not just a multiple choice selection, but require writing an accurate phrase or sentence appropriate to the given prompt. The answers provided for these questions include a range of possible answers scored by degree of appropriateness. The final writing question requires writing a short essay between 400-600 Korean characters long (about 100-150 words), which requires scoring based on a rubric (see Table B4). For

these six questions, which I could not score myself, I solicited the help of my language informant Jinju.

Data Collection Technique 3: Communicative Assessment

Both the pre and post-interviews were recorded. At the end of the study, these were given to two professional Korean language instructors to evaluate. They said they did not know of an existing speaking rubric in Korean, so following Krause (2012), I decided to use the public version of the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors which was translated into Korea by Jinju (see Appendix E for original and translated versions). The evaluating instructors were instructed to listen to the pre and post interviews and independently choose the band descriptor that most accurately described my speaking ability in each of the four categories. These were then averaged to obtain an overall score the results of which are included in chapter four.

Verification of Data

In order to address many of the disadvantages of qualitative data collection and improve internal validity and reliability, it is common to investigate the phenomenon at hand from several different perspectives (Mackey & Gass, 2005). One method of doing this involves the inclusion of both emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives. Another, is what is called mixed-method research, in which elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods are combined to complementary effect (Duff, 2008).   Because this study was primarily based on my insider perspective of the language learning process as revealed through the diary entries, I chose to include the TOPIK tests and the independently assessed interviews as outside and more objective views on my language

ability and progress as these would be difficult for me to evaluate objectively. It is hoped that the inclusion of these outside, objective and quantifiable data with the otherwise subjective data from the diary will add a measure of complexity and validity to this study.

Ethics

Because this study involved two language informants, who were regularly mentioned in my diary, the following measures were taken to protect their rights: (a) a human subjects review was completed; (b) details of my research study were shared with the informants; (c) their consent to help me and be mentioned in my diary and paper was obtained; (d) anonymity was offered to the informants, but they chose to be referred to by name in the final paper.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methods applied in this study, as well as the research design and rationale. The data collection techniques, procedures, participants and materials were discussed. I also explained the methods of data analysis and verification of data. Lastly, I addressed ethical concerns by detailing the safeguards employed in this study.

Chapter four explains the results of my research project. It includes overviews of my language-learning plan, GPA sessions, data collection techniques, and guiding questions. It also contains detailed explanations of the results gathered from each data collection technique as they related to each research question.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study explored my own self-directed language learning in the naturalistic immersion environment of my L2 host country Korea. As described in chapter three, the primary form of data collection was a language diary in which I recorded an introspective account of my language learning experience and the factors perceived as important to my learning. Additional sources of data included a pre and post TOPIK test assessment, and a pre and post interview assessment.

Through the collection of these data, I sought to find answers to the following questions. In general, what factors are important in my language learning experience? More specifically my questions were the following:

1. What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to intermediate levels?

2. What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

3. a. What are the pros and cons of my chosen language learning program, combining test-focused and communicative-focused practice? b. Can this approach help me to improve my Korean language ability?

In this chapter, I present the results of this study.   First, I discuss the language learner's diary identifying the salient themes that emerged, in relation to my research

questions. These findings are oriented to the larger body of literature by drawing

comparisons to the diary studies and relevant literature described in chapter two. In the

remainder of the chapter, I include the results of my test-focused learning method and

assessment, and my communicative-focused method and assessment.

<div align="center">Findings from the Diary</div>

Research Question #1: What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to
intermediate levels?

Based on my own estimation and supported by the TOPIK test and the spoken

interview assessments, my Korean language ability reside somewhere between the

beginning and intermediate levels. One of my primary interests in conducting this study

was to gain insight into the distinction between language learning at the beginning and

intermediate levels. Several such themes emerged.

Factors related to vocabulary acquisition. Many of the relevant themes in my

diary were issues related to vocabulary acquisition. This may not be surprising

considering that going into this study vocabulary acquisition was a priority.

Increasingly abstract. One thing that I realized during the course of the study is

that, in contrast to beginning level vocabulary, intermediate vocabulary items tend to be

more abstract and less tied to everyday experience. This seems to pose two problems to

acquisition as highlighted in the following diary entries:

Concrete objects, actions, and everyday words [e.g., apple, run] generally seem

much easier to conceptualize and store as meaningful images in the

mind...abstract ideas [e.g., reason, compare, tend to be] do not easily conjure

simple mental imagery, and are therefore more difficult to remember. (entry #5,

02-18)

Stevick (1989) echoes this when he talks about the importance of connecting words with

nonverbal images or "meaning-images"; however,   Stevick does not discuss connecting

images with abstract ideas. The second issue that more abstract words raise is mentioned

later in the same diary entry:

> Concrete ideas such as 사과 (apple) or 뛰다 (run) generally do not require a lot of
>
> knowledge about proper context of use. Once you translate and memorize the
>
> word, it is not too difficult to know how to use it. However, with more abstract
>
> concepts (e.g., 이유 [reason], 비교하다 [compare], 경향이 있다 [tend to be]), a more
>
> thorough understanding of proper context and mechanics of usage, as well as
>
> commonly occurring collocates, is needed.(entry #5, 02-18)

In this way it seems that these more abstract, intermediate-level vocabulary require a

higher level of energy input to commit to memory, as well as a greater level of external

guidance to properly use.

Wise selection and ordering. Another vocabulary related issue to emerge in the

diary was the importance of wise selection and ordering of vocabulary to be learned. It is

generally easier to decide what vocabulary should be learned at the beginning level: high

frequency function words, everyday objects and actions, numbers, telling time, etc. As

the tree of vocabulary branches out, not only does frequency of usage decrease, but the

number of words increases along with the challenge of selecting useful words to learn:

One major challenge to expanding my vocabulary is knowing which words to choose to study. If I chose the wrong words to study (e.g., too advanced for my level, or not useful for my needs) then the damage is twofold: First, my time and energy is wasted energy studying words that will not stick because further exposure to them will be absent or too limited. Second, I will end up feeling frustrated and overwhelmed in a sea of words not knowing which way was up or down, which words will help me move forward, and which will just be extra baggage dragging me down (entry #7, 02-22).

This issue is one of the challenges of self-directed learning and can hopefully be aided by good reference materials. This was one of the impetuses for choosing my method of study, and it proved promising in addressing this issue (discussed later); however, this difficulty persisted. While studying from the intermediate TOPIK test, I was finding that many of the passages were proving to be above Krashen's (1982, 1985) i+1 and I was feeling overwhelmed by the concentration of unknown words I was having to study to understand a single passage:

> There is sometimes the urge to select all the unknown words from a passage to study. I am starting to think it is wiser to be selective, and follow your intuition, or better yet, ask a native speaker you trust which words are important for you to study at this time (entry #42, 04-07b).

This closely relates to the next vocabulary related issue.

Breadth vs. depth. A frequent theme in Stevick's (1989) book is what he refers to as "stockpiling" or the accumulation of language items relatively divorced of meaning

and context. He states that people tend to not be able to remember these stockpiled items for long, and he emphasizes the need to put them to use as soon as possible. This was also a common concern of mine; however, I also found the reverse to be potentially problematic:

> I find if I study too many words without enough practice or depth of understanding, my mind tends to get bogged down with too many words that it does not know how to use well, and which will therefore slip from memory for lack of use. Conversely, when I study words in too much depth, I am not able to cover as many words as I need to because of lack of time and energy. (entry #10, 02-28).

This is a case where I found my perfectionism becoming a hindrance, as I seemed to be spending too much time looking up every new word, trying to understand it well, and finding good example sentences and collocates. Balancing how many new vocabulary items to learn versus how well to learn them became a frequent concern of mine. I did not find an easy answer to this, but decided that like any balancing act, it requires "getting a feel" for it, and points back to careful selection of which items to spend more time with, which to stockpile superficially until further depth is warranted, and which to ignore for the time being.

Word etymology and cognates. A key discussion in Jones (1994) was the observation that, as his stock of root words grew, he became increasingly able to recognize related derivatives which led him to adopt etymology as an active strategy. I also observed this to be a commonly used strategy of my own: "With nearly every new

vocabulary word that I am introduced to, one of the first things I ask myself if I can make an etymological connection with any already known words" (entry #9, 02-27). This strategy often paid off as in the following situation:

장점 [jang-jeom] and 단점 [dan-jeom]. I was having trouble remembering these two words meaning *strong point* and *weak point*. Jinju was teaching me these words, but I did not have any references in my head with which to easily connect them. I knew that 점 [jeom] translated to *point*, but my mind was searching for a connection to words meaning strong and weak. But then Jinju explained that 장 [jang] means *long* and 단 [dan] means *short*. I asked her for examples of other words using 장 and 단 so that I could try to get a fuller picture and remember them better. She racked her brain for examples, but only came up with one which I was unfamiliar with. But then I suddenly recalled a word in my flashcards that I was currently studying. I quickly flipped through my flashcards and found it. I had been right; the word I was studying on the flashcard was *plan,* 계획[gye-hoek]. And on the flash card I had written common example phrases including *long term plan* 장기 계획 [jang-gi gye-hoek] and *short term plan* 단기 계획 [dan-gi gye-hoek]. We were both very excited. Immediately both ideas became much more solid in my head because two disconnected, unfamiliar terms suddenly become connected. (entry #9, 02-27)

Though I often utilize mnemonic devices involving memorable imagery or connections with similar sounding English words, I generally find that making etymological connections, as illustrated in the previous passage, are more substantial and

generally preferable. Predictably, I have found that this strategy becomes increasingly accessible as my lexical stock increases in size. This is a point also made by Jones (1994, 1995), who points out that this evolving lexical stock also aids in guessing the meaning of newly encountered words, making the language increasingly transparent and easy to learn, which was also observed in my own learning experience.

Jones's makes special mention that his TL, Hungarian, is absent of cross-language cognates with English, making it much more opaque for an English L1 learner than most other European languages, and increasing the importance of developing intra-language etymological awareness. The same is true of Korean, but fortunately Korean seems to be a language that lends itself well to etymological analysis. Approximately 60% of Korean words are of Chinese origin, making these words' etymologies easily determined via the original Chinese characters. Further, due to Korean's agglutinative morphology, morphemes are often repeated, recombined, and easily recognizable.

Hierarchical memory. Another observation of my internal processes was in relation to my learning of vocabulary but would seem to relate equally to syntax and possibly other aspects of language and learning in general. The observation was about how some words seem to be stored in hierarchical patterns in the mind. By this I mean that in making a place for a new word in my mind, I naturally want to connect and associate the new word to previously stored words and/or knowledge. When first learning a new language, naturally most of the associations are in the L1. Usually these are semantic equivalents, but may also include cognates, phonologically similar words, or other mnemonic devices. As the L2 lexical stock expands, it becomes increasingly more

possible to associate new words with already learned words which opens up the possibility for making connections with synonyms or etymologically related words in the L2.

The reason that I call this hierarchical is that the word already established in memory acts as an access point for recalling the new word—a sort of mentor or guide that takes the new word under its wing until the new word finds a more permanent place in the mind. Observations related to this came up several times in my diary. I found that making mental associations did not work well if both of the words were new to me, as

> ...they get confused in my head and I do not learn them well. This only works if I
> am connecting a new word to a word that is already well established in my
> automatic memory. Maybe this is akin to building a house on a stable foundation.
> (entry #11, 03-02)

In this case, the value of this hierarchical relationship is in aiding recall of the new word until it enters automatic memory. After the new word becomes more established in its own right, this connection may be lost, particularly when it is a shallow mnemonic or phonological connection. In the case of deeper semantic or etymological connection, this relationship may be permanent as is true in our L1. Another salient issue arose in relation to this:

> Sometimes I have encountered a word and committed it to memory, only to find
> out later that I probably should have learned one of its more common synonyms
> first. This is unfortunate, because I think synonyms are stored in hierarchical
> patterns in our brain, so if I have learned a less important word before a more

important word, it creates strange structures in my brain that must be modified later. (entry #27, 03-21)

This goes back to the idea of wise selection and ordering and also conjures an analogy of language learning being akin to building a structure, which showed up in the diary.

A Well Structured House. My self-directed learning of Korean seemed comparable to how I learned to play guitar by just picking up a guitar and tinkering:

I started by learning to play a few chords to play songs that I liked. I never learned scales or techniques that you might learn with formal training; I never did the things that might not be fun, but might be important to developing of solid foundation. (entry #49, 04-20)

So too with Korean, my learning was characterized by a natural goal-oriented progression. I would become aware of words, expressions, or language functions that I wanted to use in my daily life or social interactions and then go about learning and practicing those. This was an enjoyable way to learn that provided continuous direction and motivation, but I now wonder if this approach laid a haphazard foundation, which seemed sufficient for my needs at the time, but may have ended up being inadequate for supporting higher level growth—much as if you started to build a house without much plan or expertise, later to realize that the foundation you had built was not sufficient to support the second story.

This seems to relate to an observation made by Higgs and Clifford (1982) among students enrolled in programs at U.S. government language teaching agencies. They found a common category of student who get stuck at various sorts of developmental

plateaus, and termed these learners "terminal cases." In investigating a reason for this, they found that these learners have usually been affected by prior language experience of some informal nature, such as "street learning" in the target culture or in some cases, inadequate classroom settings. Higgs and Clifford argue that contemporary approaches that focus on communication often at the expense of accuracy may be to blame in many of these terminal cases. Numerous researchers (e.g., Graham, 1981; Nord, 1998; Valette, 1991; Vigil & Oller, 1976) agree with this position, the general argument being that inaccurate models and non-correction of inaccurate speech production will lead to fossilization because systematic errors in learners' IL will usually go unremediated. Valette summarizes the common conclusion of this view: "The key strategy for the prevention of fossilization lies in providing a maximum degree of accurate *and* appropriate input at the early levels of instruction" (1991, p. 327). Because I feel that I put a fair amount of attention on accuracy throughout my learning of Korean, I am not sure it this discussion applies to me or not. Yet as I could certainly be described as a "street learner," it certainly gives me pause to consider.

How to incorporate higher-level language. Another issue relating to the difficulty of transitioning to an intermediate level interlanguage arose in the process of practicing my essay writing. Though writing is the skill I use least often in my real life and improving it was not a goal of mine, I found that I enjoyed the challenge of expressing my thoughts in writing. I also decided that writing had the potential to be an effective way to develop more complexity in my productive language. Because speaking is so immediate and real-time, I find that I tend to favor using language that is simple and

comfortable for me. Even in situations where I could formulate complex sentences, to avoid cumbersome pauses and reformulations, I will often stick with short simple sentences. When I was writing, I found that I had the freedom to take time to formulate more complex language, and attempt to express ideas, that I would not even attempt in speaking. The other aspect that was valuable about writing was that it allowed me to get detailed feedback and have my own thoughts rewritten in more accurate language. However, one seemingly major challenge emerged:

> I am pretty good at trying to express what I want to say in my limited vocabulary and grammar. So a simple correction based proofread, while helpful, is not a great way to expand my capability and range of language. One way around this might be to ask Jinju to try to rewrite my essay in more natural Korean. However, I know well from my own experience correcting my students' English essays, that this can be quite difficult and time consuming. When a student's writing is low level and heavily influenced by language transfer, the task of suggesting more natural language would mean completely rewriting whole sentences, or possibly the whole essay. (entry #8, 02-24)

Naturally, completely rewriting my students' writing is not something I usually do. Similarly, despite asking Jinju to suggest more natural ways of expressing my ideas, most of her feedback was limited to error correction and suggesting more natural replacements for individual words. A similar situation exists with spoken language; and this challenge of incorporating higher-level language (i.e., more natural and more complex) into one's own productive language seems to lie at the heart of moving from beginner to

intermediate level as well as overcoming a stabilized interlanguage. Unfortunately, other than recognizing that this is a challenge, I did not gain much insight into how to overcome this challenge, though I expect exposure to authentic language and explicitly working with it are key. Richards (2008) touches on this, pointing out that besides fluency and accuracy, learners must also develop complexity in their language use. He suggests that accomplishing this involves more than simply adding new language items on top of the existing interlanguage, rather a process of *restructuring* the existing interlanguage is necessary to make room for the new information (Van Patten,1993).

Research Question #2: What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

In reviewing the diary, a number of entries offer insight into factors related to the stabilization of my Korean language ability. Overall, the mention of negative factors contributing to stabilization heavily outweighed mention of positive factors that might aid language progress. The main themes to emerge relate to affective and motivational factors, acculturation, and identity, which could be described as relatively idiosyncratic to my person and situation. Two themes which I have termed "a new tool in the shop" and "incomprehensible gibberish" highlight potentially more generalizable cognitive factors.

Affective and motivational factors. Going into this period of language learning, motivation was identified as a critical, if not *the* critical, factor in moving beyond my language plateau. Though it was not a major theme in the diary, it was mentioned in a number of entries.

Positive and negative feedback. Occasionally feedback from others was reported to have a positive or negative effect. The diary reports one such occasion of receiving negative feedback from a woman from whom I often buy sandwiches. After I had tried repeatedly to communicate a simple message about the weather, she commented that I need to improve my Korean. This was a light-hearted comment, and something that she tells me occasionally, but still it made me feel discouraged because it resonated with my own feelings that my Korean ability is inadequate. However, a little while later, when talking to Jinju on the phone, we spoke in Korean and she complimented my speaking which restored my mood and confidence.

There were a few such occasions in which feedback from others both positive and negative certainly influenced my confidence and motivation; however, it seems a more salient point is the relative lack of effect that other's feedback seemed to have on me. Hanf (2013) talks extensively about the motivational effect of other people's opinions and feedback. Early in my Korean language learning journey I shared most of the feelings he describes: the desire for in-group membership, feeding off of the praise of others, and comparing my ability to that of other foreigners.

In an exchange with a store clerk, she commented on how good my Korean is. I politely thanked her, but in my head, I thought "If you talked to me more than a couple minutes, you wouldn't say that." Early on in my stay, I used to take this sort of praise to heart, and feel encouraged. Now, I hardly notice or care—I am well aware of exactly what I can and cannot do with the language and other

people's casual impressions, no longer carry much weight for me. (entry #30, 03-

23b)

This points to my language stabilization as being reinforced by and part of a larger

stabilization of my identity and beliefs about my capabilities.

Positive and negative feelings. Several times in the diary, I recorded negative

feelings of frustration and discouragement. My frustration was usually precipitated by a

breakdown in communication as in the earlier situation with the sandwich woman, or by

the general discomfort of speaking Korean as in this situation with my language partner,

Sol: "Today I felt very tongue-tied and had a difficult time understanding and speaking. I

felt like I was decreasing in ability not improving" (entry #41, 04-07a). Though this and

other situations were usually accompanied by a feeling of frustration and discouragement,

I generally did not let it get me down and put it in a bigger perspective as indicated later

in the same diary entry: "Like any skill, I assume daily fluctuations are a normal—

sometimes you're in the flow and sometimes you're not." Other entries recorded the

positive feelings: "I felt pretty comfortable speaking with Sol today. It seems that after a

few sessions of speaking practice, my tongue has loosened up a little bit. And not only

that, I feel like I am actually improving some" (entry #31, 03-24).

Sessions with my language partner Sol were more formal arrangements, and when

I had these feelings of frustration, they did not seem to interfere much as I would just

continue doing my best for our allotted meeting time. However, on a couple occasions

with my girlfriend the impact was more significant as my frustrations with the language

encroached upon our personal relationship. Jinju is a language teacher by trade, and has

a personal desire to see my Korean ability improve. As such, she has always taken a keen interest in helping me improve. In fact, helping each other with improving at our respective L2s has always been a part of our relationship, and 90 percent of the time I am very open to any help she offers, if not actively soliciting it. However, on two occasions mentioned in the diary, I reacted negatively to her efforts to help me. Both occasions were during our nightly bedtime phone chats, during which time she had started to insist that we spend part of the time speaking in Korean. This diary entry describes one of these occasions:

> I was having trouble thinking of words, even an important word that I had studied that day. I told her that I didn't want to speak in Korean now because I just wanted to talk with her and it felt like we were just studying, not communicating — and it didn't seem to be going well.   I kept trying to remember this one word, 어린 시절 (childhood).   I was trying to say every sound similar to what I thought it is, hoping she would recognize it, but she couldn't, and I could not think of it. I got really frustrated, and more frustrated that she insisted that we speak Korean, even after I expressed my strong desire not to. Eventually we did switch to English. She later acknowledged that she was tired and couldn't concentrate well, and I too, could not think well late at night like that.

After a few such incidents, it seemed that I convinced Jinju that I did not want to be pushed to speak Korean during our nightly chats, and she stopped. I struggled some with this decision, as these chats were clearly a very valuable opportunity to use the language authentically, on topics of personal relevance with a sympathetic partner. However, my

desire not to stress our relationship was more important to me than this opportunity to practice the language. When we send text messages, or meet on the weekend, we often use Korean for short periods; however, I have noticed that I usually resist going far out of my comfort zone, and steer the conversation back to English when communication becomes difficult. This pattern is clearly a negative indicator, and seems to relate to identity issues as discussed later.

Struggle with motivation and distractions. Besides the affective factors just described, motivation, or lack thereof, was specifically mentioned a number of times in the diary. These entries do not offer much insight but paint an overall picture of the struggle with motivation that increased as the study period progressed. Early on, this struggle was more general and minor: "Busy week. Feeling overwhelmed by grammar. Study seemed unproductive" (entry #12, 03-05). Later, other responsibilities started to interfere: "I haven't been able to keep up with my studies. I've been very busy at the shop, and studying is easily gets pushed to the bottom of the priority list" (entry #33, 03-28). This was exacerbated by a perceived personality trait identified in this entry: "I have always had one track mind. It seems that I cannot have more than one primary focuses in my life at a given time" (entry #40, 04-06b)

 Eventually, the inevitability of upcoming life changes came to the forefront of my life, and was the final nail in the coffin as I ended my study period two-weeks ahead of my original plan.

My study program as well as my motivation and ability to concentrate on

language study seem to have totally collapsed over the course of the past week.

My mind is completely absorbed with other things in my immediate future, and

the great uncertainty surrounding them. (entry #48, 04-17)

My current contract at my job of four years was coming to an end, which forced me to

consider not only my future in Korea but also with my girlfriend. Additionally, the

recent departure of my two best friends and business partners caused more instability and

precipitated the decision to try to sell our business.

This situation parallels Schumann and Schumann's (1977) observation that the

prospect and process of moving from one location to another caused anxiety. Francine

Schumann found that while traveling to a new country, studying the language was an

effective way to occupy her mind and alleviate her anxiety. However, when leaving the

country she was not motivated to study because the L2 would not be useful back home. I

also found the possibility of uprooting from Korea and the life I had created there, highly

demotivating as the relevance of further language learning was called into question.

Lack of acculturation. Schumann's (1978a; 1986) acculturation model states that

a learner's success is largely dependent on the degree to which they acculturate with the

L2 community. Not surprisingly my orientation toward the target culture has changed

considerably since I first came to Korea eight years ago, and this seems to represents a

very significant factor in my language stabilization as highlighted in this entry: "When I

first came to Korea, everything was fresh and new, and my desire to learn the language

was part and parcel of wanting to explore this new land, meet the people and immerse

myself in the culture" (entry #53, 04-24). Initially, I only wanted to meet Koreans, and

even avoided socializing with westerners here. I spent a lot of time with my boss and his

family outside of work, and I had an adopted "Korean mother" and spent time with her family. Learning about Korean culture and sharing mine provided plenty of motivation for socializing and a seemingly endless source of conversation. However, as time passed so did the luster and newness of the culture:

> Nights out drinking and meeting Koreans became repetitive and dull. It seems that I have made few lasting friendships with Koreans. Further, the language barrier made more than shallow friendships difficult, and what continuing relationships I do have are more comfortably conducted primarily in English. (entry #53, 04-24)

My status and identity as an expat—in but not of the culture—began to grow and take hold. Likewise, a seeming lack of avenues for socializing outside of drinking led to my lifestyle and identity isolated in a bubble of English and expat culture. This situation is what Schumann (1978a) describes this as a high degree of enclosure, in which the learner is not involved in many of the same clubs, hobbies, religious institutions, schools, or professions as members of the TL community.

One major omission from the previous passage is my relationship with Jinju, which should represent a significant degree of acculturation. However, as is commonly the situation here, I have not yet met her family or friends and usually our time together is alone or with my friends. Therefore, in actuality, my relationship with her has not yet pulled me significantly further into the culture, but certainly has the potential to, and will likely be a deciding factor in my eventual degree of acculturation.

One other significant development in my acculturation to the Korean culture shows up in my diary. Two years ago, I started to go surfing on the east coast of Korea. Eventually I met the owner of a surf guesthouse and fell in with the circle of friends focused around that guesthouse and beach. This excerpt describes one interaction with the couple who own the guesthouse:

> I stayed up for a while and had a beer and some snacks with Soonhyuk and
> Jinhwa. Often in a bigger group, I am on the periphery of the conversation.
> Tonight was nice because it was just the three of us, so they were just talking to
> me, and I could maintain the conversation pretty well, and negotiate for meaning
> when there was difficulty. (entry #52, 04-22)

Though my interactions with this circle of friends are infrequent, for a less than social person like me, they illustrate the importance of finding and creating avenues for deeper acculturation. Further, my experience here in general, has strongly confirmed the importance of acculturation to language success, and it is clear to me that my decreased participation in the culture is a key factor in the stabilization of my language learning.

Identity. The change in my degree of participation in the culture has been paralleled by a change in identity over my years here. Over the course of the study period, two factors relating to my changing identity emerged as significant to my language stabilization.

Lack of willingness to take risks and appear infantile. In her survey of what makes a "good language learner," Ruben (1975) identified that good learners often do not feel inhibited, and are willing to make mistakes and appear foolish in order to

communicate and learn. When I first came to Korea, I believe this was true for me, and I had no problem being childlike in my interactions and my willingness to try out any Korean I was learning, and even enjoyed the feeling of being childish and free from some of the constraints and expectations that go along with communicating with other native English speakers. However, gradually over the years of living here, I became less willing to play this role as indicated in this entry:

> I took Jinju to Haru's [my Japanese friend] restaurant tonight. I felt embarrassed speaking Korean with him in front of Jinju. If I was with either of them alone I would not feel so embarrassed. I don't know why this was more embarrassing— maybe because we were in public, or maybe because I felt her watching me speaking and could see how limited my ability is. Now that I think about it, though I do speak Korean with Jinju sometimes, usually I switch back to English when I get a little uncomfortable. I know this is bad for my learning, but I guess I just don't want to seem too incompetent and childish with her. (entry #17, 03-13)

I realize that I will often choose English to avoid the awkwardness of fumbling with Korean, or when I do use Korean, I am likely to stick with language I am more comfortable with and avoid language I am less sure about. This lack of willingness to take risks and appear infantile seems to be a clear contributor to my language stabilization. Again, this would seem to warrant explicit effort to create avenues for practicing the language in which I do not feel uncomfortable in this role. This is also seems closely connected to a desire not to give up power as discussed next.

Inequitable power relationships. Another observation to arise as a significant factor in my stabilization relates to the power dynamic between me and my Korean interlocutors. Peirce's (1995) describes how inequitable power relationships affect interactions between learners and target language speakers and in turn the degree of acculturation and language learning. In this study Peirce showed how immigrants' social distance to the dominant TL community created a resistance to learn the TL. Schumann (1986) points out that the reverse situation also exists: a socio-politically dominant community will often not learn a TL of a subordinate community, the example given being members of a colonizing country living in the colonized country.

In Korea, I have found that there seems to be little expectation for foreign English speakers to learn the language. Often, my Korean interlocutors seem to feel it is their responsibility to know and speak English and they often feel a certain amount of embarrassment or shame if their English ability is not up to the task.

> At the beer festival, I met the owner of a brewery. He tried to speak English even though he did not seem comfortable and had trouble with it. I am pretty sure my Korean is better than his English, but I didn't feel like switching roles and becoming the uncomfortable one. (entry #29, 03-23a)

As in this situation, it seems that when meeting Koreans, I generally have a choice whether to conduct the interaction in English or Korean. If I choose English, I am comfortably in my element and they are in the uncomfortable position of having to express themselves in a foreign tongue. In that interaction, I have essentially taken the dominant role. If I choose Korean, I submit myself to the less powerful role—become

the "inept, clumsy child". As I have grown older, for personal and professional reasons, this is an identity I have become less comfortable with.

This power inequity is very likely a reflection of the relationship between the United States and Korea, and English to the world in general. For better or worse, it is a privilege that native English speakers carry with them to many lands, and for me and many other English speakers, this may present a significant motivational barrier to learning a second language. In my case, this was not the case in the early stages of my learning, but has increasingly become so, and therefore represents an impediment to further acculturation and language progress.

Cognitive factors. A number of cognitive factors also emerged as significant factors in my language stabilization.

A new tool in the shop. During my study, I became aware of a situation that caused significant difficulty in acquiring some new grammar and vocabulary. This became very apparent to me in the first unit of my grammar book which introduced a handful of unfamiliar grammar structures of similar function. I could not figure out how they were different from each other. Furthermore, it seemed that I could accomplish all of these functions with one beginning-level grammar structure that I was comfortable with from years of use. An analogy occurred to me which I wrote about in my diary:

> My basement workshop [interlanguage] is far from professional [native], but I
> have become familiar with how to accomplish many things with my limited
> selection of tools [limited vocabulary/grammar] even though there may be better
> tools or techniques available....If I am introduced to a new tool or technique, it

may become my new favorite tool and extend my capabilities, or it may get put on the shelf and never used. (entry #21, 03-17b)

Two factors have become apparent to me and seem of significance in determining which way this scenario swings: First, is whether or not the new language item fills a gap in my current interlanguage.

I have frequently been finding that a new language item seems somewhat redundant. Even if it might help me more naturally or accurately communicate something, if I already have a habitual method of accomplishing that function, it is quite difficult for the new way to take hold. After all, my mind has become very accustomed to grabbing the old word—the old familiar tool—when that occasion arises, what motivation is there for me to learn to use a new way if it does not seem particularly different or advantageous to my old way? (entry #21, 03-17b)

Ellis (1988) and Higgs and Clifford (1982) seem to be describing a similar phenomenon when they observe that a learner's successful use of communication strategies (e.g., avoidance and paraphrase) can inhibit growth by preventing acquisition of more target-like forms.

The second obstacle to making use of a new language item is whether or not it serves a function that is useful or needed by me. A language item may fill a gap where I had no word before, but I may not have any real need to fill that gap. "I may not need a lathe in my tool shop if I am not making wooden chairs or bowls, and I may not need the word *investment* if I never talk or read about business" (entry #21, 03-17b).

I have not been able to determine if this phenomenon has been identified and investigated elsewhere in the existing literature, though Van Patten's (1993) concept of restructuring to accommodate greater complexity in one's interlanguage (mentioned previously) seems relevant.   To the extent that this may be a case of "teaching an old dog a new trick," it seems to be fundamentally related to the fossilization/stabilization phenomenon, and seems worthy of more detailed investigation.

Incomprehensible gibberish. My method for listening practice involved repetitive listening to short passages from the TOPIK test. I would first listen to a passage a few times trying to catch as much meaning as I could. I would try to take note of unfamiliar words or grammar that were causing trouble with comprehension. Then I would go to the written transcripts, again targeting unfamiliar language. After gaining a complete understanding of the passage, either alone or with my language informant, I would listen to it again—usually repetitively. I had an implicit assumption that If I dissected the passage and understood it fully ahead of time, repetitive listening would drill the new language into my subconscious and relatively opaque passages would in this way become transparent. However this did not seem to work as well as I expected as noted in this diary entry:

> I'm kind of surprised, but it seems as though repetitive listening of a passage
> doesn't seem to drill it in and make the unfamiliar language familiar. It's almost
> the opposite—the more I listen to it, the more it turns to gibberish, and my mind
> just can't seem to pin down the sounds and connect them with meaning.

Many of these passages contained quite a bit of new language, and possibly it was just too much for my mind to process. However, that would not explain why it seemed to get worse with more listening.

Nord (1998) cites research done at the Defense Language Institute by Valerian Postovsky (1970) that may shed some light on this. Working with entry level learners of Russian with no previous exposure, the experimental group was exposed to the sounds of Russian—working with minimal pair and intonational pattern distinction—without being provided with any meaning for the sounds they were hearing. The idea was that by first sensitizing them to the phonology of the language, they would learn Russian better and faster when they entered the regular course. However, to Postovsky's surprise, the experimental students did worse, in fact they seemed to have fossilized at a rudimentary level, never catching up with the students who had not had the experimental treatment— even years later. "It was as if the process of listening to non-comprehended language input had immunized them against learning the language" (Nord, 1998, p. 4). Nord, citing personal communication, even claims that Postovsky regretted what he had done to those students until his dying days.

Is it possible that my years of authentic exposure in my immersive environment has done as much harm as good? Is it possible that the more time I spend on the subway or in a cafe overhearing conversations or advertisements in Korean without attending to meaning, the more I tune it out as meaningless background noise? This is, in fact, something that I have always enjoyed about living in Korea: Unlike in America, my attention is not constantly being high jacked by comprehensible language of people and

advertisements all around me. I have even sometimes worried that if my Korean improved too much, I might lose this ability to tune out the sounds around me and exist in my peaceful little bubble. All these questions and Nord's discussion certainly give me pause and make me consider the importance and nature of the input in SLA. I am not sure if my experience with my repetitive audio listening is related, and I would certainly need to investigate more deeply, but according to Nord (1998), this is indeed *not* a good technique. He says that when speech is too fast for us, it turns into noise, and trying to overcome this with repetition just desensitizes us to the noise and does more harm than good. Instead, he claims that slowing down the rate of speech is much more effective than repetition, citing research by Zhao (1997) as evidence.

    Invisible Progress. One final observation that seems significant was the realization that my perceived language stabilization might be largely an illusion.

> I wonder if I actually have been improving, but that it is just not easy to see—just as it is difficult to observe the slow incremental process of one's own aging until you flip through a photo album and it becomes obvious (entry #30, 03-23b).

Clearly more tangible aspects of progress such as productive vocabulary and grammar had slowed significantly due to lack of explicit study. But what of less tangible, internal processes and my communicative ability? How much have they improved without my noticing?

Research Question #3: a. What are the pros and cons of my chosen language learning program, combining test-focused and communicative-focused practice?

Concerning the efficacy of my chosen learning method, diary observations were not frequent, but several themes did emerge. This question must also be evaluated in light the results of Question 3b. concerning my language progress, which will be addressed by looking at the assessment tools in the next section.

Narrowing the playing field. One major issue I have had in the past, is feeling overwhelmed by the amount of vocabulary I encounter and the difficulty in deciding which items are worth studying at a given time—which items will be encountered again, and which are unlikely to reoccur and therefore unlikely to be integrated as usable and lasting language. One major success with my study method was that it seemed successful at addressing this issue as described in this passage:

> I am pleased at how often words I am learning and studying pop up in multiple places. Just today, several words that I translated from passages in the tests showed up in the next unit of my vocabulary book. Whenever this happens, not only do the words get reinforced in my mind, but it feels like a small victory and it makes the language seem finite and possible, rather than infinite and impossible. (entry #18, 03-15)

As I progressed though my study resources the number of previously encountered vocabulary items became more frequent, and I could imagine that as the proportion of known to unknown words increased, so would the transparency of the language—at least within the confines of my study materials.

It seems very valuable to be operating within a somewhat confined space, like learning to drive in a parking lot where variables are limited before going out onto the road where anything can happen. In order to get the needed repetition of exposure in various contexts, it seems necessary to narrow the playing field, so that the likelihood of seeing a given word again is not like finding a needle in a haystack. (entry #18, 03-15)

Of course this observation is not groundbreaking. The limiting, recycling, and leveling of language is a fundamental design feature of most language learning resources. However, compared to the breadth and diversity of materials available for learning English, relatively few learning materials exist for learning Korean or other less common languages, and for me, finding leveled comprehensible input has been a challenge. Therefore, for me, the TOPIK test focused materials have proven themselves a valuable resource.

Possibly more important than repeated exposure to a vocabulary item is repeated production of it, especially in authentic contexts. In this respect, my chosen method also showed promise as it was relatively common that I found opportunities to try out new words learned from the TOPIK materials in conversations with my language partner.

I felt pretty comfortable today speaking with Sol.... I was able to use a number of the words that I have been studying recently. Sometimes I have to think for a moment in order to retrieve the word, sometimes I can't think of it and quickly grab my flashcards to look for it, or ask Sol for help. But in any case, the words

usually seem pretty readily available and it seems that with a little bit more

reinforcement they should take hold. (entry #31, 03-24)

It is this type of feedback between the test-focused and communicative-focused

methods that I hoped for when designing my learning program. Though my combined

method seemed relatively successful at providing both passive and productive recycling

of vocabulary items, it did not seem to be doing so with the grammar items I was

studying.

Grammar not working the same as vocabulary. I don't remember using any of the

new grammar I'm studying when I was speaking today. In fact, I don't seem to be

retaining any of the grammar structures I am learning at all. I think it might take

much more explicit productive practice to make grammar usable for me. (entry

#18, 03-15)

Similarly, it seemed that these grammar structures where not showing up in the TOPIK

test passages, and so I felt they were not getting the necessary reinforcement.

Communicative practice: good, but not well integrated. My communicative

practice with my language partner Sol was no doubt invaluable but seemed relatively

disorganized and not well integrated into my overall program. This passage describes the

perceived value:

The studying I've been doing so far is mostly alone and mostly vocabulary,

grammar, and reading oriented, I have been realizing that I really need to balance

my studying with speaking practice to make the language stick in a meaningful

way and make it productive language. The real-time nature of having an actual

conversation seems so entirely different from the studial techniques—like actually

skiing compared to just reading about skiing. (entry #22, 03-17c)

There were a few reasons that I felt my communicative-focused study suffered. The main reason was that I perceived form-focused learning, especially vocabulary acquisition to be most important at this point in my language learning. Based on this, the two halves of my combined approach were not given equal weight, and priority was given to the test-focused half. Second, to really improve my ability on a given conversational topic as originally intended, I felt that I needed to spend more energy outside of our scheduled meeting times studying related vocabulary and grammar. As it was, I was studying lots of vocabulary and grammar for the TOPIK test, and felt I didn't want to take extra energy specifically for conversational practice. Another issue was that my goals and how to achieve them did not seem clear enough and possibly required more planning and preparation to do well. It was already difficult to give time and energy to studying, so when I did study, I defaulted to my TOPIK materials, in which my goals and procedures were straight forward and required no extra thought.

Study with people. Though my communicative sessions were enjoyable and certainly challenging, I have found that for myself this type of conversational practice is not enough to make new language "stick" and for this, repetitive memorization practice is necessary. Prior to the study, I prioritized vocabulary and grammar acquisition, and unlike many, I have always enjoyed the memorization and repetition aspects of language learning; however, over the course of the study period, this type of repetitive solo study did start to try my attention and motivation. One thing I found was that time with a

language informant is also well spent on form-focused repetitive practice whether reviewing vocabulary flashcards, or practicing making sentences with new vocabulary or grammar.

> When I met with Jinju today, she quizzed me on words we had highlighted before, and which I had studied for the past week. It was much more fun and challenging to have her quiz me than to study alone. (entry #8, 02-24)

Hanf (2013) made a similar observation, noting that he enjoyed when his girlfriend quizzed him on his flashcard, and impressing her motivated him to study hard.

<div align="center">Assessing my Language Progress</div>

Research Question #3: b. Can this approach help me to improve my Korean language ability?

Because this question was difficult for me to answer objectively, the study was designed to include two forms of outside assessment to reveal any potential progress to my language ability.

TOPIK Test Assessment. To assess my communicative ability and progress, pre and posttest were conducted (as described in chapter three). The results are shown in Table 1. On the beginner-level test I receiving an overall score of 91.5%—well above the 70% needed to achieve TOPIK level 2 (high beginner). Because I felt that the beginner-level test was not challenging enough, I decided to focus my studying and assessment on the intermediate tests, and did not take a beginner-level posttest. After taking the intermediate-level pretest, I wrote in my diary: "It was much more difficult for

me than the beginner test... 80 to 90 percent of the test was difficult enough for me that I just guessed randomly on the questions" (entry #2, 02-15).

On the posttest, I felt little improvement and the scores confirmed that I had made no detectable improvement; in fact, the overall score stayed almost exactly the same (see Table 1). Because I found much of the test too difficult and/or ran out of time, on many of the questions, I randomly selected one of the four multiple choice items. I decide it was more important for me to know how many questions I got correct because I actually understood them—or at least had an educated guess on—so I eliminated the random selections. Both scores are included in Table 1. The scores in parentheses are those that include the random selections and are therefore a better indicator of the score I might receive on a real test, but a less accurate indicator of my actual ability. Both are well below the 50% and 70% needed to achieve level 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 1
TOPIK Test Scores: out of 100 points possible per section

	Vocabulary & Grammar	Writing	Listening	Reading	Overall average
			Pretests		
Beginner Test (Feb. 8, 2015)	93	79	100	94	91.5%
Intermediate Test (Feb. 15, 2015)	21 (28)	28 (28)	41 (55)	20 (35)	27.5% (36.5%)
			Posttest		
Intermediate Test (April. 23, 2015)	26 (35)	32 (36)	31 (38)	19 (35)	27% (36%)

Note. Scores in parentheses include randomly guessed answers.

Communicative Assessment. To assess my communicative ability and progress, pre and post-interviews were conducted (as described in chapter three). The results (see Table 2) substantiate my original self-assessment, and seem to place me somewhere between beginner and intermediate levels. Though the IELTS does not use the term beginner or intermediate, but band 5 describes a *modest user* who, "usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self correction and/or slow speech to keep going; may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers; produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems" (IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors).

Table 2
Communicative Assessment Scores on IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors (Public Version)

	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation	Overall average
Interview A (Pretest)					
Assessor 1	4	4.5	5	5	4.63
Assessor 2	5	5	4	5	4.75
Average	4.5	4.75	4.5	5	4.69
Interview B (Posttest)					
Assessor 1	5.5	5	5	6	5.38
Assessor 2	6	5	5	6	5.5
Average	5.75	5	5	6	5.44

Note. Scores represent bands and half bands (see Appendix E for description of bands).

The post interview indicates some improvement with an overall increase of 0.75 points and a potential increase from band 4 to band 5

Summary

In this chapter I presented the results of my data collection. In chapter five I will summarize and interpret these findings, discuss their implications, and make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to find answers to the following questions. In general, what factors are important in my language learning experience and more specifically

1. What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to intermediate levels?

2. What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

3. a. What are the pros and cons of my chosen language learning program, combining test-focused and communicative-focused practice? b. Can this approach help me to improve my Korean language ability?   In this chapter I discuss major findings regarding these questions, the limitations of this study, implications for other language learners and teachers, and suggestions for further research.

<div align="center">Major Findings</div>

Research Question #1: What factors are important in transitioning from the beginning to intermediate levels?

Factors related to vocabulary acquisition. In relation to question #1, a number of my observations concerned vocabulary acquisition. First, I found that compared with beginning-level vocabulary, intermediate vocabulary words were often increasingly abstract and therefore require more energy to commit to memory, as well as a greater

amount of external guidance to properly use. Second, at the intermediate level, I found it more difficult to select which words to learn next because the number of words increases, their frequency decreases, energy can easily be wasted studying words that are not useful, and this situation can easily lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed. A similar issue was the difficulty of balancing how many words to study with how deeply to study each word. A final vocabulary related observation was that making etymological connections between new words and already known words was helpful in retaining the new word; in addition, as one's lexical stock increases in size, this strategy becomes increasingly accessible.

Cognitive factors. Besides these vocabulary related issues, a few cognitive factors emerged as important to the transition from beginning to intermediate level. Several of my observations indicated to me that language is stored in hierarchical relationships in our mind, which carries with it a number of implications to successful learning. Similarly, it occurred to me that building a house may be a good analogy for learning a language, and I started to wondered if my informal learning at beginning level had left me with an inadequate foundation, too weak to support higher-level growth. Finally, I found myself unsure of how to integrating higher-level language into my IL, which seemed to be keeping me from progressing. Again, the house analogy came to mind and caused me to wonder if building a L2 is not just a process of adding more and more material, but is also a process of complexifying existing material.

Research Question #2: What factors seem to contribute to stabilization? Conversely, what factors seem to help progress beyond a stabilized state?

Acculturation and Identity. This study affirmed for me that a host of affective factors may be contributing to my language stabilization. A number of my diary entries discussed negative feelings and frustration about learning, the effect of positive and negative feedback from others, and the struggle with motivation and distractions. These are largely idiosyncratic to me and my circumstances; however the following observations are possibly more generalizable. First, I found that a relative lack of acculturation into the target culture was a significant factor in my language stabilization. While I had strong integrative motivations early in my stay, these seemed to decline as my time in Korea increased leaving me with few opportunities to meaningfully use the

language. Second, I found that changes in my identity over my time in Korea had had a

negative impact on my language growth. Two specific factors were identified: a lack of

willingness to take risks or appear infantile and a tendency to take the dominant position

by using English in interactions with Koreans.

Cognitive Factors. A few cognitive factors also emerged as significant factors in

the stabilization of my language. First, was the phenomenon I titled "a new tool in the

shop" in which I described the difficulty I had with integrating some new language items

into my productive language. The difficulty seemed to be that a stabilized IL has habitual

ways of communicating, and may resist new ways if they seem redundant or not useful.

Second, in my observation "incomprehensible gibberish," I noted that my strategy of

repetitive listening of audio passages did not seem to be aiding my listening

comprehension as expected. This observation combined with Nord's (1998) discussion

led me to wonder if my years of authentic exposure to the language while immersed in

my target culture may have actually desensitized me to the language and done as much

harm as good. Finally, in my observation "invisible progress" I introduced the possibility

that a perceived stagnation of language growth might be at least partly attributable to the

difficulty of observing such growth after beginner-level learning.

Research Question #3: a. What are the pros and cons of my chosen language learning

program, combining test-focused and communicative-focused practice?

In evaluating research question 3a., the diary provided only a few insights. One

way my learning program proved successful was in helping to "narrow the playing field"

or confine the scope of language I was dealing with, which helped provide repeated

exposure to new vocabulary words thereby making the language seem less overwhelming. However, this did not seem to work well for the grammar structures that I studied, but there is no indication of why this might be. Another observation was that my communicative practice was very valuable, yet I wished that it was more integrated with my test-focused materials because my energy seemed divided between the two, and I gave less priority to my communicative practice. Besides these, the scarcity of information provided by the diary, as well as limiting factors described later, make evaluating the efficacy of my language learning program difficult, and I would hesitate to draw any conclusions about it.

Research Question #3: b. Can this approach help me to improve my Korean language ability?

In evaluating research question 3b. it is necessary to look at the assessment tools to determine if I was able to improve my Korean ability. On the surface, the TOPIK pretest-posttest results, show no indication of improvement. The overall averages of the two tests are remarkably similar, showing a 0.5 percent decrease from pretest to posttest. In each sub-section of the test there is more variation, and because two sections show an increase and two sections show a decrease, it is easy to assume that the variations represent insignificant natural variations in the tests questions and my performance. However two sections stick out as noteworthy. In the writing section of the test, my score increased from 28 (28) to 32 (36) which does not seem significant in relation to the variation found in other sections. However, Table 1 does not show that my score on the written essay jumped from 12 to 22 out of a total of 30 points. My informant Jinju, who

scored my writing, and I both felt that my written essay showed significant improvement from pretest to posttest.   This is the only element of the test that I feel comfortable interpreting as a potentially real indicator of a change in ability, and I can offer a tentative explanation for this marked increase. I had never practiced writing prior to this study, so it seems likely that I was able to make rather marked gains in a short time. In particular, there were a number of conventions of formal writing with which I was unfamiliar and able to quickly learn and put into practice. The other section of the test that seems noteworthy is the listening section, which dropped from 41 (55) on the pretest to 31 (38) on the posttest. As the greatest variation on the test, this seems too significant to ignore but explanations are not forthcoming. The discussion on "incomprehensible gibberish" comes to mind as a possible explanation, but this seems quite unlikely to me, so without further exploration, I can only treat this as an insignificant anomaly.

The communicate assessment in the form of pre and post interviews indicates some improvement with an overall increase of 0.75 points and a potential increase from band 4 to band 5. However, I would hesitate to draw conclusions from these results for two reasons. First, my feeling is that my gains were likely performance gains from "being in practice" due to the regular conversation time I was getting, and did not represent deeper or more complex ability of a lasting nature. Second, and more importantly, during the posttest interview two of the randomly picked interview prompts were the same as those picked during the pretest interview. I therefore had the advantage of having already responded to these two questions once before, which calls into question the validity of the results indicating improvement.

Limitations

A number of issues should be highlighted that may limit the conclusions that can be drawn from this study. It has already been mentioned that a few issues potentially limited the efficacy of my language learning program: namely, difficulties in scheduling time with my language informants, and the distraction of upcoming life changes cutting my study period short. Furthermore, one of the objectives for the communicative half of the method was to target my specific needs and personal interests, but I found I could not easily come up with such needs and interests. Therefore the topics I chose were only of vague interest to me, so I was not motivated to spend extra time studying them.

Concerning my potential language gains, the TOPIK test assessment indicates that I made no significant overall gains, and the communicative assessment indicated that I made slight gains; however, I believe these results are also dubious. As previously mentioned the repeating of interview questions between pre and post interviews calls into question the gains indicated by the communicative assessment.   Even if the results of these two assessment tools are accurate, I believe a more serious limitation is that the study period of approximately ten weeks was too short to draw conclusions about the bigger question of moving beyond plateau. I very well may have started on a path of progress, but my gains were not yet markedly visible. Conversely, I may have been struggling in vain to break free from a host of factors holding me at my current plateau. A longer and more rigorous study would be needed to draw firmer conclusions. Because it is difficult to draw conclusions about any potential language gains or lack thereof, it equally difficult to evaluate my chosen method of learning in any objective way.

Implications

While acknowledging that the previously discussed limitations make it difficult to draw any conclusions about fossilization/stabilization or my chosen method of study, it was never the purpose of this study to establish quantifiable, experimental evidence to support or refute any hypotheses. Rather, this was an exploratory study meant to generate rich descriptive details of the inner processes of my language learning journey, which may in turn prove insightful to understanding fossilization/stabilization as well as stimulating hypotheses about these. To this end, I believe that this study was successful.

My Language Learning Program

Because of the limiting factors surrounding my chosen method of study, I could not comfortably recommend this method or not recommend it. On a personal level, I will likely continue using the TOPIK test as a method of study for the Korean language for the reasons initially given: It is structured and leveled, there are many published materials available, and it provides the motivation of reaching a goal as well as a visible measurement of progress. I would still want to balance this form-focused learning with speaking and real communicative practice, however I would want to be addressing more specific needs with my communicative practice. Additionally, I would want to have more specific and varied communicative activities to engage in with my language informant such as those outlined in Greg Thomson's GPA (e.g., A. Thomson, A. Thomson, C. Thomson, & G. Thomson, 1999; G. Thomson, 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 2011) and Peter Pikkert's LACE (Pikkert, 2013). Alternatively, I would try to find a way to create communicative practice from the TOPIK materials so that my learning program

felt more integrated. As the TOPIK test and associated materials are specific to Korean, it is difficult to say whether or not a similar method could be extended to other languages.

<u>Affective Factors of Stabilization</u>

Two main affective factors arose as significant contributors to my language stabilization. As in the beginning honeymoon period of my stay, the motivation to interact with people was an automatic part of wanting to explore the country and culture; likewise, the exchange of culture provided continuing topics of conversation and a reason for socializing. However, as this honeymoon period wore off so did my social interactions. I believe it is critical that one be prepared to continue the process of acculturation, by finding new avenues of socializing, and by "complexifying" types of interactions. I found that generic socializing with Koreans became uninteresting repetitive and my most authentic social interactions were with the friends made through my hobby of surfing. Therefore, to continue improving one's language, I think it is important to join clubs, churches, volunteer groups, language exchange groups or other such social networks. It might seem backwards or artificial to *create* avenues of socializing in order to learn the language, as usually language is learned to support socialization and other needs. However, I believe this is a reciprocal relationship: Language growth enables further acculturation, and acculturation enables further language growth.

Second, my findings also indicate that one's identity plays a key role in successful language learning and support Guiora (1972) and Acton's (1984) belief that an overly rigid *language ego* can inhibit language growth. Conversely, flexibility or *permeability*

of this ego, can aid in acquisition. Having a limited command of the L2 can essentially make one feel like a clumsy, inept child and easily lead to embarrassment in many social situations. Sometimes this was not a problem for me, but at other times I did not want to lower my status with colleagues, business acquaintances, or my girlfriend. For me, the implication is that I need to make sure that there are times and places where I am comfortable being the "clumsy child"—certainly with language partners, but also in some social circles. It is also worth noting that the most uncomfortable interactions are usually when using Korean with people whose English ability is much higher than my Korean. Conversely, the most comfortable interactions are with people whose command of English is equal to or less than my Korean.

Cognitive Factors: Fossilization Revisited

In this study, I have made a number of observations about cognitive factors which may be contributing to my language stabilization, and I believe that these carry significant implications for language learning. Indeed they have fundamentally changed my view of fossilization and language learning in general. These implications are too broad and theoretical to fully elucidate in the conclusion to this study; however, because they represent what I consider to be the most important implications of this study, I will try to summarize the key points here in the hopes that they might spur further research.

Going into the study I was rather dismissive of the idea of fossilization. My thoughts went something like this: Of course most people's language acquisition declines and eventually ceases, but probably because their language needs are met, and/or their motivation, time, and energy has declined—as seemed to be true in my case. Further, I

agreed with Long's (2003) position: How could we ever determine that one's language has *permanently* fossilized? With enough motivation, can't we always choose to continue improving at any skill? However, I have come to be much less dismissive of fossilization as a concept, and have started to believe that there may be significant cognitive factors contributing to this phenomenon. My views on research questions 1 and 2 have also changed through the course of this study. Originally, transitioning from one ability level to the next and moving beyond plateau were separate topics in my head. However, I have come to believe that they may be intimately connected.

Both of these changes in my view stemmed from a change in my larger conceptualization of language learning and plateauing. In my introduction, I compared language learning to a journey up a mountain with regular gains and plateaus, but this analogy has become a bit too linear for me, and my observations led me to believe that the analogy of building a house may offer more insight. Perhaps when our language learning stalls out, it is not simply because we are tired from the hike; perhaps it is not so easy to take a quick rest and then continue on. Perhaps it is more like building a house, where, as Jones (1994, 1995) pointed out, each new phase of language learning requires new techniques and strategies which may challenge the learners ability to move on—much as the saw and hammer must be traded in when working on the plumbing. I believe many insightful links can be drawn from this house analogy but I will only address the two implications that stand out as most significant to me:

Problems in the foundation. My observations "hierarchical memory" and "wise selection and ordering" suggest that our mental representations of language items build

upon themselves and therefore the order of acquisition may be important—much like you would not build a house from the roof down. Further, my observation of "a well structured house" along with Higgs and Clifford's (1982) discussion suggest that problems in foundational language may not support full maturation of the L2 and may result in premature termination. However, couldn't these problems in the foundation of the IL just be remedied when detected? Higgs and Clifford suggest that this is more difficult than it sounds, stating that "remediation in these cases is seldom, if ever, successful" (1982, p. 67). Higgs and Clifford go on to argue that contemporary approaches that focus on communication, often at the expense of accuracy, may be to blame in many of these terminal cases. Numerous researchers (e.g., Graham, 1981; Nord, 1998; Valette, 1991; Vigil & Oller, 1976) agree with this position—the general argument being that inaccurate models and non-correction of inaccurate speech production will lead to fossilization because systematic errors in learners' IL will usually go unremediated. Valette summarizes the common conclusion of this view: "The key strategy for the prevention of fossilization lies in providing a maximum degree of accurate *and* appropriate input at the early levels of instruction" (1991, p. 327). Of course this contradicts many contemporary theories of SLA which see language acquisition as a dynamic and largely unconscious process of hypothesis formation and refinement in which restructuring of faulty hypotheses is a regular part of the process.   If Higgs and Clifford's contention that these terminal cases rarely recover is true, what would explain this? This question leads to the second major implication of this study.

Crystallization. Over the course of this study my observations of my own internal

processes and my readings of the literature have led me to hypothesize the existence of a

cognitive factor that may contribute to language stabilization or fossilization. I hesitate to

so suggest that I am the first to describe this phenomenon, but since I have not been able

to locate a clear description of it in the fossilization literature, I tentatively suggest the

term "crystallization" to describe it. I suggest crystallization as it is commonly used to

describe how vague and malleable notions precipitate into a more crystallized idea. I

believe the IL forms in a similar way: New information in the form of words, grammar

structures, and hypotheses about how the language work begin as vague and disconnected

ideas that gradually precipitate into place creating more crystallized structures and sub-

structures. Crystallization implies a process of becoming more defined, interconnected,

rigid, and resistant to change—but does not necessarily imply permanence, nor non-

target-like . Ideally, the IL will crystallize into target-like structures, but unfortunately

the whole fossilization discussion centers around the observation that erroneous

structures are commonplace.   There is nothing in this theory to suggest that faulty

structures cannot be undone and corrected. However, to the extent that language is a

"complex hierarchical system" (Lightbown, 1985, p. 177) it would seem that the larger

the IL becomes, the more crystallized it becomes. Moreover, the longer erroneous

structures go unchallenged, the more deeply they become embedded, and the more

energy will be required to destabilize and restructure them—much as a mistake made in

building a house, may be easily remedied if caught quickly, but much more difficult as

the house expands in size and complexity.

If there is any validity to the prior discussion, the implications to language learning are clearly significant, but cannot be adequately covered here. For Higgs and Clifford (1982) and Valette (1991) the implications are clear: Namely that, approaches that emphasize fluency at the expense of accuracy are likely to lead to fossilization; therefore, accurate input and corrective feedback at early stages of learning are key to the prevention of fossilization. But clearly this is a contentious position and they provide no experimental evidence to support their conclusions. However, Higgs and Clifford also clearly state that they are not condemning communicative methodologies, but rather calling for a recognition of the appropriate role that linguistic accuracy plays in achieving communicative competence. I can only leave the question open for further research to investigate.
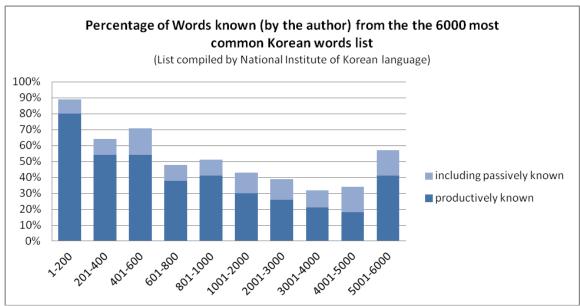
<div align="center">Further Research</div>

Bailey and Ochsner (1983) point out that the diary study is a uniquely valuable research design for hypothesis creation, which proved to be true for me. This study caused me to take a detailed look into the internal processes of my own language learning and the factors that seemed to be keeping me from improving my Korean language ability, and out of this introspection have come numerous observations, questions, and hypotheses that I believe to be worthy of further investigation. In the implications section I highlighted two hypotheses that I believe carry the most significant implications and therefore are the most deserving of further research.

Though I feel that these models are metaphorically appealing, they are purely hypothetical and may not actually reflect how we learn or how a language system is

developed and stored in our mind. Certainly it would take further research and

discussion to determine if they have any credibility or applicability to our understanding

of L2 learning and fossilization. To validate or invalidate these hypotheses, a more

thorough search of the literature very well may uncover material that I have overlooked.

And if these ideas have not been covered in the SLA literature, then it seems likely that

they have been covered elsewhere in general theories of learning in the cognitive and

neuro-sciences.   I regret that I do not have a background in these fields nor the time or

space to investigate them here. If these models do turn out to have any credibility and

value, more thought would have to be put into how they can be refined and their

methodological implication, both in the classroom and for the independent language

learners around the world.

APPENDIX A: ESTIMATE OF THE AUTHOR'S KOREAN VOCABULARY SIZE

(PRIOR TO STUDY)

The list was divided into sub-groups: the first 200 words, the next 200 words (i.e. 201-400) and so on. After the first 1,000 words, the list was grouped by 1,000 words and I took a random samplings of 200 words from each sub-group to arrive at the estimates represented in the chart. *The unexpectedly dramatic increase in sub-group 5,001-6,000 seems to be due to the list containing a significant number of food, animal, and place names, which I am easily familiar with. This seems to be due to a degree of topical organization occurring especially near the end of the list. This would suggest that this is not a pure frequency list, but a recommended core vocabulary list.

APPENDIX B: DETAILS OF THE TOPIK TEST (OLD FORMAT)

The Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) is a Korean language test for people learning Korean as a foreign language: overseas Koreans who are learning Korean, those wishing to study at a Korean university, and for those who want to be employed at Korean companies in and outside of Korea. TOPIK is administered by the National Institute for International Education (NIIED) and offered several times per year in Korea and abroad.

The format of the TOPIK changed in July 2014. For this study I chose to use the old format for my study because of the greater variety and availability of study materials and past test papers. Accordingly all of the details concerning the TOPIK test described here and in this study apply to the original format and may or may not be true of the new format. Two versions of the test were offered: standard S-TOPIK and the business B-TOPIK. Only S-TOPIK is discussed in this study. Further information about the new format can be found on the official TOPIK website (http://www.topik.go.kr/).

The test offers official certification for foreigners wanting to work, study, or gain residency in Korea. The old TOPIK has three different difficulty levels given as separate tests: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Each level is divided into two sub-levels for a total of six grades. The levels and scoring are shown in Table 1. To pass grades 1, 3, and 5, an overall average score of 50 percent or above and no less than 40 percent in any one test section must be achieved on their respective tests. To pass grades 2,4, and 6, and overall score of 70 percent or above and no less than 50 percent in any one section must be achieved.

Table 1:
Levels & Passing Scores for TOPIK (old format)

Level	Grade	Pass Thresholds	Fail Thresholds (in any one section)
Beginner	1st Grade	50%	40%
	2nd Grade	70%	50%
Intermediate	3rd Grade	50%	40%
	4th Grade	70%	50%
Advanced	5th Grade	50%	40%
	6th Grade	70%	50%

(Kim, Moon, Yoo, Lee, & Choi, 2012)

Table 2:
TOPIK Level Descriptors

Beginner level	
1st Grade	Use of basic commands of Korean for survival, such as greeting, purchasing, ordering, etc. Expressing and understanding oneself in simple everyday conversation by making simple sentences from 800 basic words.
2nd Grade	Discussion of familiar topics employing a vocabulary of about 1,500~2,000 words. Distinguishing correctly between formal and informal situations.
Intermediate level	
3rd Grade	Carrying out transactions with people in public spaces and maintaining social relationships. Understanding the correct usage of words and speech. Command of fundamental characteristics of Korean.
4th Grade	Comprehension of news articles, general social issues and abstract topics with accuracy and fluency. Comprehension of Korean social and cultural contents relying on essential idioms and understanding of representative aspects of Korean culture.
Advanced Level	
5th Grade	High fluency in using the Korean language in professional research or work. Understanding and discussing less unfamiliar topics in politics, economics and other fields. Usage of appropriate expressions, distinguishing formal and informal, written and spoken, by context.
6th Grade	Absolutely fluent in the Korean language for professional research or work, Capacity to understand and express oneself without problem, although without the full fluency of a native speaker.

Retrieved from http://www.topikguide.com/topik-overview

The TOPIK test covers four areas divided into two sections (see Table 3). Ninety minutes is allowed to take each section with a 30 minute break in-between. Except for several questions in the writing section, all question are multiple choice with 4 choices. Three to five of the writing questions require completing a sentence of paragraph. The last writing question is a short essay between 150-300 letters on the beginner test, 400-600 letters for intermediate, and 700-800 letters for the advanced test.

Table 3:
TOPIK Question Composition

Section	1st Section			2nd Section		Total
Area	Vocabulary/ Grammar	Writing		Listening	Reading	4 Areas
Type of Questions	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice	Written Answers	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice / Written Answers
Number of Questions	30	10	4-6	30	30	105-107
Score	100	40	60	100	100	400

(Kim, Moon, Yoo, Lee, & Choi, 2012)

Table 4 is a translated copy of the writing evaluation guidelines for the intermediate short essay question.

Table 4:
Scoring Rubric for Written Essay portion of Intermediate TOPIK (old format)

Category	Scoring Criteria		Scoring Division		
			High	Mid	Low
Content and Task Completion (9 points)	1. Does the essay correctly answer the given topic? 2. Do the essay contents address all of the points asked for? 3. Is the essay's content varied and descriptive?		9-6	5-3	2-1
Essay Development & Structure (6 points)	1. Is the beginning and end proper? 2. Are the sentences structured in a proper and natural way? 3. Does each paragraph contain a proper amount of content? 4. Are connections between paragraph close and natural?		6-5	4-3	2-1
Language Use (12 points)	Vocabulary (4 points)	Is a variety of intermediate level vocabulary used correctly?	4	3-2	1
	Grammar (5 points)	Is the essay composed using grammatically correct sentences?	5-4	3-2	1
	Spelling (3 points)	Are spelling, spacing, etc. correct?	3	2	1
Formality (3 points)	Does the essay contain appropriately formal vocabulary, grammar, and expressions, and *not* contain colloquial vocabulary, grammar, expressions, sentence endings , omitted particles, or sentence fragments?		3	2	1
TOTAL (30 points)					

Retrieved from http://www.topikguide.com/2013/04/topik

APPENDIX C: SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAM

Skills	Weekly Schedule*	Intermediary Objectives	Final Goals
Reading	8 passages (from reading section of test)	I can quickly read and easily understand the reading passages on the Intermediate TOPIK test	
Writing	1 essay	I can easily write a 400 character essay on personal topics in 15 minutes.	
Listening	8 passages (from listening section of test)	I can easily understand all of the listening passages on the intermediate TOPIK test	**I can easily pass level 4 of the intermediate TOPIK test.**
Vocabulary	3 units (approx. 30 words per unit)	I know all 2200 900 core vocabulary words from TOPIK vocabulary book (Kim, 2012) (plus additional vocab. from TOPIK tests)	
Grammar	4 units (approx. 3-6 grammar structures per unit)	I know all 150 50 three-star** grammar structures (passively) from TOPIK grammar book (Kim, 2010)	
Speaking	1 topic per 2 weeks		**I can easily have a conversation about these topics:** 1. Childhood, Family & Background 2. Travel 3. Life / Experiences in Korea

* Schedule to finish studying 2 TOPIK tests, the vocabulary book, and grammar book in 2 months.
** Grammar structures are rated from one to three stars based on importance/frequency on TOPIK test.
~~deleted items~~ represent original goals adjusted after found to be too ambitious.

APPENDIX D: COMMUNICATIVE ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Topic #1: Childhood, family, prior experiences, general background, etc.   8 questions

1. What is the strongest memory of your childhood?
1. 어린 시절의 기억 중 가장 기억에 남는 일(것)은?

2. Briefly describe your family.
2. 당신의 가족에 대해 간략하게 묘사(설명)해 보세요

3. What were some positives and negatives about your university life?
3. 당신의 대학생활 중 좋았던 것과 나빴던 것이 무엇이었나요?

4. What event in your life has affected you the most?
4. 당신의 삶에서 어떤 일이 가장 당신에게 영향을 많이 끼쳤나요?

5. How did your mom and dad meet each other?
5. 당신의 어머니와 아버지는 어떻게 만나게 되었나요?

6. Describe your childhood home/hometown.
6. 당신의 어린 시절 집이나 고향에 대해서 (묘사)설명해보세요.

7. What do you think is the biggest difference between your childhood and the average Korean childhood?
7. 당신의 어린 시절과 한국사람들의 어린 시절의 가장 큰 차이점이 무엇이라고 생각하나요?

8. What was your dream job when you were young?
8. 당신은 어렸을 때 어떤 직업을 가지고 싶었나요?

Topic #2: Travel

1. Describe your most recent travel experience.
1. 당신의 최근 여행 경험에 대해서 설명해보세요

2. What is the most interesting place you've ever visited?
2. 당신이 방문했던 곳 중 어떤 곳이 가장 흥미로웠나요?

3. What are some benefits of travelling to different countries?

3. 다른 나라로 여행하는 것의 좋은 점은 무엇일까요?

4. What are the dangers of travelling in different countries?
4. 다른 나라에서 여행할 때 위험한 점은 무엇일까요?

5. Which country do you hope to travel to next?
5. 다음 번에 어떤 나라로 여행하기를 원하나요?

6. Do you prefer to spend vacations in Korea or in different countries? Explain why.
6. 당신의 한국에서 휴가를 보내기를 원하나요? 아니면 다른 나라에서 보내기를 원하나요? 그 이유가 무엇인지 설명해 보세요

7. Describe some travel experiences you've had in the United States.
7. 미국에서 여행을 했던 경험에 대해서 묘사해보세요

8. What advice would you give to someone who was travelling alone for the first time?
8. 처음으로 혼자 여행하는 사람을 위해서 어떤 조언을 해주고 싶은가요?

Topic #3: Life and experiences in Korea

1. In what ways is Korea different from what you originally expected?
1. 한국이 어떤 면에서 당신이 기대했던 것과 달랐나요?

2. What is the most challenging thing about living in Korea?
2. 한국에 살면서 가장 어려운 점은 무엇인가요?

3. In what ways is life in Korea different from life in the United States?
3. 어떤 면에서 미국에서의 삶과 한국에서의 삶이 다른가요?

4. Describe your most interesting experience in Korea.
4. 한국에서 가장 흥미로웠던 경험에 대해서 묘사(설명)해보세요

5. What are some positive aspects of Korean culture, in your opinion?
5. 당신이 생각하기에 한국문화의 좋은 점에는 어떤 것이 있나요?

6. What are some negative aspects of Korean culture, in your opinion?
6. 당신이 생각하기에 한국문화의 나쁜 점에는 어떤 것이 있나요?

7. Describe an experience of culture shock in Korea.
7. 한국에서 겪었던 문화충격에 대해 설명해보세요.

8. What advice would you give to someone moving to live in Korea for the first time?
8. 한국으로 이민 와서 처음 살게 된 사람에게 어떤 조언을 해주고 싶은가요?

APPENDIX E: COMMUNICATIVE ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

The IELTS 9-band scale (IELTS Band Scores)

Each band corresponds to a level of English competence. All parts of the test and the Overall Band Score can be reported in whole and half bands, e.g. 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0.

Band 9: Expert user: has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

Band 8: Very good user: has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Band 7: Good user: has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Band 6: Competent user: has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

Band 5: Modest user: has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Band 4: Limited user: basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

Band 3: Extremely limited user: conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

Band 2: Intermittent user: no real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

Band 1: Non-user: essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

Band 0: Did not attempt the test: No assessable information provided.

IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors - public version (IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors)

SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• Speech is often unintelligible
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does not attend			

Korean Translation of IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors - public version (IELTS speaking band descriptors)

Band	유창성과 유기성	어휘	문법과 정확성	발음
9	• 거의 반복없이 유창하게 말하며 스스로 오류를 수정함 단어나 문법에 대한 이해서가 아닌, 내용을 생각하면서(pause(말성임))를 함. • 주제에 관하여 적절하게 전개시킴	• 모든 주제에 대해 유창하고 정확하게 어휘를 사용함	• 자연스럽고 적절하며 다양한 문장 구조를 사용함 • 영어민 모인 실수하는 부분을 제외하고 지속적으로 정확함	• 정확하고 미묘하게 다양한 feature를 사용함 • 전체적으로 유연한 사용을 유지함 • 청자가 이해하는 데 다른 노력을 요하지 않음
8	• 아주 가끔씩 반복을 사용하며 유창하게 말하고 스스로 오류를 수정함; Pause(말성임)는 보통 내용과 관련되어 있으며 아주 가끔씩 단어의 문법으로 인해 발생함 • 주제에 관하여 유기적이고 적절하게 전개시킴	• 다양한 어휘를 쉽고 유연하게 사용하고 정확한 의미를 전달함 • 흔하지 않거나 관용적인 어휘를 능숙하게 사용하지만 때때로 오류를 범함 • 필요시 자신의 언어를 효과적으로 표현함	• 다양한 문장 구조를 유연하게 사용함 • 대부분 오류가 없는 문장을 사용하지만 아주 가끔 부적절한 실수가 있음	• Band9의 모든 긍정적인 속성을 보이고 Band8의 긍정적인 속면도 보임
7	• 장시간 말하기를 할 수 있지만 때때로 반복, 오류수정 혹은 pause(말성임) 때문에 유기성을 잃음 • 다양한 연결어를 사용하지만, 항상 적절한 것은 아님	• 주제에 관하여 말하기 위해 충분히 다양한 어휘를 사용하고, 정확하지 않음에도 의미를 명료하게 만듦 • 흔하지 않은 어휘와 관용적인 어휘를 약간 사용하고 연결과 그러한 스타일을 알고 있으며 가끔 부적절하게 사용할 수 있음 • 효과적으로 자신의 언어로 표현함	• 약간의 유연함과 함께 다양한 복잡한 구조를 사용함 • 오류가 없는 문장을 자주 만들지만 정확성 결함 혹은 기본적인 실수를 범함	• 가능은 통제된 features(별음, 억양 등)를 가진 범위를 사용함 • 특정한 구조를 제어적으로 사용하지만 정자가 하여금 • Band6의 긍정적인 속면도 보여줌
6	• 장시간 주제에 관하여 말하기 위해 충분히 다양한 어휘를 사용하고, 정확하지 않음에도 의미를 명료하게 만듦 • 보통 성공적으로 자신의 언어로 표현함	• 익숙하거나 익숙하지 않은 주제에 관하여 이야기를 할 수 있지만 제한적인 유연성을 가지고 (조금 유연하게) 어휘를 사용함 • 자신의 언어로 표현하기 위해 시도하지만 성공하기도 하고 실패하기도 함	• 단순하고 특정한 문장의 문장구조를 혼합하여 사용하지만 제한됨 • 특정한 구조를 제한적으로 사용하지만 보통으로 문법적으로 오류가 있으며 정자가 이해하는 데 가끔 어려움이 있음	• 가끔은 통제된 features(별음, 억양 등)를 가진 범위를 사용함 • 보통 효과적인 features의 사용을 계속적으로 유지되지 않음 • 전반적으로 이해 가능하지만 개별적인 어휘를 정못 발음하고
5	• 항상 눈에 띄는 말성임이 있으나 느리게 자유롭게 함. • 반복하게 반복을 사용하고 스스로 오류 수정을 자주함; 단순한 문장들을 연결시킬 수 있지만, 반복되는 간단한 연결어를 사용하여 때때로 유기적이지 못함	• 익숙한 주제에 관해서는 말을 수 있지만 익숙하지 않은 주제에 대해서는 오직 기본적인 의미전달만 가능하고 어휘를 선택에 있어서 오류를 범함 • 거의 자신의 언어로 표현하려고 하지 않음	• 단순한 문장 구조를 만들며 시도하지만 가끔씩 성공함 • 조금 익숙하지 않은 주제에 관해서 종합하지 않은 어휘를 사용함	• 제한적으로 발음 features를 사용함 • Feature(별음, 억양 등)를 통제하기 위해 노력하지만 실수가 종종 발생함 • 부정확한 발음의 종종 발생하여 정자로 하여금 때때로 이해하기 어렵게 함
4	• 단순한 문장들을 연결할 수 있으나 때에 반복되는 단순한 연결어를 사용하며 때때로 붕괴되는 간단한 연결어를 사용하여 때때로 유기적이지 못함	• 개인적인 정보를 전달하기 위해 단순한 어휘를 사용함 • 조금 익숙하지 않은 주제에 관해서 충분하지 않은 어휘를 사용함	• 기본적인 문장 구조를 만들며 때때로 정확하게 단순한 문장을 만들지만 종속적인 구조는 거의 만들지 못함 • 오류가 자주 발생하여 정자가 잘못 이해할 수 있음	• 제한적으로 발음 features를 사용함 • 몇몇 Band2의 특징을 보이며, 전부는 아니지만 Band 4의 특징도 보임
3	• 오직 간단하게 응답할 수 있으며 기본적인 메세지를 전달하는 데 어려움이 있음	• 오직 제한적인 어휘를 사용하며 암기된 표현만을 사용함	• 단순한 문장 구조를 만들고 시도하지만 가끔씩 성공함 하고 암기하여 암기된 표현에 의존함	
2	• 긴 말성임이 있음 (pause) • 의사소통이 아주 조금 가능함	• 오직 제한적인 연어를 사용하여 암기된 표현만을 사용함	• 단순한 문장구조를 만들지 못함	• 자주 이해하기 어려움
1	• 의사소통이 불가능함			
0	• 시험에 응시하지 않음			

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