ACQUISITION OF KOREAN NEGATION BY ROMANIAN SPEAKERS: CHALLENGES AND INSIGHTS[1][2]

Abstract: *This study delves into the acquisition of Korean negation by Romanian native speakers, exploring the challenges encountered and giving insight into the language learning process. The research investigates the differences in negation systems between Korean and Romanian, highlighting the complexities faced by Romanian learners as they navigate the unique structures of Korean negation. Through a contrastive analysis, error analysis, and corpus linguistics approach, the study uncovers patterns of misuse, semantic nuances, and grammatical restrictions that influence the acquisition of Korean negation by Romanian speakers. The findings shed light on the cognitive processes, linguistic factors, and strategies employed by learners to overcome challenges in acquiring Korean negation. By examining the linguistic features of both languages and analyzing the errors and difficulties faced by Romanian learners, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic language acquisition. The research underscores the importance of further investigations to support the effective acquisition of Korean negation by Romanian speakers.*

Keywords: *Korean negation, error analysis, second language learning, contrastive analysis*

L'ACQUISITION DE LA NÉGATION CORÉENNE PAR LES PARLEURS ROUMAINS : DÉFIS ET PERSPECTIVES

Résumé : *Cette étude se concentre sur l'acquisition de la négation coréenne par des locuteurs natifs roumains, explorant les défis rencontrés et offrant un aperçu du processus d'apprentissage des langues. La recherche examine les différences entre les systèmes de négation coréens et roumains, mettant en évidence les complexités auxquelles sont confrontés les apprenants roumains lorsqu'ils naviguent dans les structures uniques de la négation coréenne. Grâce à une analyse contrastive, une analyse des erreurs et une approche de la linguistique de corpus, l'étude met en évidence les schémas de mauvaise utilisation, les nuances sémantiques et les restrictions grammaticales qui influencent l'acquisition de la négation coréenne par les locuteurs roumains. Les résultats éclairent les processus cognitifs, les facteurs linguistiques et les stratégies employées par les apprenants pour surmonter les défis liés à l'acquisition de la négation coréenne. En examinant les caractéristiques linguistiques des deux langues et en analysant les erreurs et les difficultés rencontrées par les apprenants roumains, cette étude contribue à une compréhension plus approfondie de l'acquisition interlinguistique des langues. La recherche souligne l'importance de poursuivre les investigations pour soutenir l'acquisition efficace de la négation coréenne par les locuteurs roumains.*

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The study of how native speakers acquire the linguistic features of a second language is a fundamental aspect of second language acquisition research. One particularly interesting area to explore is the acquisition of negation structures, as the ways in which negation is expressed can vary significantly across languages. In the case of Romanian native speakers learning Korean, the differences in negation systems between the two languages present an intriguing challenge. While Romanian has a relatively straightforward negation system, Korean negation involves a more complex set of grammatical rules and particles. Understanding how Romanian speakers navigate and acquire these Korean negation structures offers valuable insight into the language learning process, shedding light on the cognitive and linguistic factors influencing second language development. This knowledge can enhance language teaching methodologies, supporting more effective language learning for individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds. By studying how Romanian speakers acquire Korean negation, we gain insight into the cognitive processes involved in cross-linguistic language learning and the strategies learners use to overcome challenges.

Background

The Korean language is characterized by its unique features across phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax. Ranked eleventh among the world's languages in terms of the number of speakers, is a fascinating linguistic entity with unique characteristics and a rich historical context. Korean is an ancient and well-developed language that has attracted significant attention in the field of linguistics. It is spoken by approximately 72 million people worldwide, with the majority residing on the Korean Peninsula in North and South Korea.

Linguistically, although Korean is classified as a language isolate, it is often associated with the Altaic language family, which includes Turkic, Mongolian, and Tungusic languages. The Altaic hypothesis suggests that dominant Altaic peoples migrated southward into Korea from the north, influencing the native language and culture. This historical interaction led to a blending of proto-Altaic and the language spoken in Korea at that time, shaping the Korean language as it is known today (Yi, 1983). Korean does exhibit a range of linguistic similarities with Altaic languages, including phonological correspondences in vowels and consonants, lexical and morphological similarities, and typological features like SOV word order, postpositions, and vowel harmony. These linguistic connections provide insight into the historical development and structural properties of the Korean language (Kim and MacNeill, 2020).

As far as phonetics and phonology is concerned, Korean has a distinct phonation contrast in consonants, with an alphabet officially consisting of 24 letters, including 14 consonants and 10 vowels. The phonetic system of Korean is designed to guide the placement of the tongue in the mouth, making it akin to reading a map of tongue positioning (Cho, 2016). Korean is also known for having a three-way contrast among stops and affricates, which are classified as "lax", "aspirated", and "tense" (or "fortis") (Bîja, 2020).

The Korean language is also renowned for its highly agglutinative morphology, a distinctive feature that sets it apart from many other languages. This agglutinative nature is

primarily expressed through the extensive use of suffixes to convey grammatical relations. It is done by attaching particles to nominal expressions, as Cho and Whitman (2019) claim: "Korean is well known as an agglutinative language, with a complex system of inflectional suffixes attached to various stem types." (Cho and Whitman, 2019:131).

Moreover, the Korean language distinguishes three major parts of speech, as they are classified, again by Cho and Whitman (2019:19):

1. Nominals (nouns, pronouns, numerals)
2. Predicatives (verbs, adjectives)
3. Modifiers (determiners, adnominals, adverbials, particles)

As far as its writing system is concerned, Korean uses the Hangul script, a phonetic script created in 1443 during the reign of King Sejong. Hangul consists of 24 letters, including 14 consonants and 10 vowels, allowing for the representation of various phonemes, double consonants, and diphthongs (Martin). These letters are then combined into syllabic blocks of 2 to 4. Sampson describes the Korean script as follows: "unlike the Roman alphabet, Hangeul is not written letter by letter, but in syllables. That is, two or three letters which form one syllable are written together as one orthographic unit." (Sampson, 2016).

On the other hand, linguistically, Romanian is classified as an Eastern Romance language, part of the Italic branch of the Indo-European language family (Sala, 2012). One of the unique features of the Romanian language has a diverse phonetic landscape, which includes a range of vowel sounds, such as nasal vowels, that add depth and complexity to the language. This phonetic diversity is a result of the language's historical development and contact with various other languages over time.

In terms of vocabulary, Romanian showcases a unique blend of Latin, Slavic, Greek, Turkish, and other loanwords, reflecting the language's extensive contact with neighboring linguistic influences. This lexical permeability has been an ongoing process, with the introduction of words from languages like French and English in more recent times (Pană Dindelegan, 2013:3).

Romanian stands out as one of the most morphologically complex Romance languages, with a rich and intricate system that sets it apart from its linguistic counterparts. The morphology of Romanian is a subject of significant scholarly interest, as evidenced by the comprehensive work "The Oxford History of Romanian Morphology" (Maiden, 2021), which delves into the evolution and development of the language's morphological system. In nominal morphology, Romanian features a three-gender system comprising masculine, feminine, and a 'neuter' gender, adding a layer of complexity to noun classification. Notably, the language exhibits a high degree of unpredictability in noun plural formation, often requiring the explicit specification of plural forms alongside singular ones. Verbal morphology in Romanian is equally intricate, retaining unique features such as a non-finite form reminiscent of the Latin supine. The language has undergone a morphological split in the infinitive, where one form functions as a noun while the other retains its verbal nature. Additionally, the subjunctive mood in Romanian has experienced significant morphological changes, reflecting the language's evolving grammatical structures. A notable aspect of Romanian morphology is the presence of morphological allomorphy, where noun and verb forms are influenced by historical sound changes, resulting in complex patterns of morphological variation (Maiden, 2021, 1). Maiden lists some of these distinctive traits of Romanian as follows:

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"• the morphological system of Romanian appears to possess a third gender, in addition to masculine and feminine—a gender called 'neuter', with distinctive morphological characteristics;

• it possesses an inflexional case system;

• unlike other Romance languages, it has an inflexional vocative;

• the morphological marking of number reaches such a level of unpredictability that, for most nouns (and for many adjectives), the form of the plural must be independently specified alongside that of the singular;

• there is a non-finite form of the verb that apparently continues the Latin supine;

• relatively recently, the infinitive has undergone a morphological split such that one form now functions purely as a noun, while the other remains purely a verb;

• the distinctive morphology of the subjunctive has largely disappeared (with systematic exceptions);

• striking morphological differences have emerged between auxiliary verbs and the lexical verbs they originate from" (Maiden, 2021:1)

These intricate morphological features in Romanian have sparked debates and controversies regarding their origins, offering intriguing insights into the historical development of the language and posing interesting questions for Romance linguistics and morphological theory.

Differences in negation structures

The focus of our study is, however, as previously stated, the acquisition of negation in Korean, by Romanian native speakers, an endeavor that is made more difficult as a result of the differences between the two languages.

Korean has two forms of negation - a short-negation (S-Neg) and a long-negation (L-Neg) (Nam, 2020). According to Nam, the proportion of L-Neg usage has gradually decreased over time in spoken Korean, with S-Neg becoming the more dominant form in recent decades (Nam, 2020:6, 9). L-Neg is still, however, a key feature of Korean. Both forms of negation are further divided into 2 more distinct forms, which we will call simple negation and negative modal expression. The simple S-Neg is the conjunction 안*an,* which means "not" and has the simple role of negating a verb depicting an action or a stative verb, whilst the modal negative expression 못 *mot* carries the meaning of inability to do an action. Their L-Neg counterparts are the verb-ending structures -지 않다 *-ji anhta* and -지 못하다 *-ji mothada* respectively. S-Neg and L- Neg do not differ only in length, but also as far as their position in the sentence is concerned, S-Neg being placed in front of simple verbs and between noun and verb as far as compound verbs are concerned, while L-Neg is, as we mentioned, a verb-ending structure glued to the root of a main verb. Besides these, there are verbs which have a separate negative counterpart, such as 좋다 *johta* (to be good) =/= 싫다 *silta* (to be bad), 있다 *itda* (to have) =/= 없다 *eobsta* (to not have)

Negation in Romanian is primarily expressed through the versatile negation particle "nu", which is placed before the verb, noun, adjective, or other elements to form negative sentences. This fundamental element serves as the cornerstone of negation in Romanian, offering a flexible and widely used tool for expressing negation across different parts of speech. In addition to the negation particle "nu," Romanian employs a variety of negative

adverbs and pronouns to convey negation, including terms like "niciodată" (never), "nicicând" (never), "nicăieri" (nowhere), and "nimeni" (nobody). These negative adverbs and pronouns add depth and nuance to the expression of negation in Romanian, allowing for a nuanced and precise communication of negated concepts.

Furthermore, Romanian utilizes negative adjectives such as "niciun" (no/any, masculine/neuter) and "nicio" (no/any, feminine) before nouns to indicate negation. This use of negative adjectives contributes to the complexity and richness of the Romanian negation system, offering additional layers of meaning and expression in negated contexts.

Misuse of Korean Negation by Romanian Native Speakers

Based on the description provided in the previous section, we can say that there are a few key challenges Romanian speakers may face when acquiring Korean negation. One of the biggest challenges is the complexity of the Korean negation system, namely the short-form negation (S-Neg) and its long-form counterpart. This two-way negation system in Korean is more complex compared to the relatively straightforward negation system in Romanian, which primarily uses the negative conjunction "nu".

The incorrect use of negation particles includes mistakes in semantic nuance, as S-Neg is used for general negation and L-Neg is used for negation where one's ability is involved. The semantic nuances of negation in Korean, do not directly align with the straightforward negation expressed by "nu" in Romanian, thus Romanian speakers may misinterpret the specific meanings and contexts where 안 *an* and 못*mot* are used in Korean, resulting in inaccuracies or miscommunications in their negation expressions.

Some examples of semantic misuse are:

Misuse 1: 저는 수영을 못 할 수 있어요 *jeoneun suyeongeul mot hal su isseoyo.* instead of the correct 저는 수영을 못 해요. *jeoneun suyeongeul mot haeyo* (I can't swim.)

Explanation: Here the negative modal expression 못 *mot* is used together with another modal expression, which in negative form (-으 ㄹ 수 없다 *eul su eobsta*) also expresses inability.

Misuse 2: 저는 한국어를 안 할 수 있어요*jeoneun hangugeoreul an hal su isseoyo .* instead of the correct 저는 한국어를 못 해요. *jeoneun hangugeoreul mot haeyo* (I can't speak Korean.)

Explanation: Using 안 *an* instead of 못 *mot* may convey a lack of willingness to speak Korean rather than an inability to do so. Also, the modal expression (으)ㄹ 수 있다 *(eu)l su itda*, which shows ability, was incorrectly negated.

As far as formality and register are concerned, L-Neg is generally considered more formal and is more commonly used in written and formal communication, whereas S-Neg is more common in casual, spoken language. This ends up in the use of a) informal negation in formal contexts, b) formal negation in informal contexts, c) inconsistent formality levels, d) overuse of formal negation and e) inappropriate formality shifts:

a)   Misuse 3: 저는 초콜렛을 안 좋아해요. *jeoneun chokolres-eul an johahaeyo.* (I don't like chocolate.) in a formal setting, instead of the more formal 저는 초콜렛을 좋아하지 않습니다. *jeoneun chokolres-eul joahaji anseumnida*

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Explanation: Using the informal negation particle 안 *an* in a formal context may be perceived as inappropriate or too casual.

b) Misuse 4: 저는 수영을 할 수 없습니다. *jeoneun suyeongeul hal su eobsseumnida* (I cannot swim.) in a casual conversation, instead of the more natural 저는 수영을 못 해요. *jeoneun suyeongeul mot haeyo*

Explanation: Employing the formal -지 못합니다 *-ji mothamnida* construction in an informal setting may sound overly polite or stiff.

c) Misuse 5: 저는 춤을 안 춥니다. *jeoneun chumeul an chum-nida* (I don't dance.) in a mix of formal and informal language, instead of maintaining a consistent level of formality, such as 저는 춤을 추지 않습니다. *jeoneun chumeul chugi anseumnida*

Explanation: Mixing formal and informal negation expressions within the same sentence can create an inconsistent and potentially awkward tone.

d) Misuse 6: Consistently using the formal -지 않습니다 *-ji anseumnida* construction in casual conversations, even when the informal 안 *an* would be more appropriate.

Explanation: Excessive use of formal negation in informal settings may make the speaker sound overly polite or distant, potentially creating a disconnect with the conversational context.

e) Misuse 7: Switching between informal 안 *an* and formal -지 않습니다 *-ji anseumnida* negation within the same conversation without a clear reason or context.

Explanation: Abrupt changes in the formality level of negation expressions can be perceived as inconsistent or confusing, potentially hindering effective communication.

There are also a number of grammatical restrictions that need to be taken into consideration. S-Neg is used for declarative and interrogative sentence types, but not for imperative and propositive sentence types, and L-Neg can be used in all sentence types, including imperative and propositive.

Misuse 8: 이 책을 안 읽으세요. *i chaeg-eul an ilgeuseyo*. (Don't read this book!) in an imperative sentence, instead of the correct 이 책을 읽지 마세요. *i chaeg-eul ilkji maseyo*. (Don't read this book!)

Explanation: S-Neg is not used in imperative sentence types in Korean. If we want to express prohibition, we need to use the sentence final structure -지 말다. *-ji malda.*

Misuse 9: 저는 운동을 안 할까요? *jeoneun undong-eul an halkkayo?* (Shall I not exercise?) in a propositive sentence, instead of the correct 저는 운동을 하지 않을까요? *jeoneun undong-eul haji anheulkkayo?* (Shall I not exercise?)

Explanation: L-Neg is used in propositive sentence types in Korean.

Similarities and Differences

Due to the complexity of Korean negation, we can say that there are few similarities between negation forms in the 2 languages, apart from the negative adverb "nu" in Romanian, and the negative particle 안 *an*, which are similarly used. These are placed before the verb being

negated in both languages, for example, 안 가요 *an gayo* (I don't go) in Korean and "Nu merg" (I don't go) in Romanian.

The differences lay in several aspects, however. One of them is the complexity of the negation forms, as Korean has two distinct forms of negation - the short form (S-Neg) and the long form (L-Neg) - which differ in structure and usage, while Romanian negation is more straightforward, primarily using the single negative adverb "nu".

Moreover, in Romanian, the negative adverb "nu" is used to negate nouns and pronouns, such as "Nu vreau nimic" (I want nothing). Korean does not use the negation particles 안 *an* or 못 *mot* to directly negate nouns and pronouns but rather employs negative adverbs and pronouns. Romanian utilizes a range of negative adverbs (e.g., "niciodată", "nicicând") and negative pronouns (e.g., "nimic", "nimeni") to express negation as well, their usage and integration with the negation structures, however, are different compared to the Korean use of negation.

And last but not least, Korean negation has specific grammatical restrictions, such as the use of 안 *an* and 못 *mot* in different sentence types and contexts. Romanian negation, while having its own grammatical rules, may not exhibit the same level of complexity or restrictions as observed in Korean.

Both Korean and Romanian employ various structures to negate various parts of speech, but we could say that the Korean negation system is more complex, with distinct short and long forms, as well as differences in the usage of negative adverbs and pronouns compared to the more straightforward Romanian negation system.

Methodology

To investigate the acquisition of Korean negation by Romanian speakers, a range of research methods have been employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the learning process. These methods encompass both qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering valuable insight into the challenges and strategies involved in acquiring Korean negation.

First of all, we have conducted a contrastive analysis between the negation systems of Korean and Romanian to identify similarities and differences that may impact the acquisition process. By comparing the structures, rules, and usage of negation in both languages we were able to understand potential challenges faced by Romanian speakers.

Another approach was error analysis. Analyzing errors made by Romanian speakers when using Korean negation aided us in identifying patterns of mistakes and areas of difficulty. Examining the types of errors, such as misplacement of negation particles or incorrect usage of negation forms made us understand the learning process. This type of analysis was done on a number of circa 900 home assignments given to students enrolled in their first, second and third year of studies. By doing so we built a corpus of Korean language data produced by Romanian learners to analyze patterns of negation usage. Examining this dataset of learner language helped us identify common negation errors and track the progression of negation acquisition over time.

One last method used was observing Romanian speakers as they engage in language learning activities related to Korean negation and documenting their interactions, errors, and progress to gain a deeper understanding of the acquisition process in real-time.

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By employing this combination of research methods, we can say we are on the path of gaining a comprehensive understanding of how Romanian speakers acquire Korean negation, the challenges they face, and the strategies that may facilitate their learning process.

Results and Discussion

The preliminary findings of our study shed light on the challenges encountered by Romanian native speakers in acquiring Korean negation structures. These findings are based on a thorough contrastive analysis between the negation systems of Korean and Romanian, as well as error analysis conducted on a corpus of Korean language data produced by Romanian learners.

One of the key findings is the complexity of the Korean negation system, which consists of both short-form (S-Neg) and long-form (L-Neg) negation structures. Unlike Romanian, which primarily uses the negative conjunction "nu" in a straightforward manner, Korean negation involves nuanced distinctions between S-Neg and L-Neg, as well as differences in formality and register.

Our analysis managed to reveal instances of different types of misuse of negation, among which we can mention semantic misuse, where Romanian speakers incorrectly applied Korean negation particles, leading to inaccuracies in meaning. For example, confusion between the meanings of 안 *an* and 못 *mot* resulted in errors such as using 안*an* to express inability instead of 못 *mot*. Romanian speakers also faced challenges related to formality and register when using Korean negation. Misuse of formal or informal negation particles in inappropriate contexts, as well as inconsistent formality levels within sentences, were common errors observed in our study.

Furthermore, our analysis highlighted grammatical restrictions inherent in Korean negation, such as the specific usage of S-Neg and L-Neg in different sentence types. Romanian speakers often struggled to apply these grammatical rules accurately, leading to errors in sentence construction.

While there are some similarities between Korean and Romanian negation structures, such as the placement of negation particles before the verb, there are notable differences in complexity and usage. Korean's two-way negation system and specific grammatical constraints present unique challenges for Romanian learners.

Moving forward, further research is needed to explore additional factors influencing the acquisition of Korean negation by Romanian speakers, such as individual learner characteristics and instructional strategies. Longitudinal studies tracking learners' progress over time will provide deeper insights into the trajectory of negation acquisition and the effectiveness of different teaching approaches. Additionally, expanding the scope of research to include other language pairs and learner populations will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-linguistic negation acquisition.

Conclusion

The study of how Romanian native speakers acquire the complex negation system of the Korean language has revealed significant challenges and insights into the language learning process. The contrastive analysis between the negation structures of the two languages has

highlighted the stark differences in complexity, with Korean exhibiting a more nuanced system of short-form (S-Neg) and long-form (L-Neg) negation, compared to the relatively straightforward negation using the particle "nu" in Romanian.

The error analysis conducted on a corpus of Korean language data produced by Romanian learners has uncovered various types of misuse and difficulties encountered by the participants. These include semantic misunderstandings, where Romanian speakers struggle to grasp the distinct meanings and contexts of the Korean negation particles 안 *an* and 못 *mot*. Formality and register also pose significant hurdles, as learners often inappropriately apply informal negation in formal settings or vice versa, leading to pragmatic issues in communication.

Furthermore, the study has revealed that Romanian speakers face difficulties in navigating the grammatical restrictions associated with Korean negation, such as the appropriate use of S-Neg and L-Neg in different sentence types. These linguistic differences between the two languages create a complex landscape for Romanian learners to navigate, requiring them to develop nuanced understanding and strategies to overcome the challenges.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of incorporating contrastive analysis and targeted instruction on Korean negation structures into language learning curricula for Romanian speakers. By addressing the specific areas of difficulty, such as semantic nuances, formality levels, and grammatical restrictions, educators can better support the acquisition of Korean negation and enhance the overall language learning experience for this population of learners.

Additionally, the insights gained from this research contribute to a broader understanding of cross-linguistic language acquisition, highlighting the cognitive and linguistic factors that influence the learning process when navigating disparate negation systems. The comparative analysis of Korean and Romanian negation can also inform theoretical discussions in the field of second language acquisition and typological linguistics.

In conclusion, the study of how Romanian native speakers acquire Korean negation has shed light on the complexities and challenges involved in this language learning endeavor. By addressing these issues through tailored instructional approaches and further research, we can better facilitate the successful acquisition of Korean negation for Romanian speakers and contribute to the advancement of language learning and teaching methodologies.

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