

## A Study on How to Teach Tense to Chinese Korean Language Learners

Sun-Min Lee  
Namseoul University

Lee, S. M. (2011). A study on how to teach tense to Chinese Korean language learners. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 15(1), 221-234.

Presently it is hard to find a thesis which have presented the teaching plan on how to teach the tense to Chinese learners on the spot of learning and even the textbooks in classes cover the subject of tense only in the medium or high level. The author considers that the learners' mistakes on the subject of tense are apt to be fossilized, if they are not corrected in the beginning stage. Thus, the author intends to present the exercises on 'tense', as a means to teach the learners in the basic or low intermediate step, in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Considering on the basis of the properties of Chinese language, the present tense of Korean does not seem to be so difficult to Chinese learners that it was decided to be excluded from the subject. Therefore, the subject of this research would be limited to the past tense and the future tense out of the trisected tenses of present, past and future. The reason for the exclusion of present tense will be explained in detail in the following Chapter 2.

**Key Words:** Chinese Korean language learners, Korean tense, tense teach

### 1 Preface

The grammatic concept of 'tense' in Korean does not exist in the language of Chinese<sup>1</sup>. Therefore it is a natural phenomenon that Chinese Korean language learners of which the number is continuously increasing, have difficulties and make frequent errors when they study the 'tense of Korean'. The author of this thesis has often been in touch with Chinese learners who made such errors as mentioned above on the spot of learning. Consequently the research motive of "how to teach the 'tense' to Chinese learners" came to be kept with the author.

This motive seems to correspond with the current tendency, shifting from the former teacher-centered method to the currently prevailing learner-centered method.

Though the research on the comparison of the tense in Korean with the tense in Chinese is not so brisk, it has been attempted by Wang (2007)

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<sup>1</sup> The standard Chinese (Mandarin) has no tense but aspects (Charles N. Lee (1996:153)).

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and Kim (2008). Upon having sorted the tense in Korean into 6 forms of 'present', 'progressive aspect', 'past', 'perfective aspect', 'the pluperfect', 'retrospection', 'presumption' and 'intention', including the 'aspect' concept in tense, Wang (2007) presented the Chinese words that are equivalent respectively to each form of tense in Korean. And Kim (2008) have divided "-으랴(eod)" in Korean and '了(le)', the Chinese perfective aspect into present, past and future and cleared up the respective usage of them. Also Park (2009) has carried out a research on how the Chinese Korean language learners learn the tense. On the theoretical basis of Aspect Hypothesis (AH)<sup>2</sup>, Park studied through an experiment, on from which attribute of the past tense verbs the Chinese learners start to learn, out of the 5 attributes of state, action, perfection, achievement and mentality cognition.

But, presently it is hard to find a thesis which have presented the teaching plan on how to teach the tense to Chinese learners on the spot of learning and even the textbooks in classes cover the subject of tense only in the medium or high level<sup>3</sup>. The author considers that the learners' mistakes on the subject of tense are apt to be fossilized, if they are not corrected in the beginning stage. Thus, the author intends to present the exercises on 'tense', as a means to teach the learners in the basic or low intermediate step, in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Considering on the basis of the properties of Chinese language, the present tense of Korean does not seem to be so difficult to Chinese learners that it was decided to be excluded from the subject. Therefore, the subject of this research would be limited to the past tense and the future tense out of the trisected tenses of present, past and future. The reason for the exclusion of present tense will be explained in detail in the following Chapter 2.

### **2 The Illustrations of the Mistakes in the Expression of Korean Tense which Chinese Learners are Apt to Make**

As mentioned in the preceding 'Preface', Chinese language does not have such a concept as the tense of Korean grammar. Instead, it has only the concept of aspect(相) such as '了' of the Perfective (actually '了' has not only the meaning of perfective but also other meaning) '在•着' of the Continuance Aspect, '过' of the Experience Aspect, '一' of the Delimitative Aspect and the

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<sup>2</sup> AH: Aspect Hypothesis, Aspect hypothesis is a hypothesis, forecasting that the level of development would vary according to the kinds of action in the acquisition of tense aspect morphemes.

<sup>3</sup> Looking into the Korean grammar course in China, it is noticed that the basic level of 1~2 grade focuses on practicing the parts of speech, various types of word ending and the definition and function of particles, etc. and in the intermediate high level of 3~4 grade, the usage of tense, passive and causative form of verb, negative form, honorific expression and connotation/conjunction are added(Kim/byung-woon (2009:163)).

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Verb Repetition Pattern. Hence, the difference between Korean and Chinese is introduced as shown under.

- (1) 가. 그는 어제 공부했다.  
나. 그는 오늘 공부한다.
- (2) 가. 他 昨天 学习。  
나. 他 今天 学习。

(※ Originally, Chinese is written with no space between the words but for easy discernment, spaces were left intentionally herein.)

The meaning of (1 가) is same as (2 가) and the meaning of (1 나) is same as (2 나). As seen in (1 가) and (1 나), the form of Korean verb changes, depending on whether it is the present tense or the past tense. The form of past tense, '-았/었다' is different from '-(느)니다', the present tense form, in Korean. But with (2 가) and (2 나), the Chinese case, we can easily notice that the form of verb is in the same form of '学习(study)', although there is a vivid difference of tense between yesterday, the tense of (2 가) and today, the tense of (2 나)<sup>4</sup>.

In case of the present tense, there is no big difference between Korean and Chinese. Except that Korean verbs have such final endings like '-아/어요' and '-(스)입니다' to be memorized by the learners, such an apparent difference as above case of past tense does not exist with the present tense. Additionally, in case of the progressive aspect, the Korean expression of '-고 있다' is so much equivalent to Chinese tense adverb '正在' or Chinese tense particle '着' that the present tense is not a matter to be argued with. Therefore, the author intends to analyze the mistakes with Chinese Korean language learners in regards to the past tense and the future tense as well as the reasons, making an exception of the present tense.

### 2.1 Illustrations of the mistakes in the expression of past tense

The past tense of Korean is embodied by the pre-final ending of '-았/었다'. However the Chinese learners make occasionally such a mistake as follows<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The sentence of (2 가) is also expressed as '他昨天学习了'. But this is a special expression, as the perfective aspect of '了' in this sentence implies that the speaker have ascertained 'he completed the deeds of study.'

<sup>5</sup> The instances of errors, presented in this thesis were collected from 400 or more Chinese learners when the author was teaching Korean in a Korean Language Institute, attached to University but an accurate statistical figure is not currently available. Afterwards, the author will get the statistical figures through a means of precise experiment, in regard to the tense expression errors with Chinese learners.

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(3) 가. 그는 어제 가요. (X)

The reason why the pre-final ending of '-았/었-' is omitted in (3 가) above is neither has the Chinese language such a concept as the tense of Korean, nor has Chinese grammar the function of pre-final ending. In other words, "어제 가요(yesterday I go)" is not wrong at all in terms of Chinese grammar.

The Chinese learners make mistakes also with the connective ending as well as the sentence ending form, of which the example comes as under.

- (4) 가. 어제 친구를 만나지만 오래 이야기 하지 못한다. (X)  
가. 어제 친구를 만나지만 오래 이야기 하지 못했다. (X)  
나. 너무 늦게 만나기 때문에 오래 같이 있지 못했다. (X)

The reason why '만나지만' in the part of connective ending above is wrongly used instead of the correct form of '만났지만' and '못한다' in the sentence ending part is wrongly used instead of the correct form '못했다' is also that Chinese doesn't have any grammatical form that corresponds to the pre-final ending of '-았/었-' in Korean. The example of (4 나) is also wrong because the connective part of '만나기 때문에' is incorrectly used without being changed into the past form of '만났기 때문에'.

As seen in case (4 가' ) above, some learners make mistakes only with the connective ending form, not with the sentence final ending. The author presumes that it is because of some connective word-endings like '-아/어서' '-(으)러' '-(으)려고' and '-(으)면서' which take; at all times, the present tense form regardless of the actual tense. The fact that some Korean connective endings have to be used in the form of present tense must have been a sticky obstacle to those learners who had already been suffering for the difficult past tense ending '-았/었-'. Due to this, the Chinese learners seem to confuse the connective ending of the past tense form with that of the present tense form.

Also with using the adnominal form of past tense, the Chinese learners are making the errors shown below.

- (5) 가. 어제 만나는 친구는 초등학교 동창생이다. (X)  
나. 어제 읽는 책이 무척 재미있었다. (X)

From above we can notice that '만나는' and '읽는' are the wrong expression of '만난' and '읽은' respectively. As seen herein, errors in the usage of the adnominal form are also occasionally found. This might be because the properties of Chinese language that use the adnominal phrase in a single form without discriminating the adnominal phrase of present tense from the one of past tense, have affected the Chinese learners.

### 2.2 Illustrations of the mistake in the expression of future tense

Generally speaking, the two forms of '-겠' and '-(으)ㄹ 것이'-<sup>6</sup> is the typical expression of future tense in Korean. Both morphemes of '-겠' and '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' connote the meaning of 'intention' and 'conjecture', besides the meaning of 'future'. When we want to clarify whether the morpheme of '-겠' or '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' means the speaker's intention or the speaker's conjecture, we have to examine the context or look closely into the meaning of the words (expression) used together, because no apparent look can hint the meaning. On the contrary, the language of Chinese distinguish clearly the meaning of intention from the meaning of conjecture by using the adverb of '-定(要)' for intention and the adverb of '大概' for conjecture (there is no need to examine the context or the meaning of words used together). The examples are introduced hereunder.

(6) 가. 나는 열심히 공부하겠다.  
나. 내일은 비가 오겠다.

(7) 가. 我 一定要 努力 学习.  
나. 明天 大概 下 雨.

(※ Originally, Chinese is written with no space between the words but for easy discernment, spaces were left intentionally herein.)

The meaning of (6 가) is same as (7 가) and the meaning of 'intention' is what both of the two sentences intend to signify. And the meaning of (6 나) is same as (7 나) and both of (6 나) and (7 나) mean the conjecture. From the previous examples of (1) and (2), related to past tense, it was noticed that Korean had two from (갔다, 간다) get involved while Chinese had only a single shape of '去' get involved. On the contrary, in case of examples of (6) and (7), Korean language gets a single form of either '-겠' or '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' involved while Chinese gets two forms (-定要, 大概) involved. What we can find from this fact is the Chinese learners scarcely miswrite the form of '-겠' and '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' in the course of writing activities. But when it comes to the course of reading activities, the situation is reversed. It comes to be very hard for Chinese learners to distinguish whether the meaning of '-겠' or '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' among Korean sentences fall under the category of 'future +intention' or that of 'future +conjecture'. Actually, the author has often observed in a class of Chinese learners that many students except those of superb achievement could not answer back or make correct answer when

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<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, '-겠' and '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' show conjecturing of the present or past fact but this would not be mentioned because this clause covers the future tense.

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they were questioned whether the meaning of '-겠' or '-(으)ㄹ것이다' comes under 'intention' or 'conjecture'. Accordingly, the author come to consider that a special discipline to distinguish the meaning of above grammatical morphemes is keenly required for Chinese learners. So the author is going to present a teaching method in the following chapter 3.

Apart from '-겠' or '-(으)ㄹ것이다-', an adnominal form of '-(으)ㄹ' also display the future tense. Due to the difficulties, caused by the grammatical difference between Korean and Chinese language, the Chinese learners make frequent mistakes with the use of the future tense adnominal form as well as with the use of the past tense adnominal form. The instance comes as under.

- (8) 가. 나는 모레 입는 옷을 다려 놓았다. (X)  
나. 이따가 전화를 거는 곳이 많아요. (X)

The form of '입는' in (8 가) should be expressed as '입을' and the form of '거는' in (8 나) should be expressed as '걸', but Chinese learners often make this kind of error when they converse with other people. Just as the case of past tense adnominal form, the reason for this kind of error seems to be that Chinese language has no future tense adnominal form like '-(으)ㄹ' of Korean.

Based on the error analysis in this chapter, the author would like to present, in chapter 3, an effective teaching method in a textbook for Chinese learners.

### **3 The Plan on How to Teach the Tense to Chinese Learners in the Textbook of Korean Language**

In this chapter, a plan on how to teach the past • future tense to Chinese learners will be introduced through presenting the actual contents in Korean textbook.

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### 3.1 The plan to teach the past tense

* <보기>와 같이 쓰세요.	
<보기>	
지금 잠을 <u>      </u> 자요. (자다)	
<u>어제</u> 잠을 <u>      </u> 잤어요.	(해당 그림)
1. 지금 밥을 <u>      </u> . (먹다)	
<u>어제</u> 밥을 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)
2. 지금 축구를 <u>      </u> . (하다)	
<u>아까</u> 축구를 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)
3. 지금 커피를 <u>      </u> . (마시다)	
<u>어젯밤에</u> 커피를 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)
4. 오늘 기분이 <u>      </u> . (좋다)	
<u>그제</u> 기분이 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)
5. 오늘 몸이 <u>      </u> . (아프다)	
<u>지난주에</u> 몸이 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)
6. 오늘 제 <u>      </u> . (생일이다)	
<u>어제</u> 제 <u>      </u> .	(해당 그림)

Currently, the exercises to practice the present tense and the past tense are being presented one by one to the learners in many Korean textbooks. But the author attempted to develop a repetitious training, aiming to help the Chinese learners who hardly distinguish the past tense from the present tense, through offering the two tenses at one time in one exercising unit of a workbook (The timing for this exercise should be immediately after the past tense were taught to the learners). In this training, various adverbs, indicating past tense like '어제(yesterday)' '어젯밤에(last night)' '그제(the day before yesterday)' and '지난주에(last week)' are to be given in order to have the

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learners get rid of the meaningless iterative practice of a simple thing and also to remind the learners, continuously and in various ways, of the fact that the tense of the sentences under practice is of the past. In addition to verb conjugation drill, the adjective conjugation drill as well as the inflection of 'noun + 이다' form were attempted in above sample of exercise. As an additional tip, a simple artwork is recommended to be put on the side to prompt the learners comprehension and associations.

\* <보기>와 같이 두 문장을 한 문장으로 바꾸십시오.

<보기>

어제 친구를 만났어요. 하지만 오래 이야기하지 못했어요.

⇒ 어제 친구를 만났지만 오래 이야기하지 못했어요.

1. 어제 너무 늦게 만났어요. 그렇기 때문에 오래 같이 있지 못했어요.

⇒ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 그저께 컴퓨터를 샀어요. 그런데 오늘 더 싸고 좋은 컴퓨터를 봤어요.

⇒ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. 며칠 전에 방학을 했어요. 그렇지만 혼자 계속 공부를 했어요.

⇒ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 지난주에 축구를 했어요. 그리고 어제 농구를 했어요.

⇒ \_\_\_\_\_.

The above pattern of exercise which combines two sentences into one is a basic type, used to make the learners grasp the usage of connective endings. Though no developed form of this pattern was suggested by the author, the author would like to point out that the textbook as a means for Chinese learners should include a great number of exercise of this pattern than the ordinary book (this exercise should be presented after the learners master the usage of Korean conjunction). Also when they learn the connective endings of which the form should be of present tense at all times like '-아/어서', '-(으)려고', '-(으)러' and '-(으)면서', a great number of exercises should be presented in the textbook. Then the Chinese learners will be more efficiently trained to distinguish the inflection forms of Korean connective ending.



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\* <보기>와 같이 맞는 것을 고르십시오.

<보기>

어제 (        ) 친구는 초등학교 동창생이다.

- ① 만날      ② 만나는      ③ 만난

1. 어제 (        ) 책이 무척 재미있었다.

- ① 읽을      ② 읽는      ③ 읽은

2. 저번 주에 (        ) 편지가 없어졌다.

- ① 받을      ② 받는      ③ 받은

3. 며칠 전에 (        ) 공원이 참 좋았다.

- ① 갈          ② 가는      ③ 간

4. 그제 (        ) 내용을 잘 모르겠다.

- ① 공부할      ② 공부하는      ③ 공부한

The author considers that such exercise as seen above should be presented in a abundance, in order to imprint the past tense adnominal form of '-(으)ㄴ' on Chinese learners. This time, the learners will discern easily the contents and learn efficiently, if we emphasize the shape and hint some importance by underlining the part of 'the adnominal + noun' together with the time adverbials.

3.2 The plan to teach the future tense

\* <보기>와 같이 밑줄 친 두 부분에 공통으로 맞는 것을 고르십시오.

<보기> ‘-(으)ㄹ 거예요’  
나는 열심히 공부할 거야. 그래서 기말고사를 잘 볼 거야.  
① 의지                      ② 추측

1. ‘-겠-’  
내일은 비가 오겠습니다. 우산을 준비해야 하겠습니다.  
① 의지                      ② 추측

2. ‘-겠-’  
저 빵을 오늘 안 먹으면 상하겠습니다. 빨리 먹어야 하겠습니다.  
① 의지                      ② 추측

3. ‘-겠-’  
저는 그 책을 사겠습니다. 펜도 사겠습니다.  
① 의지                      ② 추측

4. ‘-(으)ㄹ 거예요’  
저는 다음 주의 집들이 요리 재료를 준비할 거예요. 후식도 준비할 거예요.  
① 의지                      ② 추측

As mentioned in previous chapter, it is very hard for Chinese learners to distinguish whether the morpheme of '-겠-' or '-(으)ㄹ 것이-' in Korean sentence means intention or conjecture due to the distinguish between two languages. As a solution to this problem, the exercises of above pattern are recommended to be presented, though they have a bit high level of difficulty. In the course of composing exercise, it is suggested that two sentences which include the expression of same grammatical meaning are to be arrayed in a set in order to help the learners grasp the contextual relation between two sentences. It is also suggested that the part of future tense should be underlined, in order to help the learners recognize the form. And next, we are to have the learners practice repeatedly to infer the grammatical meaning of future tense. The author considers that the frequency of future tense error with Chinese learners might be reduced by this method.

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\* <보기>와 같이 맞는 것을 고르십시오.

<보기>  
나는 모레 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 옷을 다려 놓았다.  
① 입을            ② 입는            ③ 입은

1. 이따가 전화를 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 곳이 많아요.  
① 걸                ② 거는            ③ 건

2. 내일 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 곳에 대해 미리 알아보시다.  
① 갈                ② 가는            ③ 간

3. 모레 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 사람이 제 친구 동생이에요.  
① 올                ② 오는            ③ 온

4. 다음 주에 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 내용에 대해 연습하세요.  
① 공부할            ② 공부하는        ③ 공부한

A great number of exercises in above style should be presented in order to imprint the form of '-(으)고', the future tense adnominal form on Chinese learners, as suggested previously for the practice of the past tense adnominal form, '-(으)ㄴ'. This time, the learners will discern easily the contents and learn more efficiently, if we emphasize the shape and hint its importance by underlying the part of 'the adnominal + noun' together with the time adverbials.

### 4 Conclusion

Taking notice of the fact that Chinese Korean language learners are making frequent errors in expressing Korean tenses, the author examined the difference in tense expression between the two languages of Korean and Chinese. Based on the understanding of the difference between two languages, acquired through this examination, the author has suggested to improve the pattern of tense exercises in the textbooks of basic and intermediate level. Thus, a new method of teaching was considered to be

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presented through this suggestion. In chapter 1, the motive of research on the errors of tense expression with Chinese learners was introduced together with the preceding researches and the course of this research was mentioned. Classifying the misuse instances of tense with Chinese learners into two categories of present tense and past tense, a brief analysis was conducted in chapter 2. In the last chapter 3, the plan how to teach the tense to Chinese learners in a Korean textbook was presented in the form of actual exercises and explanations on the pattern of exercises were given together. The author considers that the textbook of cross-linguistic standard should be sublated henceforth.

Instead we should concentrate our efforts into developing a customized and systematic textbook, grounded both on the commonalities and on the differences between the mother tongue and foreign language of the learner, upon comparing and contrasting the characteristics of the learner's 1st language with that of Korean language, the learner's 2nd language and the author wishes this thesis would be of a little help to develop such a customized and systematic textbook. Though the author admits that this thesis is not enough in quantity and not entirely satisfactory, the author would like to continue the study in depth in order to present the improved teaching methods not only in the field of tense but also in many other fields of teaching Korean as per the author's long-term project. The author believes that the learning effect of 2nd language would be doubled if we develop a new teaching method, taking the characteristics of the learner's mother tongue into consideration and making use of the commonalities together with the differences between the two languages. Fortunately, the related academic world started to show a keen concern about this method. So the author intends to endeavor to produce an outcome of high quality through participating in this movement.

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Sun-Min Lee  
General Education Dept.  
Namseoul Institute of International Culture & Exchange  
Namseoul University  
21 Maeju-ri, Seonghwan-eup, Cheonan-city,  
Choongnam, Korea 330-707  
Tel: 82-41-580-3020/2701  
Email: leesm@nsu.ac.kr, sd1619@naver.com

Received: February 28, 2011

Revised: May 12, 2011

Accepted: June 15, 2011