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Acceptability of some Korean lexical items judged by Korean L1 and L2 speakers¹

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신성철. 2006. 한국어 제 1 화자와 제 2 화자가 판정한 한국어 어휘의 수용성. 외국어서의 한국어 교육 31 권 153-171. 본 연구는 한국어 학습자의 작문에서 발견되는 어휘 오류 가운데 짝을 이루며 혼동을 일으키는 6 개의 어휘 사용에 대해 한국어 화자가 어떤 수용성 (acceptability)을 가지고 있는지에 대해 조사 분석하였다. 오류 연구의 교육적 관련성 가운데 오류의 교정 문제 (Corder 1975)가 있는데, 이는 학습자가 쓴 문장의 이해도 및 언어학적 이탈의 정도를 가늠할 때 고려되어야 한다. 오류 비중의 평가는 보통 세가지 기준 (Khalil 1985)을 사용하며, 수용성은 그 중 하나로서 오류의 심각성 정도를 판단하는 기준이다. 영어권 한국어 학습자가 범한 어휘 오류 가운데, use 개념, change 개념, come 개념의 단어를 각각 '대중 교통', '꿈', '하숙집' 등의 제시어와 짝지어 구성된 문장 6 개를 담은 질문지를 작성하여 시드니 거주 한국어 제 1 언어화자 (25 명)와 한국계 한국어학습자 (16 명)를 대상으로 비교 조사하였다. 통계 분석 결과 그룹간 수용성이 약간 다르게 나타났다. 가령, '대중 교통'과 '쓰다' 및 '이용하다'의 결합에 대해서 한국어 제 1 화자는 24%의 응답자가 '쓰다'와의 결합에 긍정적 수용성을 보인 반면, 한국계 학습자는 31%의 응답자가 긍정적 수용성을 보였다. 반대로 '이용하다'와의 결합에 대해서는 제 1 화자의 경우 거의 (96%) 모두가, 한국계 학습자는 88%가 긍정적 수용성을 보였다. 전체적으로는 두 그룹이 유사한 수용성 패턴을 보이나 개별 어휘 사용면에서는 한국어 제 1 화자가 한국계 한국어 학습자보다 수용성이 약간 낮은 것으로 나타난 것이다. 즉, 한국어 학습자가 오류 가능성이 있는 어휘 사용에 대해서 오류 비중을 덜 심각하게 본다는 것으로 해석할 수 있다. 비한국계 (고급) 한국어 학습자가 보는 어휘 오류에 대한 수용성이 한국어 모국어 화자보다 더 넓을 것임을 시사한다. 오류 수용성은 언어학적 이탈의 정도 외에도 판단자의 성격, 교육철학, 상황, 사회적 분위기 등에 따라 달라질 수 있으나 외국어 혹은 제 2 언어로서의 한국어 학습시에는 혼동을 일으키는 어휘들 사이의 의미 제약 및 의미 범주를 명확히 교육하는 것이 필요하다. 이를 위해 한국어 어휘 교육시 활용 가능하도록 유사 단어와 의미를 목록화하는 것이 중요하다.

(뉴사우스웨일즈대)

핵심어(key words): 어휘 오류 (lexical errors), 오류 비중 (error gravity), 수용성 (acceptability)

¹ In this paper, Korean 'native speakers' are referred to as Korean L1 speakers, while Korean 'heritage' or background learners as Korean L2 speakers. See 2. Subjects for more details of these two groups.

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine the acceptability of the use of some Korean lexical items in contextualized sentences. There has been a considerable quantity of error analysis studies in KFL over the past few years. Most studies cover more or less the stages of identification, description and explanation of errors, but evaluation of errors involving the addressee's comprehension or affective response (Ellis 1994: 63) has largely been neglected. This is probably because investigators were more interested in an examination of errors from the point of view of the learner—what type of error it is and why it was made, etc., but not in the effect that an error has on the addressee, i.e. the person who judges. As practicing teachers, we need to pay attention to errors the learner makes but at the same time we need to encourage them to communicate, hopefully with minimum interference with communication. Pedagogical implications of error thus include the 'problem of correction', specifically the problem of what to correct. This also involves the assessment of the gravity of an error (Corder 1975).

Error gravity is determined by the seriousness of an error. It is assessed by different criteria such as the comprehensibility of an incorrect form or utterance and the degree of linguistic deviance. In general, 'judges' or evaluators use three general criteria: intelligibility, acceptability and irritation (Khalil 1985). Intelligibility concerns comprehensibility and acceptability involves the judgments of seriousness, while irritation concerns an addressee's emotional response.

This study uses acceptability as a judging criterion simply because of convenience in the design of test tool and data gathering. Previous studies (e.g. Davies 1983) show that there are clear differences in the judgment made by L1 and L2 speakers. Generally L2 speakers tend to evaluate morphological and local errors more severely than L1 speakers, while they seem to judge lexical and global errors less severely than L1 speakers (Ellis 1994: 66).

The present study was motivated by contradictory views of two practicing teachers/linguists in KFL on some lexical items produced in learners' compositions. Among the 'competing' lexical items, I have selected six items (three in pairs) as a sample on the basis of the ambiguity and subtlety in their differences and investigated how Korean L1 and L2 speakers judge the use of the items for each specific context, namely, 1) 'means of public transport': *ssuta* 'use' vs *iyonghata* 'make (good) use of'; 2) 'dream': *pyenhata* 'undergo a change' vs *pakkwita* 'change/be changed'; and 'boarding house': *ota* 'come' vs *tolaota* 'come back'. Although initially motivated by the vast difference in evaluation by the Korean L1 teachers—for example, Teacher A was arguing that *daycwung kyothong* 'public transport' or *daycwung kyothong swutan* 'means of public transport' works well with *ssuta* 'use', while Teacher B was saying that such a match was

nonsense and unacceptable—I have further noticed that these paired items carry a potential confusion that might produce a high frequency error and thus require semantic clarification, contrastive analysis and pedagogical explanation.

2. Subjects

The subjects of the present study are two groups: Korean L1 (25) and L2 (16) speakers residing in Sydney. The Korean L1 speakers were born, grew up and educated in Korea up to at least high school and in some case tertiary studies. Their age ranged from 16-25 (18/72%), 26-35 (4/16%) and to 36-45 (1/4%). They were involved in full-time study (undergraduate or postgraduate) or work at the start of the investigation. Their first and main language was Korean.

Korean L2 speakers were born in Australia or came to Australia at an early age and did all or most of their schooling in the Australian educational system. They all belonged to the age group 16-25, and their average length of Korean learning experiences through educational systems such as ethnic schools and high school programs prior to the investigation was approximately 3.5 years. They were all studying Korean in background stream (or 'heritage') courses at a tertiary institution. Their main language was English, though they were also speakers of Korean as their 'home' or 'heritage' language.

3. Procedure

A survey method was used to collect the data. A survey questionnaire consisted of six sentences containing the lexical items in question, and the subjects were asked to indicate how acceptable they think each lexical item is in the sentences, by choosing one of the responses given in four-point scale (two positive and two negative responses). Instructions were given in Korean in the L1 speakers' questionnaire and in English in the L2 speakers' questionnaire, but both groups were not given any explanation or translation for the sentences in question. The L1 survey was conducted on the street at a tertiary institution and in the Korean community, while the L2 survey was economically carried out during the class.

Finally, based on the collected data, calculations were made of the distribution and relative percentage of acceptability. Percentages of the responses in the L1 and L2 questionnaires were computed and compared.

4. Results

The two groups shared the same distribution pattern of percentages in all items except one in overall positive and negative responses. But there are some differences between the two groups in the evaluation of 'extremely or a little awkward' lexical items. L2 speakers seem to evaluate the use of those items less severely than L1 speakers. Below, I will show how the L1 and L2 speakers evaluate the three pairs of lexical items in more detail.

4.1 Taycwung kyothong swutan 'means of public transport'

The subjects were first asked to judge how acceptable the following two expressions about 'means of public transport' were:

- (1a) Taycwung kyothong swutanul *sseya* twayyo. 'You must *use* means of public transport.'
- (1b) Taycwung kyothong swutanul *iyonghayya* twayyo. 'You must *make good use of* means of public transport.'

The significant majority of L1 (76%) and L2 (68.7%) speakers gave negative responses to the match of *taychwung kyothong swutan* 'means of public transport' and *ssuta* 'use', and only 24% and 31.3%, respectively, judged it acceptable, as shown in <u>Table 1</u>. Instead, they clearly (96% and 87.5%, respectively) indicated that the phrase matches the verb *iyonghata* 'make (good) use of' as observed in <u>Table 2</u>. When we compare the acceptability of the two groups in relation to the use of *ssuta* 'use' which received significant negative responses, it is interesting to learn that L2 speakers judged the use of *ssuta* slightly less severely than L1 speakers.

Table 1: Match with *ssuta* 'use' $(N/\%)^2$

Response		L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	11 (44.0)	19	7 (43.7)	11
	A little awkward	8 (32.0)	(76.0)	4 (25.0)	(68.7)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	5 (20.0)	6	5 (31.3)	5
	Totally acceptable	1 (4.0)	(24.0)	Nil	(31.3)

Table 2: Match with *iyonghata* 'make good use of' (%)

Response		L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	1 (4.0)	1	1 (6.3)	2
	A little awkward	Nil	(4.0)	1 (6.3)	(12.5)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	5 (20.0)	25	5 (31.2)	14

² Some of 0.05 percentage values were rounded in the Tables.

Totally acceptable	19 (76.0)	(96.0)	9 (56.3)	(87.5)
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4.2 Kkwum 'dream'

The second pair of sentences that the subjects were asked to evaluate were about *kkwum* 'dream'. The subjects were given the following sentences.

- (2a) Nauy kkwumun cemcem *pyenhaycin* kes kathayo. 'I think that my dream has gradually *undergone a change*.'
- (2b) Nauy kkwumun cemcem *pakkwin* kes kathayo. 'I think that my dream has gradually *changed*.'

The majority of L1 (84%) and L2 (68.7%) speakers assessed that the match between *kkwum* 'dream' and *pyenhata* 'undergo a change' was extremely or a little awkward, as shown in <u>Table 3</u>. The absolute majority (92% and 87.5%, respectively) of the two groups, instead, gave positive judgments to the match between *kkwum* and *pakkwita* 'change/be changed' as in <u>Table 4</u>. In relation to the use of *pyenhata* in the context, there were as many as 31.3% that judged it acceptable among L2 speakers, so they evaluated the match of *kkwum* and *pyenhata* less severely than L1 speakers.

Table 3: Match with *pyenhata* 'undergo a change' (N/%)

	Response	L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	9 (36.0)	21	4 (25.0)	11
	A little awkward	12 (48.0)	(84.0)	7 (43.7)	(68.7)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	4 (16.0)	4	2 (12.5)	5
	Totally acceptable	Nil	(16.0)	3 (18.8)	(31.3)

Table 4: Match with pakkwita 'change/be changed' (N/%)

Response		L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	Nil	2	1 (6.3)	2
	A little awkward	2 (8.0)	(8.0)	1 (6.3)	(12.5)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	9 (36.0)	23	10 (62.5)	14
	Totally acceptable	14 (56.0)	(92.0)	4 (25.0)	(87.5)

4.3 Haswukcip 'boarding house'

The subjects were then asked to evaluate the third pair of lexical items, *ota* 'come' and *tolaota* 'come back', used in the context that refers to a 'boarding house' and a greeting by the lady owner. The sentences in question were as follows:

- (3a) Cenun haswukcipey *ocamaca* haswukcip acwumenihantheyse insalul patayo. 'As soon as I *come* to my boarding house, I am greeted by the lady owner.'
- (3b) Cenun haswukcipey *tolaocamaca* haswukcip acwumenihantheyse insalul patayo. 'As soon as I *return* to my boarding house, I am greeted by the lady owner.'

Unlike in the other two paired sentences, L1 and L2 speakers gave opposite opinions on the use of *ota* 'come' in the context, as shown in <u>Table 5</u>. The considerable majority of L1 speakers (64%) judged that the match between *haswukcip* 'boarding house' and *ota* was acceptable in that particular context, while the slight majority of L2 speakers (56.2%) assessed it as inappropriate or awkward. Both groups, however, largely agreed to the use of *tolaota* 'come back' as acceptable, as shown in <u>Table 6</u>. Interestingly, the majority of L1 speakers judged the use of both *ota* (64%) and *tolaota* (64%) equally acceptable in the context, while L2 speakers gave a clearly positive judgment (87.5%) to the use of *tolaota* but two closely dividing negative (56.2%) and positive (43.8%) opinions for the use of *ota*.

Table 5: Match with ota 'come' (N/%)

	Response	L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	4 (16.0)	9	2 (12.5)	9
	A little awkward	5 (20.0)	(36.0)	7 (43.8)	(56.2)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	8 (32.0)	16	6 (37.5)	7
	Totally acceptable	8 (32.0)	(64.0)	1 (6.3)	(43.8)

Table 6: Match with tolaota 'come back' (N/%)

	Response	L1 spkrs	Total	L2 spkrs	Total
Negative	Extremely awkward	2 (8.0)	9	Nil	2
	A little awkward	7 (28.0)	(36.0)	2 (12.5)	(12.5)
Positive	Acceptable to some extent	6 (24.0)	16	9 (56.2)	14
	Totally acceptable	10 (40.0)	(64.0)	5 (31.3)	(87.5)

The above statistical information can be summarized like this: 1) both the L1 and L2 Korean speakers perceived that *taychung kyothong swutan* 'means of public transport' should be used with *iyonghata* 'make (good) use of' rather than *ssuta* 'use', with the L1 group being more

decisive and strict in such a judgment; 2) the two groups again agreed that *kkwum* 'dream' works with *pakkwita* 'change/be changed' instead of *pyenhata* 'undergo a change', but the L2 group was also lenient with *pyenhata*; and 3) the L1 group judged that *haswukcip* works well with both *ota* 'come' and *tolaota* 'come back', while the L2 group was not certain about the match with *ota* but perceived that it works much better with *tolaota*.

Overall, the L1 speakers judged much more uniformly than the L2 speakers on the use of the lexical items, and L2 speakers were less decisive and more lenient. This is due mainly to two possible reasons. One is that L1 speakers generally have more concrete knowledge about the usage and referent range of an L1 lexical item than L2 speakers. Quite often L2 speakers misjudge the semantic boundary or struggle themselves to match the conceptual range of an L2 item with that of their L1. Another reason might relate to L1 interference. L2 speakers' judgment on the use of an L2 item could be made on the basis of their knowledge of the use of its equivalent in L1, thus overly or narrowly conceptualized.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The results have limitations but permit generalizations. The limitations are mainly due to the small number of lexical items chosen and the relatively small number of subjects involved in the survey. Nevertheless, the results indicate some linguistic and pedagogical implications. The statistical findings suggest that both L1 and L2 speakers generally agree to the correct use of a lexical item but disagree to a semantically and contextually ambiguous use of an item. The L1 speakers accepted dual possibility depending on the context, while L2 speakers seem to be less decisive. In general, the results show that L2 speakers evaluate awkward or inappropriate lexical items that received relatively higher negative responses less severely than L1 speakers. In other words, L1 speakers judged lexical errors to be more serious than L2 speakers, and L2 speakers were more lenient than L1 speakers.

Semantically, the findings reinforce the need to provide L2 learners with adequate input about the semantic restrictions of competing lexical items. In the match with *taycwung kyothong swutan* 'means of public transport', the item *ssu.ta* 'use' is normally employed for general purposes, and it not normally used for the means of public transport such as *ki.cha* 'train' and *pe.su* 'bus'. In relation to a vehicle, it is only appropriate for a private vehicle as in *Nay cha.lul ssu.se.yo*! 'Use my car!'. If its usage is overextended to refer to public transport, therefore, it is erroneous or extremely awkward. To refer to public services such as bus and train, *i.yong.ha.ta* 'make (good) use of' is correct and proper (Seo, S-K. et al. 2004). Alternatively, *tha.ta* 'ride' or

tha.ko.ka.ta 'ride and go' is more commonly used than i.yong.ha.ta, especially in spoken language.

Also, in relation to kkwum 'dream', the meaning of pyen.ha.ta 'undergo a change' and pa.kkwi.ta 'change/be changed' appears to be the same and the two verbs are often interchangeable in everyday use, but they carry different semantic boundaries in that pyen.ha.ta is used to describe a certain state or shape, such as taste, colour, one's attitude or mind, becoming different (implying a negative or unfavourable change), while the latter pa.kkwi.ta is used to describe not just something which has changed, but, importantly, something which has been replaced or alternated with something else (e.g. day and night, telephone number, semester or conventional thought) and further something which has been improved or bettered. Thus, when someone says his/her dream has changed, he/she really means that his/her dream has been replaced with something else (i.e. something more suitable), and even if the pair 'dream-pyen.ha.ta' may be accepted by some Korean L1 speakers, especially in a casual context, it is not considered to be completely appropriate.

The match of *haswukcip* 'boarding house' with *ota* 'come' and *tolaota* 'come back' requires some contextual considerations beyond semantic differences. This is why L1 speakers in the survey gave opinions that both *otada* and *tolaota* were acceptable, depending on the context. The intention of the speaker was to express his/her *return* from place A (i.e. school) to place B (i.e. home) in the particular context, rather than just *coming* to a place to which he/she has no intention of returning. Without such a context it may sound 'OK' with *o.ca.ma.ca* 'as soon as one comes', but an 'act of return' is appropriate in the context where the learner intends to express an act of leaving his boarding house at a certain time, for instance, in the morning and coming back to the place. In another aspect, it might be prompted by the English expression, '*come home*' that is normally used to mean 'to come back home' in parallel English-speaking contexts.

We noted that the judgment by the L1 and L2 speakers of the first two paired items *ssuta* 'use' vs *iyonhata* 'make (good) use of' and *pyenhata* 'undergo a change' vs *pakkwita* 'change/be changed' was less different than that of the third paired items *ota* 'come' vs *tolaota* 'come back'. It was probably because both L1 and L2 speakers generally agreed to the match of two lexical items when they judged it taking into account the semantic or definitional feature of the L2 items but disagreed when they considered other factors such as context as well. In the case of *ota* and *tolaota*, for example, it seems that the L1 speakers were more pragmatic and context-conscious in their judgments, while the L2 speakers were logic-based in that they showed more decisive support for the concept of 'come back' while giving more negative response to the concept of simply 'come' than L1 speakers.

Pedagogically, the concepts of 'use', 'change' and 'come' and their associated semantic components, as well as their acceptable (or unacceptable) match with each other require a clear explanation in KFL instruction and materials. In the case of the concept of 'use', for example, English L1 speakers need to be aware that: 1) The match with 'public transport', which is considered in this paper, has such acceptability as:

*ssuta *Taychwung kyothongul ssuseyyo.

'Use public transport.'

?sayonghata ?Taychwung kyothongul sayonghaseyyo.

'Use public transport.'

 $\sqrt{iyonhata}$ $\sqrt{Taychwung kyothongul iyonghaseyyo}$.

'Make good use of public transport.'

2) The match with 'private vehicle', however, has some complex acceptability depending on the speaker's intention and the sentence construction such as:

offer: \sqrt{ssuta} $\sqrt{Nay cha ssuseyyo}$.

'Use my car.'

 $\sqrt{\text{sayonghata}}$ $\sqrt{\text{Nay cha sayonghaseyyo}}$.

'Use my car.'

?iyonhata ?Nay cha iyonghaseyyo.

'Make good use of my car.'

means: *ssuta *Appa chalul sse kulul towassta.

'I helped him by using Dad's car.'

√sayonghata √Appa chalul sayonghay kulul towassta.

'I helped him by using Dad's car.'

 $\sqrt{iyonhata}$ \sqrt{Appa} chalul iyonghay kulul towassta.

'I helped him by making good use of Dad's car.'

reason: \sqrt{ssuta} VEmmaka onul nay chalul ssuki ttaymwuney...

'Because Mom uses my car today...'

√sayonghata √Emmaka onul nay chalul sayonghaki ttaymwuney...

'Because Mom uses my car today...'

?iyonhata ?Emmaka onul nay chalul iyonghaki ttaymwuney...

'Because Mom makes good use of my car today...'

3) Modes of public transport are better or more frequently expressed with the verb *thata* 'ride' or *thako kata* 'ride and go' rather than the concept of 'use' to refer to one's going somewhere and this verb is also used for a private vehicle that is driven by someone else; and 4) there are various other distinctive matches with each of the 'use' verbs—*ssuta*, *sayonghata* and *iyonghata*—in Korean (e.g. *son* 'hand' – *ssuta*: 'use hands'/'take measures'; *akki* 'musical instrument' – *sayonghata*; *chinkwu* 'friend' – *iyonghata* 'take an advantage of friend').

Similarly, KFL learners need to be aware of the various expressions of the concept of 'change', their subtle differences and associated matches. In addition to *pyenhata* and *pakkwuta*, there are a number of *pyen* ('change')-verbs such as:

pyenkyeng-hata(-toyta) plan, course, etc.

pyenmo-hata(-toyta) physical feature, e.g. shape

pyensim-hata one's mind

pyenhyeng-hata(-toyta) form, biological feature, e.g. cell

pyenchen-hata(-toyta) times, generation, phases

pyenhwa-hata(-toyta) situation, condition, weather, season, etc.

pyenhwan-hata(-toyta) vehicle gear, personal feelings pyenhyek-hata. vehicle gear, personal feelings discovery, technique, society.

These verbs are often found to be extremely difficult for KFL learners to discern the subtle difference and understand the usage. For that matter, it is not easy for L1 speakers also to give an immediate and clear-cut explanation for some of the words. In the meantime, the verb <code>pakkwuta/pakkwita</code> has a distinctive semantic feature of broadly covering the referent range of all or most of the <code>pyen-verbs</code> and beyond (i.e. <code>pyen-verbs</code> plus the concept of 'exchange', 'revise', 'substitute' and even 'buy'). Essentially the verb <code>pakkwuta</code> denotes the concept of 'change for a good purpose/reason' and that makes it distinguished from <code>pyen-verbs</code>, which denote all of positive, negative and neutral changes. Where possible, it is important and necessary in KFL instruction to specify the usage of these verbs giving some examples of matching words.

The acceptability, which was used as criteria in the survey, can be influenced by individual judges and contextual factors. Thus, the evaluation of the same erroneous or awkward expression may be quite different "depending on who made it and where, when and how it was made" (Ellis 1994: 67). For instance, Korean L1 experts (e.g. linguists, teachers) and non-Korean L2 speakers might have evaluated the test items in the survey differently. In assessing error gravity, different judges may use different criteria, i.e. some may take the degree of linguistic deviance more seriously, while others may consider the degree of interference with communication more severely. What is important in KFL is the intensive attention paid to those erroneous or problematic items. In KFL contexts, there are a number of paired lexical items that need to be defined more accurately, appropriately and inclusively in terms of their referent range, lexical domains and semantic restrictions. There is also a need to be aware of the different referent range of the Korean and English (or other languages) terms. At the same time, practicing instructors should pay more attention to those competing items, and perhaps utmost attention to erroneous/extremely awkward expressions that interfere with communication.

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[Appendix]

Survey questionnaire

설문조사: 언어 수용성 			연구조사자: 신성철
=====================================	======= 국어화자		
이 조사는 한국어 . 수용성(acceptabili			
아래 글을 읽고 고 록 생각하는지 가장 알			게서 얼마나 수용 가능한 언어라고 표해주십시오.
	2= 약간 어색 3= 어느 정도	수용가능한 표현	쓰이는 표현이 아닌 것 같다.
1. 대중 교통 수단을 1	을 써야 돼요 . 2	3	4
2. 대중 교통 수단을 1	≟ 이용해야 돼요 2	2 . 3	4
3. 나의 꿈은 점점 ! 1	변해진 것 같아! 2	요 .	4
4. 나의 꿈은 점점 t 1	바뀐 것 같아요. 2	3	4
5. 저는 하숙집에 오 1	2자 마자 하숙집 2	아주머니한테 3	서 인사를 받아요. 4
6. 저는 하숙집에 돌 1	들아오자 마자 히	·숙집 아주머니 3	한테서 인사를 받아요. 4
조사해 응해 주셔서 마지막으로 다음 (미 해 주세요.	
여 려대: 1 16-2 5	2 26-35	3 36-45	4 46 or over

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