English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 20, No. 3 Fall 2014

The Effects of Utilizing Language Learning Strategies in Teaching the Speech Act of Refusal

Bohyon Chung[*]
Mokwon University
Sujung Min[**]
Kongju National University
Jongbok Lee[***]
Mokwon University

Chung, Bohyon, Min, Sujung & Lee, Jongbok. (2014). The effects of utilizing language learning strategies in teaching the speech act of refusal. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 20*(3), 51-70.

This study examines the effects of strategies-based instruction on the refusal productions measuring the appropriateness using pre-test and post-test design. The aim of the study is to validate the strategies for speech acts acquisition suggested by Cohen (2005). The twenty Korean EFL learners with homogeneous level of English proficiency in undergraduate course participated in this study. The participants were given three instructional treatments which were modeled after taxonomy of strategies for speech act acquisition by Cohen (2005), namely, (1) strategies for the initial learning of speech acts, (2) strategies for using the speech act material and (3) metapragmatic considerations. Pre-test and post-test were administered a week before and after the teaching sessions to illustrate refusals with consideration of the social status between speaker and hearer. With collected refusal responses, two raters evaluated appropriateness of refusals according to a previously developed evaluation rubric (Taguchi, 2006). Based on the data from the refusal appropriateness evaluation score of the participants, a paired sample *t*-test was implemented in order to measure the effects resulted by three teaching sessions. The results demonstrate that there was a positive effect on the refusal appropriateness as the mean scores were positively increased in all three various social statuses.

[language learning strategies/pragmatic teaching/refusal appropriateness]

---

[*] First author, [**] Correspond author, [***] Co-author

I. INTRODUCTION

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) and its effective instruction methodologies have drawn much attention from researchers and practitioners (Anderson, 2005; Bardovi-Harling & Vellenga, 2012; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-weltz, 1990; Cohen, 2005; Chung, Min & Uehara, 2013; Iwata, 2006; Kawate-Mierzejewska, 2009; Kwon, 2004; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Rose & Ng, 2001; Taguchi, 2006; Takimoto, 2007, 2009). It was in response to the claim that ILP certainly warrant extensive and critical research to make a link between ILP and second language acquisition (SLA) theories (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Nevertheless, Cohen (2005) argued that "explicit and implicit strategy application to the learning and use of speech act is, at present, still limited" (p.288). It was led him up to claiming language learner strategies for acquiring speech acts in particular to assist learners to enhance knowledge in ILP. Intended as a validation study on effects of the strategies for speech act acquisition suggested by Cohen, the present study would appear to provide justification for measuring of changes in refusal appropriateness that might be the result of strategies-based instruction. It would be reasonable to assume that the findings eventually bring improvement in ILP performance. Moreover, this study would be expected to contribute to somewhat limited body of ILP instruction in Korean context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Instruction in Pragmatics

Initiated in research on constructs of communicative competence, many studies were carried out to investigate the pragmatics both in first and second language acquisition. Particularly in SLA, active attempts were made to find an effective way to teach pragmatics of target language in classroom setting (Bardovi-Harling & Vellenga, 2012; Birjandi & Derakhshan, 2013; Cohen, 2005; Cohen et al., 1998; Takimoto, 2007, 2012, 2013). Considerable number of pragmatic teaching approaches is likely to fall into explicit or implicit methodologies.

Following studies suggested that the explicit method in teaching pragmatics shows clear impacts on gaining the knowledge of pragmatics comparing to implicit method. There is a study that analyzing the effects of intention-oriented instruction on pragmatics focusing on learners' noticing and production of the request speech act (Takimoto, 2013). Based on the two different types of instruction, namely, intentional learning-induced instruction and incidental learning-induced instruction, two groups were given each of instruction and the

other group served as control group. Results indicated that both two methods improved level of noticing and request production. Between the two, intentional approach which connects with explicit learning showed more successful result than the incidental learning which suggest us that explicit teaching method can have more impact.

Bardovi-Harling and Vellenga (2012) also implemented input plus focus metapragmatic noticing instruction which is thought to be associated with explicit method. Some authentic conventional expressions like 'Thank you for having me,' or 'I'll call you back' was chosen as target structures. The study involved 66 students with 11 different language backgrounds. Instructions with different set of expressions for two groups resulted in bringing positive effect. It concluded that conventional expressions can be taught successfully by metapragmatic noticing instruction though still bound by transparency of the expression and the learners' level of linguistic ability.

While explicit instruction has been found to benefit language acquisition as seem above, several studies apply strategies based instruction in learning language skills. Cohen et al. (1998) analyzed the effects of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and Strategy Checklists on speaking performance on the three tasks; a self-description, a story retelling, and a description of a favorite city. Results in overall speaking performance by the experimental group surpass the control group, which were accounted for the use of strategies. Cohen (2005) further offered language learning strategies in support of learners to develop speech act ability. In light with a distinction between language learning and language use strategies from precious research, the strategies for speech act acquisition rest on three steps; initial learning strategy, speech act material using strategy and metapragmatic consideration strategy. He continued to present practical steps to be applied in speech act learning process, which served as a baseline in the present study.

Metapragmatic consideration, as included in the strategies for speech act acquisition by Cohen (2005) in the previous section, has been cooperated with other teaching methods in L2 instruction research. Metapragmatic instruction might be combined with metapragmatic discussion with the active participation of students in various forms of teacher-fronted-format, peer work, small groups, role-plays, semi-structured interviews, introspective feedback, and metapragmatic assessment tasks (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Interventional studies (e.g., Rose & Ng, 2001; Takimoto, 2007, 2012, 2013) have investigated the issue of metapragmatic instruction in different forms and compared it with other forms of instruction, either explicit or implicit instruction. They lend support that by metapragmatic instruction and discussion, significant improvement can be observed in pragmatic ability among EFL learners. It may, still, be mentioned that metapragmatic consideration embedded in strategies-based instruction concerning pragmatic ability found to be limited.

2. Previous Work on Refusals in ILP

Learners within any language background tend to feel difficulties when they make refusals since the possibility of offending the interlocutor is inherent in the act itself (Kwon, 2004). Due to its intricacy of refusal speech act, there have been many researchers, who carried out studies in different approaches.

In such intricacy, there was a comparative study (Beebe et al., 1990) where a discourse completion test (DCT) was used as an instrument. The study made the case for comparing Japanese and American refusal strategies usage. This study presented a list of semantic formulas based on the usage by Japanese and Americans, and it opened doors to opportunities to examine refusal speech acts in different cultural backgrounds.

Kwon (2004) investigated the refusal expressions made by Korean and American in English with DCT questionnaire which scenarios were taken from Beebe et al. (1990). It was found that the frequency and content of semantic formulas were different even though the range of refusal strategies was somewhat similar between the two groups. The results were parallel to the study by Beebe et al. (1990). Apology and gratitude were frequently expressed before making refusals among Korean participants whereas English speakers often stated positive opinion and expressed gratitude for a proposed action.

Chung, Min, and Uehara (2013) conducted an experiment on the content and frequency of refusal types were compared between Korean and Japanese university students. Considering that the participants in the study were considered to have a high-intermediate level of English proficiency, the results showed both Korean and Japanese students employed only a limited range of refusal types as in L2. They both tend to use either regret expression, saying "I'm sorry", or to give a good reason to make the refusal polite. The result was on par with other research carried out in the EFL countries indicating that EFL learners produced only a small number of refusal types (Kwon, 2004; Lee & Kang, 2001). This leads to a gap in which the lack of understanding about pragmalinguistic knowledge affects its employment of refusal strategies.

The speech act of refusal was investigated as well as in Japanese EFL context. Iwata (2006) carried out a contrastive study on refusal strategies using DCT developed in previous literatures. Based on the categorization for refusal strategies, the preference on using refusal strategies in different situations in relation to social status, social distance, and the gender of the speaker was analyzed between Japanese and American participants. The findings indicated that the nationality play an important role affecting the choice of refusal strategies. Also this study focused on the reason made by the participants from two countries, and it indicated that American speakers tried to provide somewhat honest reason, at the same time, Japanese speakers citing reasons not under their control. In addition, Kawate-Mierzejewska (2009) examined request-refusal interactions and the

sequences of refusal realization strategies among Japanese and American English speakers in Japanese. The study was conducted in a naturalistic way as the researcher analyzed the data occurred in the telephone conversations. The result showed that Japanese speakers tend to employ similar strategies whereas American speakers produced more wide range of refusal strategies. Both groups only shared few refusal strategies and thus general patterns could not be detected.

The literatures above proved a clear difference appeared in the refusal productions between English language learners and native speakers. In that sense, researchers are required to make attempts to close the gap between the two, employing either existing SLA theories or an interpretation of them. Of the various theories within SLA, strategies received decent interest from the point when Rubin (1975) provided a useful discussion on strategy approaches applied in language learning and language use (as cited in Cohen, 2005). Since then, the strategies-based instruction has been used in two approaches: Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) and Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI) (Anderson, 2005). CALLA is an approach assumes that second language (L2) acquisition is stimulated by an explicit instruction focusing on strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) initially proposed the approach and conducted thorough literature review in relation to learning strategy. SSBI, on the other hand, is an approach aims to teach language learners to be aware of their learning styles such as auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Cohen, Weaver, and Le (1998) reported an examination on the impact of Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI), resulted in improvement in oral language proficiency. According to Cohen (2005), the strategies-based instructions in support of speech act acquisition are mentioned to be in need of empirical confirmation and Cohen has described three steps of strategies based instruction in pragmatic acquisition. Therefore, the present study rests on an instructional strategies proposed by Cohen and it aims to validate the effects of the strategy-utilizing instruction on the speech act of refusal. Accordingly, the research question in this study can be put forth as follows: Do language learning strategies proposed by Cohen enhance learners' formulating of appropriate refusals among Korean EFL learners?

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The 20 undergraduate university students from a private university located in Daejeon, South Korea took part in the present study. They opted for a required course in English Education department. There were 17 female participants (85 %), 3 males (15 %) in

either junior or senior year with an age range between 21 and 35. It was thought to consider these participants as a single experimental group due to lack of access to participants. Though a research design without a control group bears limitations, the comparison between the scores from pre-test and post-test would allow observing if participants improved after receiving the instructional treatment.

The English proficiency among participants was determined based on the scores of the Vocabulary Size Test (VST) developed by Nation and Beglar (2007). The VST is a widely used multiple-choice test that is designed to measure learners' vocabulary size among the 14,000 most frequent groups of words that have a common feature or pattern (Chon & Kim, 2011).

In this study, a total number of 100 items, each of which would act as a sample of 100 words at each word family, were used to examine the English proficiency level (Cronbach's alpha = .777). The VST score results among the participants ranged from 74 to 85 out of 100. According to Nation and Beglar (2007), the average score around 80 (8,000 word families) are considered an important threshold level for learners to be able to understand complex spoken and written test. In order to compare this score to that of the participants' VST results, a one sample *t* -test was conducted. The results showed that the means of VST among participants' (M = 79.50, *SD* = 3.301, *Min.* = 74, *Max.* = 85) and the suggested mean scores by Nation and Beglar are not statistically significantly different (t (19) = .506, $p > .05$). Therefore, the participants in this study are also considered to be homogenized in terms of the in the important level claimed by Nation and Beglar. A sample item of VST is as follows:

Strap: He broke the **strap**.
a. 약속
b. 뚜껑
c. 접시
d. 끈

2. Instruction

Participants were exposed to the in-class teaching sessions that lasted for three weeks of spring semester in 2014. The participants were instructed by the researcher. The instruction in each session was to utilize strategies for learning and performing L2 speech acts devised by Cohen (2005). Acknowledging learner autonomy, Cohen suggested language learner strategies for acquiring speech acts to assist learners in improving their pragmatic knowledge. Cohen laid down a definition of the term, language learner strategies as "conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors

deployed by learners, often with the intention of enhancing their knowledge and understanding of an L2" (p. 276). Under this umbrella term, the learner strategies for acquiring speech acts sequenced as the following three strategy types:

A) Strategies for the initial learning of speech acts which help learners to take practical steps to gain understanding of how specific speech acts work by.
B) Strategies for using the speech act material which assists learners to retrieve the speech act material that has already been learned.
C) Metapragmatic considerations which help learners monitor for appropriateness of directness, address, time, and so on.

Following the three strategy types above, the instructional treatments in the present study were developed. A strategy demonstrated in one instructional treatment was varied each week. The detailed instructional descriptions and procedures are as follows:

1) Strategy for the Initial Learning

The first key strategy identified for learning speech act from Cohen's (2005) study was the initial learning strategy. This strategy was composed of two activities; identifying and practicing. First, participants were asked to read and discuss with their peers on five major refusal types listed on the handout to identify and distinguish certain expressions used as refusal speech act. Second, in order to gathering information on how those speech acts are performed, they did a practice exercise by listening to five casual conversations of request-refusal sequence asking each of five refusal types. While they listening, they had to fill in the blanks and identify what type of refusal strategy they were. A sample item of the listening activity is as follows:

> **Listen to the five dialogs and write down (a) the missing key expressions in the blanks and (b) which type (A, B, C, D, or E) each dialog below corresponds to.*
>
> 1. Oh, I'm ( ), but my family has already made plans. [TYPE]

After finished listening to the passages, students compared answers with peers and confirmed them with those of the instructor. A list of the five major refusal types with examples used in the instructional materials includes as follows: (a) positive opinion (e.g., I'd like to, I wish I could...), (b) Thanking (e.g., Thanks, but...), (c) Apology (e.g., I'm sorry, but...), (d) Alternative (e.g., Perhaps next time...), (e) Direct refusal (e.g., I

can't make it...). The sole source used for the two steps in this initial learning strategy was an English textbook entitled "Heart to Heart" (Yoshida, Kamiya, Kondo, & Tokiwa, 2000).

2) Strategy for Using Speech Act Material

In this strategy, learners may utilize a memory aid for retrieving the speech act material that has already been taught (Cohen, 2005). He especially distinguishes this language use strategies from language learning strategies as its primary focus is on helping students utilize the language that they already have taught (Cohen et al., 1998). The repertoires in this strategy were claimed to include the following four types: retrieval strategies for remind linguistic knowledge already stored in memory, rehearsal strategies for practicing L2 expressions already been taught, communication strategies for expressing meaning in creative ways (e.g., paraphrasing), and cover strategies for using memorized idioms and partially understood phrase in order to not looking foolish.

Two types of repertoires among the four illustrated above, retrieval and rehearsal strategy were adopted. It was mainly to practice refusal speech act performance taught in the previous strategy by engaging in imaginary interactions. The instructional material in this strategy included a DCT questionnaire consisted of three questions. Each item was developed to consider the power relation with interlocutors (lower, equal, or higher) to complete dialogues by writing down appropriate refusals in each situation. Again, the questions were taken from the book, "Heart to Heart" (Yoshida et al., 2000), which also referred in the previous strategy. Before participants started working on answering the questions, they were asked to review what they have learned last time, the five refusal types, with peers. A sample item of the DCT questions for the second strategy is as follows:

1. *A friend of yours, Jennifer, asks you to go on a ski trip with her and her friends next weekend, but you don't feel like going because you don't like some of the people who are going.*

Jennifer: How about going on a ski trip with us next weekend?
You :"_____"
Jennifer: OK. I understand.

3) Matapragmatic consideration

The third teaching session for matapragmatic consideration strategy was carried out by making participants completing a metapragmatic assessment questionnaire (MAQ)

and having them discuss on the MAQ results. According to Cohen (2005), learners are the one who needs to consider whole process from pre-planning, during the delivery of speech and to the evaluation in response to preventing from pragmatic failure. He continued specifying the aspects to monitor for learners in metapragmatic consideration. It included five aspects; appropriateness of the level of directness, appropriateness of the selected term of address, appropriateness of the timing for a speech act, the acceptability of how discourse is organized and sociopragmatic appropriateness. It was once documented that a group received metapragmatic instruction outperformed other methods; form-searching group, role-play group and control group to gain pragmalinguisitc knowledge (Birjandi & Derakhshan, 2013).

In this regard, MAQ was given to the participants for this strategy. MAQ contained four scenarios with five possible responses. Each of four situations was in different relationship where the power of speaker and interlocutor was either equal or not equal (lower or higher). The situations were modified from the study by Chen (1996). Participants were instructed firstly to go over to comprehend what the situations were, and then rank order in terms of the appropriateness of the given five refusal responses. The five refusal responses were developed in response to the five major refusal types taught in the first strategy, that is, positive opinion, thanking, apology, alternative and direct refusal. The appropriateness is evaluated according to five-point Likert scale which is used to allow the individual to express how appropriate they consider each refusal responses (1: very inappropriate to 5: very appropriate). In addition to rank-order refusal responses, participants were asked to think about the reason why they give the highest score on a particular response and write it down. A sample item of the MAQ questions for the second strategy is as follows:

4. *Z's younger brother asks to use Z's car to go to Chicago. Knowing that Z's younger brother is a careless and unskillful driver, Z doesn't want to lend the roommate the car. Z says,*

1 2 3 4 5	A)	"I'm sorry, but I don't lend my car to anyone."
1 2 3 4 5	B)	"Sorry to say, but I don't feel comfortable loaning out my car for long trips. Besides, I need it this week.
1 2 3 4 5	C)	"I can't. If something happens, it's a mess with the insurance."
1 2 3 4 5	D)	"I wish I could, but I made a policy not to lend my car to anybody. Besides, I need it this week."
1 2 3 4 5	E)	"I might go somewhere. I'll give you my answer later."

Reason: _____

After they finish the MAQ, students got into groups and exchange opinions about what they had on the questionnaire. In this discussion, the students were encouraged to share and compare their views on what makes each response appropriate in a situation. A response sample for reason why a participant chooses the most appropriate refusal in item 4 is shown below:

> Learner #12: Refusal (B) showed the feeling about the situation and gave reasonable reason for a rejection.

3. Assessment

Data was collected using the pre-test/post-test research design. It was to compare what the students knew before in pre-test and after the instruction in a post test. In this method, participants were pre-tested in week 10 of spring semester. In weeks 11, 12, and 13 participants took part in teaching sessions, and in week 14 the post-test was done. (Table 1)

TABLE 1
Pre-Test DCT Situation Attributes

Item	Social status	Refusal topic
1	Higher	An offer to on the job as a teaching assistant.
2	Equal	An offer of a ride home in his/her car.
3	Lower	A request credit card application
4	Higher	A request to help organize documents.
5	Equal	A request to borrow the participant’s laptop.
6	Lower	A request to borrow the participant’s textbook.
7	Higher	An invitation to join in a home-coming party.
8	Equal	An invitation to see a movie.
9	Lower	An invitation to make a speech at a speech contest.
10	Higher	A suggestion to take his/her class next semester’
11	Equal	A suggestion to join in a group study.
12	Lower	A suggestion to do short explanation for a lesson.

Note. The social status refers to the relative social position of interlocutor.

All pre/post-test questionnaires were in the form of a written discourse completion task (DCT) containing 12 items in each questionnaire focusing on refusal-provoking situations. The data collection tool in this study, DCT is thought to allow researchers to draw participants' responses of their knowledge and attitudes regarding the use of speech acts, and as such can be analyzed for arriving at a conclusion (Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001). The test items were not duplicated with the instructional treatment materials. During the survey in pre/post-test, the participants were allowed to use smart phones to look up the

word in the dictionary whenever they are thought to be in need. They were instructed to read and imagine being in each situation and produce the refusals in natural way. There was no time constraint, but the survey was completed within 40 minutes in general. The situations were designed to reflect one of the sociolinguistic variables, social status of the interlocutor since refusals are sensitive to as such (Beebe et al, 1990). Each social status (low, equal, and high) was considered and reflected in four items. The situations in the pre-test were adapted from previously used in research (Chung, et al., 2013) (See Appendix A). Table 1 displays attributes of the situations in pre-test.

In the post-test, on the other hand, the scenarios were directly taken from a previous study by Beebe et al. (1990).

TABLE 2
Post-Test DCT Situation Attributes

Item	Social status	Refusal topic
1	Lower	A request to increase in pay.
2	Equal	A request to lend lecture notes.
3	Lower	An invitation to a dinner with business partner.
4	Higher	An invitation to a dinner with boss.
5	Equal	An offer to try a new diet.
6	Higher	A suggestion to organize better.
7	Lower	An offer to compensate for broken vase.
8	Lower	A suggestion to change the teaching method.
9	Equal	An offer to have another piece of cake.
10	Equal	An invitation to a dinner with a friend's couple.
11	Higher	An offer to raise promotion but moving place in rural area.
12	Higher	A request to do extra works.

The situations of 12 items were different from those of the pre-test, which would prevent subjects to attempt to memorize the response and to reduce the testing effect. The attributes of the situations in post-test is described in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha for pre-test questionnaire was .940 and .872 for post-test. Therefore it is suffice to say that all the Cronbach's alpha results met the minimum reliability level of .60 for this study.

4. Data Analysis

1) Refusal Appropriateness

Refusal expressions can be analyzed at several different levels, each of which may serve different theoretical purposes. In this study, the refusals from DCT data both in

pre- and post tests were analyzed in terms of refusal appropriateness based on a six point rating scale, developed for measuring the pragmatic appropriateness by Taguchi (2006), ranging from 0 to 5. The scale covers grammatical competence and pragmatic competence. According to the scale, appropriateness of refusals were measured by two raters, the lead author and a native speaker of English who has decent understanding of South Korea in general by having years of experience in teaching English to Korean EFL learners. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The inter-rater reliability was calculated and found to be .734 (r (19) = 0.734, $p < .001$), whereby data are independently coded and the scores by two raters compared for agreements. The average score between the raters was assigned as the final score.

2) Effects of Strategies Utilized Instruction

Given the pre- and post-test average scores, two type of statistical analysis; namely paired *t*-test was carried out to see the changes by strategies-based instructions. Prior to performing paired *t*-test, Kolmogorov-Sminov (K-S) test was done to determine the two data sets would be in normal distribution, thereby decreasing the probability of producing fallible paired *t*-test results. This test was positively necessary since the number of participants was merely 20. Results for the K-S test for normality indicated that both pre- and post-test scores have a *p*-value greater than 0.05 ($p = .596$, $p = 1.000$, respectively). This result indicated normal distribution of data, which paired *t*-test was eligible to be computed for the data in the present study in consideration of the interlocutor's social status. All of the analysis above was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.

IV. RESULTS

1. Refusal Appropriateness

1) Results from the Pre-Test

The DCT was administered to 20 people a week before the participants received instructional treatment. The DCT for pre-test consisted of 12 different situations to elicit refusals. The detailed situation description is showed in Table 1 above. The collected DCT data of 12 refusal responses were evaluated using the pragmatic appropriateness rating scale (Taguchi, 2006) by two raters. The pre-test scores served as comparison to the post-test evaluation results. The descriptive statistics for the assessment of refusal

appropriateness for each item are displayed in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics for the Refusal Appropriateness Assessment of Pre-Test

	Total (*N* = 20)			
Item No.	M	SD	Min.	Max.
1	2.98	0.55	2.5	4.0
2	3.10	0.53	2.0	4.0
3	3.10	0.42	2.5	4.0
4	3.43	0.29	3.0	4.0
5	2.93	0.37	2.0	3.5
6	3.08	0.41	2.5	4.0
7	2.85	0.33	2.5	3.5
8	3.08	0.52	2.0	4.0
9	2.95	0.46	2.0	3.5
10	3.28	0.38	2.5	4.0
11	3.23	0.41	2.5	4.0
12	2.60	0.58	1.5	3.5
Total	3.05	0.44	2.29	3.83

For each of the questionnaire items, the means and standard deviations derived from DCT refusal responses of all 20 participants were calculated. As the table shows, there were 12 items, producing a maximum score of 4 and a minimum score of 1.5. The total mean score were found to be 3.05 (*SD* = .44) and this result indicated that the overall refusals were considered as neither appropriate nor rude since it went slightly over midpoint. The averages were varied as item 4 scored the highest (*M* = 3.43) and item 12 the lowest (*M* = 2.60). The situation in item 4 scored the highest was to make a refusal to a senior student in the department who asked some help to organize the documents. Example response for highest score is as follows:

> Learner #8 (item 4): I really want to help you, but I have to do my homework. Sorry, I'll help you next time.

For a refusal with a person of higher status, a learner tried to display positive opinion and apology to show politeness and provide convincing reason as the example above. This response was evaluated high scores by the two raters, 5 and 4 respectively. As for the lowest scored item, item 12, it was to refuse to a student who requested to short explanation for a chapter. Example of the lowest scored response is:

> Learner # 12 (item 12): No, not now. This part is very important!

In the case of refusing to a lower status interlocutor, a leaner seemed to employ a

direct refusal expression and a short reason with a strict tone of voice. The two raters marked low scores on this response, 3 and 2 each.

2) Results from the post-test

One week after three series of strategies based instructions were carried out, the post-test was administered to pre-test respondents, as completion of pre-test and post-test measures was required for the following *t*-test analysis. In Table 4, the assessment score on 12 refusal expressions are showed with mean, mode, standard deviation (SD), minimum and maximum values as follows.

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics for the Refusal Appropriateness Assessment of Post-Test

	Total (*N* = 20)			
Item No.	M	SD	Min.	Max.
1	3.85	0.49	2.5	5.0
2	3.65	0.54	2.5	4.5
3	3.50	0.67	2.5	4.5
4	3.78	0.77	2.5	5.0
5	3.43	0.69	2.5	4.5
6	3.70	0.66	2.5	4.5
7	4.00	0.79	1.5	5.0
8	3.80	0.75	2.5	5.0
9	3.53	0.66	2.0	5.0
10	3.80	0.64	2.5	5.0
11	3.60	0.80	2.0	5.0
12	3.70	0.71	2.5	5.0
Total	3.69	0.68	2.33	4.83

In the post-test result, there also were 12 items but with distinguished scenarios from prior questionnaire items as the table illustrates. The results reveal that the mean score for all 12 items in the post-test (M = 3.79, SD = .68) increased from that of pre-test (M = 3.05, SD = .44), but it manifested the higher within-group variation, as reflected in the standard deviation. The minimum score in the post-test was 1.5 for item 7 whereas the maximum was 5.0. In addition, the average result showed that the refusals in the post-test were generally taken as acceptable and decent in terms of the appropriateness. The averages showed variation as it was seen in the pre-test, which item 7 recorded the highest (M = 4.00) and item 5 the lowest (M = 3.43). The situation in item 7 scored the highest was to make a refusal to a cleaning lady who is thought to have a low status than the speaker and she tried to compensate for broken vase.

In general, the length of responses in the post-test was caught researchers' attention as they grew longer. As in the example below, a learner laid down refusal showing

appreciation, positive opinion and persuasive reasons. It resulted to be marked the high scores, 5 from both two raters. In terms of the lowest scored item in post test, item 5, which was to write down how participants would refuse to a friend's suggestion to try a new diet ranked the lowest. Samples of the highest and the lowest response are as follows:

> Learner # 12 (item 7): Oh, haven't you hurt any part of your body? Oh, thank you for your concerning. I appreciate your honesty. And you don't have to pay back for the accident. You know this kind of accident often happen. So never mind and just try to keep your body safe next time.

> Learner # 4 (item 5): Wow what did you say? It's really hard to try a diet. And it makes me so exhausted. I don't want to try it.

In this situation, a participant had to refuse to a person who is in equal social status, namely friend. Though the five different refusal expression were presented both in direct and indirect ways through the teaching sessions, the example above didn't showed any respect by thanking or apologizing, and only tried to appeal how much it is difficult to accept the suggestion. Thus, the two raters' scores relatively low scores, 3 and 2 respectively.

2. Instructional Effects

The examination of refusal appropriateness in the pre-test and post-test necessitated the use of *t*-test analysis. The paired *t*-test was used to compare the means of refusal appropriateness ratings in the two assessments and it required the data to be normally distributed. Since the normality assumption was questionable as the number of the participants was less than 30, Kolmogorov-Sminov (K-S) test was run to determine the two data sets would be in normal distribution in preparation for conducting the subsequent t-test. The *p*-value from K-S test result for pre-test and post-test was found to be $p = .596$, $p = 1.000$, respectively and it concluded that the data comes from a normal distribution.

The subsequent table brings light on the paired *t*-test result to see the effects from the language learning strategies utilized in the instructional treatments. Results of a repeated-measure, paired sample t-test examining differences between subjects in pre-test and post-test were significant. First of all, the overall average scores regardless of the interlocutors' social status increased by 21 percentage points (0.64 point increased).

It showed a statistically significant difference in a t-value of -6.830 with 19 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed p-value was less than 0.001. A further investigation of instructional effects by the speakers of different social status appears in the following Table 5.

TABLE 5
Results of the Difference in Refusal Appropriateness Scores in Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Pre-test	Post-test			
Social Status	M (SD)	M (SD)	Improvement	*df*	*t*
Higher	3.20 (0.24)	3.69 (0.55)	0.49 (15.3%)	19	-3.633**
Equal	3.08 (0.26)	3.60 (0.49)	0.52 (16.9%)	19	-4.746***
Lower	2.89 (0.25)	3.79 (0.44)	0.90 (31.1%)	19	-9.062***
Total	3.05 (0.44)	3.69 (0.68)	0.64 (21.0%)	19	-6.830***

Note. Paired sample *t*-test, $N = 20$, **: $p < .01$, ***: $p < .001$

Secondly, the improved mean scores for each of the three social statuses, positive improvements were also found, ranging from 0.49 (15.3%) to 0.90 (31.1%). The t-test indicated that all was statistically significant improved mean scores. The refusals made to higher status interlocutor in post-test average scored higher (3.69 ± 0.55) than the pre-test of 3.20, a statistically significant difference of 0.49, t (19) = -3.633, $p < .01$. In case of equal status interlocutor, there also was a statistically significant difference between means (t (19) = -4.746, $p < .001$) of the refusal appropriateness. As for the refusals for people who are in lower status, it was worth noting that there was the most notable difference among the three social statuses, in the scores for pre-test (2.89 ± 0.25) and post-test (3.79 ± 0.44) assessment; t (19) = -9.062, $p < .001$. These results suggest that the strategies for speech act acquisition by Cohen (2005) give positive effects, thereby increase the ratings on refusal appropriateness.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to make an attempt to validate and give empirical support of the Cohen's strategies for speech act acquisition (2005). The strategies were composed of three; (1) strategies for the initial learning of speech acts, (2) strategies for using the speech act material and (3) metapragmatic considerations. The participants who took part in the strategies-based instruction were known as being homogenized in terms of the in the important level claimed by Nation and Beglar (2007). In this regard, the research question addressed the effectiveness of the three strategy-based instructional approaches on the production of appropriate refusal. The findings of this study confirm that the strategies for learning speech act claimed by Cohen significantly improved the

appropriateness of refusal speech act among Korean EFL learners. In line with research accounting for strategies-based teaching such as the ones undertaken by Cohen et al. (1998) and Birjandi and Kerakhshan (2013), the present study revealed that the performance level of refusal appropriateness is increased.

It is noteworthy that performance level improved in all three social status variance considered as one of the key elements in sociopragmatics. As the findings in the previous study (Chung, et al., 2013) indicated, it also showed that Korean EFL learners are sensitive to the relative social status of interlocutor. That is, the more appropriate refusal would be used in the case of the situation with speakers of higher social status, whereas it may be taken somewhat inappropriate that refusals produced to a lower social status interlocutor. As noted earlier, the three strategies applied in the instruction demonstrated a positive effect on improving the refusals to all social status, and then it would seem imperative that educators should be strongly encouraged to incorporate these strategies into their teaching practices. Despite general support for Cohen's strategies-based instruction in pragmatic acquisition, the present study did not report which strategies among the three had the strongest effect on the observed improvement. Though it may be difficult to pinpoint the effect of individual strategies as they combined with other teaching techniques, it would be worthwhile to examine its unique influence of each strategy thereby enable teachers to apply proper strategy in various situation. In addition, assessing long-term effects of strategies-based instruction warrants further investigation.

Limitations of the study should take into account in the future study. The findings could have been enhanced if the number of participants increased thereby dividing participants into experiment and control group to measure the better effects of instruction. In addition, the fact that present study involves seventeen out of twenty female students, that is female students outnumber male students, could have caused a biased result, so gender balance should be considered in the future study to be able to generalize the findings from the study. The data collection in the present study did not account for drawing authentic production of refusals nor did it take into consideration of the learners' individual variables. In the subsequent studies, it would be advisable to use interviews to collect more authentic speech samples with more participants involved and investigate depends on learner's characteristics, such as gender, power, sexual orientation, and more others as it was described as a subtleties in discourse and pragmatics that a second language learners (Brown, 2007).

REFERENCES

Anderson, N. J. (2005). L2 strategy research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 757-772). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bardovi-Harling, K., & Vellenga, H. E. (2012). The effect of instruction on conventional expressions in L2 pragmatics. *System, 40*, 77-89.

Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. S. Andersen & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-73). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Birjandi, P., & Derakhshan, A. (2013). Pragmatic comprehension of apology, request, and refusal: An investigation on the effect of consciousness-raising video-driven prompts. *Applied Research on English Language, 3*(1), 67-86.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching (5th ed.).* New York, NY: Longman.

Chen, H. J. (1996). Cross-cultural comparison of English and Chinese metapragmatics in refusal. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Indiana University, IN.

Chon, Y. V., & Kim, Y. H. (2011). Lexical Discovery and Consolidation Strategies of Proficient. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 17*(3), 26-56.

Chung, B., Min, S., & Uehara, S. (2013). A cross-cultural study on pragmatic transfer in the EFL learners' speech act of refusal. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 19*(3), 51-70.

Cohen, A. D., Weaver, S. J., & Li, T-Y. (1998). The impact of strategies-based instruction on speaking a foreign language. In A. D. Cohen (Ed.), *Strategies in learning and using a second language* (pp. 107-156). New York: Longman.

Cohen, A. D. (2005). Strategies for learning and performing L2 speech acts. *Intercultural Pragmatics, 2*(3), 275-301.

Iwata, Y. (2006). Japanese and American Refusal Strategies: Discourse Analysis. *Southern Journal of Linguistics, 27*(1-2), 52-67.

Kawate-Mierzejewska, M. (2009). Refusals in Japanese telephone conversations. In N. Taguchi (Ed.), *Pragmatic Competence* (pp. 199-226). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Kwon, J. (2004). Expressing refusals in Korean and in American English. *Multilingua-Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication, 23*(4), 339-364.

Lee, S., & Kang, H. (2001). Comparative study of refusal response of Korean and English. *Humanities, 8*, 65-100.

Nation, I. S. P., & Beglar, D. (2007). A vocabulary size test. *The Language Teacher, 31*(7), 9-13.

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, K. R., & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, K. R., & Ng, C. K. (2001). Inductive and deductive teaching of compliments and compliment responses. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 145-170). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, J. (1975). What the "good language learner" can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly, 9,* 41-51.

Taguchi, N. (2006). Analysis of appropriateness in a speech act of request in L2 English. *Pragmatics, 16*(4), 513-533

Takimoto, M. (2007). The effects of input-based tasks on the development of learners' pragmatic proficiency. *Applied Linguistics, 30*(1), 1-25.

Takimoto, M. (2012). Metapragmatic discussion in interlanguage pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics, 44*, 1240-1253.

Takimoto, M. (2013). Exploring the effects of intention-oriented input-based instruction in second language pragmatics: A case of English request hedges. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 10*(4), 41-69.

Yoshida, K., Kamiya, M., Kondo, S., & Tokiwa, R. (2000). *Heart to Heart: Overcoming Barriers in Cross-Cultural Communication* (pp. 30-41). Tokyo, Japan: Macmillan.

APPENDIX

Examples of text materials used

Pre-test

Instruction: In the following situations, please describe what you would say to a particular person in English. Imagine that you are actually in the situation, and try to write down exactly what you think you would say to the person.

1. You are a university student. You received an offer from your professor to take teaching assistantship. *You refuse this offer by saying,* (based on Beebe et al, 1990)
   (Offer: Higher status)

   _____

Post-test

Instruction: In the following situations, please describe what you would say to a particular person in English. Imagine that you are actually in the situation, and try to write down exactly what you think you would say to the person.

1. You are the owner of a book store. One of your best workers asks you to speak to you in private.
   Worker: As you know, I've been here just a little over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.
   You refuse this offer by saying, (from Beebe et al, 1990)
   (Request: Lower status)

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: College

Bohyon Chung
Department of Liberal Arts
Mokwon University
88, Doanbuk-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon, South Korea 302-729
CP: +82 (010) 6668-4456
Email: bohyon0920@mokwon.ac.kr

Sujung Min
Dept of English Education, College of Education
Kongju National University
56, Gongjudaehak-ro, Gongju-si,
Chungcheongnam-do, South Korea
Tel: +82 (041) 850-8192 CP: +82 (010) 3559-9736
Email: sujmin@kongju.ac.kr

Jongbok Lee
Dept of English Education, College of Education
Mokwon University
88, Doanbuk-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon, South Korea 302-729
Tel: (042) 829-7448
Email: jblee@mokwon.ac.kr

Received in July 15th, 2014
Reviewed in August 26th, 2014
Revised version received in September 5th, 2014