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Learning How to Perform L2 Speech Act in EFL Context

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The present study investigates how Korean learners of English perform a speech act, in comparison with Korean native and English native speakers. With a focus on the speech act behavior of 'gratitude', this study aims to reveal the cross-cultural differences between the Korean and the English language groups, and to find what should be included in L2 sociolinguistic competence. The data have been obtained from 43 Americans and 91 Koreans assigned to three groups: English native speakers, Korean learners of English, and Korean native speakers. A discourse completion test and a subsequent interview examined the participants' perception of the social factor of power relationship and further their choice of response strategies according to the power relationship. The statistical procedure revealed that by different power relationships, they used significantly different gratitude strategies as well as politeness markers. Korean learners of English heavily depended on the strategies of negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978. 1987), and the pattern of usages was similar to the Korean language group. Korean EFL textbooks and classrooms, therefore, need to include not only more diverse contexts in which 'gratitude' is necessary, but also the ways in which the English speech act is performed in a culturally appropriate manner.

[EFL learning/cross-cultural difference/politeness markers/power relationship/ social factor/speech act]

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Hymes (1972) proposed the notion of communicative competence, cross-cultural communication has gained more concern in second/foreign language learning and teaching. It is now a commonly shared understanding that language and culture usually interact with each other in such an intricate way that culture can never be treated lightly if language learners aim to use the target language well. Often recognized are the differences in the behaviors of first language (L1) and second language (L2) speakers,

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due to the L2 speakers' problems with adopting the culture of the target language. This shift of interest from linguistic components to more pragmatic uses of the language has duly led to second language research not only on what the L2 cultural norms are, but also on how differently the norms are realized between L1 and L2.

Studies of interlanguage pragmatics, to find the different cultural norms in language use, adopted the useful notion of 'speech act' as a natural unit for analyzing a speech habit within a speech community. These studies have focused on the identification of how some of the speech acts, such as 'request', 'refusal', 'compliment', and 'apology', are differently realized in L2 interactions (e.g., Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; Chang, 2012; House & Kasper, 1981; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Wolfson, 1981; Yu, 2004). What these studies centered on are the discussion and the test of the social variables, such as social distance, social power and imposition, as proposed in the politeness model of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The results have revealed that the way people perceive and assess the variables is not only situation-dependent, but also culturally specific (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). L2 speakers' nonnative-like handling of these variables has often been presented in relation to their L1s, and thus the L1 transfer into L2 production is relevant to all the linguistic levels including the learners' sociocultural level (Gass, 1988).

The present study examines the speech act of 'gratitude', as used by Korean learners of English. Gratitude universally carries a social value in any culture. Among American English speakers, it has a more critical social value than any other country (Rubin, 1983), and is one of the speech acts that are taught to children in the society. To nonnative speakers of English, according to Eisenstein and Bodman (1986), gratitude expressions may cast challenges, because in their study, even advanced nonnative English speakers had considerable difficulty with expressing gratitude adequately in the target language. In terms of a pedagogical perspective, the study of the contrastive aspects of the speech act is much needed, because despite the social significance of gratitude expressions in cross-cultural communication, the English classroom in Korea, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), still lacks guidance on how to appropriately offer this speech act.

1. Speech Acts and Politeness

In Brown and Levinson's influential work regarding politeness (1978, 1987), they assumed a 'model person', a competent adult member of a society who has an inclination to keep up his face: a positive face (the model person presumes that his wants are desirable for at least some others) and a negative face (he hopes that his actions are unimpeded by others). In any verbal encounter, both faces of this model person are

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inevitably threatened. The weight of the face-threatening act is closely related to three social factors: the distance between speaker and hearer, the power of the hearer over the speaker, and the inherent weight of the imposition of the face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Participants in a conversational event, then, adopt strategies in order to restore positive and negative faces. The strategies include not only semantic unit, e.g., 'thank you', but also a marker, e.g., 'oh', as they both address the degree of politeness expressed in a conversational turn. House and Kasper (1981) suggested, in their study of "request." modality makers which are closely associated with intensity of a speech act and politeness. For example, conversation participants will use intensifiers (e.g., "really, terribly, so, very") and interjections (e.g., "Oh, Wow") to properly handle the higher degree of politeness while performing a speech act.

Several researchers have criticized Brown and Levinson's universal taxonomy of politeness strategies along with the binary notions of politeness. Their typology was noticeably problematic because it was often different from how participants in real conversations perceived the strategies in practice (Baxter, 1984). Baxter also questioned the dichotomy of positive versus negative politeness since he observed that positive politeness is a precondition for negative politeness. Moreover, the universality of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies has been challenged in terms of the ultimate goal of politeness research. Several researchers (Arundale, 2010; Watts, 2003; Watts et al., 1992) have noted that interlanguage pragmatics of politeness should aim to explain why members of a particular society are able to evaluate their own linguistic acts, and the acts of others, as deferential or rude. Face, therefore, is not a stable aspect that a conversation participant can solely handle, but a key aspect of the relationship multiple participants in a conversational event constitute together, as they conjointly constitute meanings and actions in talk-in-interaction (Arundale, 2010).

As the notions of politeness and face are now recognized as dynamic and interactional concepts, researchers have now adopted Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies as an inventory of resources that may be deployed by language users in specific communicative situations (Jansen & Janssen, 2010). That is, whether or not they will use one or more of the strategies depends on numerous conditions including the speakers' knowledge of the language in use and the communicative conventions in that culture and in a specific context at hand. Thus, as Spencer-Oatey (2000) notes, while face is a universal phenomenon, "culture can affect the relative sensitivity of different aspects of people's face, as well as which strategies are most appropriate for managing face" (p. 12).

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2. L2 Sociocultural Context and Strategic Usage of a Speech Act

Recently, in their endeavor to expand the scope of speech act studies, researchers from different fields of pragmatics have employed various analytic methods, including a discourse completion test and conversation analysis, and examined speech acts in different contexts of communication, such as business interaction and online chat (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Eisenchlas, 2011; Huth, 2006; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Yu, 2004). These studies have attempted to identify characteristics of a certain context as it influences talk in action. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2000) describes four contextual variables that have an impact on rapport management, i.e., participant relations, message content, rights and obligations, and communicative activity. Jansen and Janssen (2010) also note that strategic choices are made based on language, culture, and situation. According to them, while the inventory of politeness strategies might be universal, the interpretation of the incorporation of one or more concrete strategies is dependent on these variables.

The social variable of power relationships has contributed to differences in its perception, and, as a result, in L1 and L2 productions of various speech acts. Schnurr and Chan (2011) examined the cultural differences in responding to teasing and self-denigrating humor between Hong Kong and New Zealand. Speakers from these two cultures used a wide range of ways to manage rapport by responding to teasing and self-denigrating humor in business meeting contexts. Hong Kong culture generally puts a stronger emphasis on maintaining hierarchical relationships than New Zealand. The distinction between quality and identity face was clearer in the Hong Kong context, than in the New Zealand context in which these two notions of face were much harder to separate. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), in the study of requesting behaviors of Greek versus British English speakers, found that English speakers were more direct in a certain context, i.e., requesting the owed tuition fee, than Greeks and Greek learners of English. Interestingly, in the perception of social power, English speakers assessed the social power that the speaker had over the hearer as higher in this context. Thus, Economidou-Kogetsidis proposes, directness levels depend on the speakers' perception of social relations, which is in turn culture-specific.

The studies of speech acts of EFL learners in the Asian context have continuously noted the transfer of their L1 pragmatic knowledge to L2 practice. Yu (2004) studied strategies that Taiwanese learners of English used to respond to the speech act of compliment and found that American participants were found to adopt more acceptance strategies, but fewer nonacceptance and combination strategies than Taiwanese learners of English. Interestingly, English learners in the United States (ESL) adopted more acceptance and combination strategies, but fewer amendment strategies than those

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learning English in Taiwan (EFL). Indirect L1 communication style in Chinese culture was also noted in Chang's study of speech act of refusal performed by Chinese learners of English (2012). The EFL learners provided excuses with specific and significant details in L2 refusals instead of direct refusal strategies.

Interesting findings on Korean EFL learners' speech act behaviors have continuously been reported in the studies of L2 pragmatics. Hyeon-Sook Kang (2011) showed that Korean learners of English heavily depended on a few formulaic expressions to place polite 'request', often including 'sorry' and an address term. Interestingly, they believed that the English language had an address term and vocabulary that had a similar deferential quality as in Korean. This tendency to use several formulaic expressions was presented in Dae-min Kang (2008)'s study of Korean EFL learners' speech act behavior of implicit compliment. He emphasized that the level of this pragmatic knowledge and L2 sociolinguistic competence affects the production of L2 implicit compliments. Moon-Young Chun (2010) also discussed the problem related to interpretation of politeness in Korean versus Canadian culture. Koreans, while enacting the advice-giving speech act, were concerned the most about showing interest in others' well-being, whereas the native Canadian English speakers interpreted those actions as invasion of privacy.

3. Studies of the Speech Act of Gratitude

In his analysis of speech acts, Searle (1969) defines thanking as an illocutionary act performed by a speaker regarding a past act performed by a hearer. This past act benefits the speaker, and the speaker believes it to have benefited him/her. The speaker feels grateful or appreciative, and makes a statement which counts as an expression of appreciation. The importance of studies on gratitude in light of the cross-cultural point of view has gained attention from the theoretical and empirical researchers. In her theoretical study on the use of a politeness formula, Ferguson (1981) identified thanking expressions and responses to them in light of a politeness formula. She maintained that thanking and responding to thanks were common to all human speech communities, and there was a universal correlation between the form of the formula and the social setting of the participants. She presented the communicative pattern of verbal gratitude in which different objects of gratitude require different strategies for thanks, and the appropriate responses. According to Coulmas (1981), in the choice of thanking strategies, both the object of gratitude and the quality of the interpersonal relation between the participants (friends, family, and strangers) are important. She explored further the importance of the cultural context. She found the ethics of indebtedness is prevalent in Japanese culture, and apology expressions are used over frequently to express gratitude, not only when they speak Japanese but also western languages, consequently causing pragmatic interference.

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The earlier studies on gratitude expressions focused on ethnographic data of non-English speakers (e.g., Apte, 1974; Rubin, 1983) and revealed the significant difference in its use and function in those languages. The empirical research on the English learners' competence in gratitude expression provided more specific evidence for cross-cultural miscommunication. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) collected data from native and nonnative speakers from a variety of backgrounds for the contrastive study of the gratitude speech act. They first devised a questionnaire composed of 25 situations of gift, favor, reward, or service and collected native speakers' data to decide the situations in which the responses were clear and consistent. The situations represented a range of formality that required no expression of gratitude, a short expression of gratitude, or an elaborate, extended expression of gratitude. With the data and subsequent interview procedure, they found that even the advanced nonnative speakers had considerable difficulty adequately expressing gratitude in the target language. The nonnative participants in the study showed divergence from native use on the lexical and syntactic levels and difficulty in using formulaic expressions. In a recent study of the speech act of German compliment, Huth (2006) indicated that American learners of German, despite explicit classroom instruction on the responses to a compliment, frequently used thanking expression to a compliment in spontaneous German interaction. This pragmatic transfer from their native language, English, to German confirms how deeply native pragmatic structures are ingrained in L2 learners' verbal behavior (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

Although the previous studies shed light on the systematic investigation into culturally different realizations of the speech act of gratitude, no studies to date have specifically addressed this topic in an EFL context such as Korea, using experimental procedure. Also necessary are sources of data that triangulate findings such as qualitative as well as quantitative research, as Chang (2012) indicated. This paucity of empirical research has left L2 educators, especially those engaged in EFL teaching practices, to be deprived of an appropriate pedagogy to deal with this critical aspect of communicative competence. It is, thus, necessary to conduct experiments which will provide useful information on how this speech act interplays with a certain social variable in different cultures, i.e., Korean and American.

II. METHOD

1. Research Questions

The following questions are at the heart of this paper.

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1) What would be the overall patterns of the speech act of gratitude performed by Korean native speakers, Korean learners of English, and English native speakers?
2) Do Koreans and Americans perceive the same social situations differently in terms of social power?
3) To what extent do Korean learners of English and English native speakers agree on the variation of gratitude expressions and the uses of politeness markers, according to different power relationships?

2. Participants

In order to examine how learners' L1, specifically their L1 pragmatic knowledge, may affect their L2 pragmatic performance, other than the two groups of English speaking participants, i.e., the English native speakers (ENSs) and Korean learners of English (KLEs), the group of Korean native speakers (KNSs) was included in the design of this study. 43 Americans and 91 Koreans participated in the experiment. ENS participants were undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a state university of California, the U.S.A. Special attention was paid to the selection of the KLE group. In order to properly conduct the current study, it was crucial for the KLE participants to be able to comprehend each context provided in the English-written questionnaire, and to write down a gratitude expression. The selected 47 KLE participants were graduate students or senior level undergraduate English major students of three universities in Seoul, South Korea. For the KNS group, 44 non-English majors in three universities in the metropolitan cities of Seoul and Ulsan in South Korea participated in this study. They were asked to answer the Korean version of the questionnaire.

3. Design and procedures

1) Manipulation of Power Relationships

The major independent variable was the participants' perception of the status of the addressee. The participants have been divided into two groups for the comparison: the American (ENS) and the Korean group (KLE and KNS together). The participants were simply asked to review the 11 situations in the questionnaire and to decide two highs and two lows in power relationship (See Appendix).

The social factor of the power relationships has often been presented as a factor that reveals great discrepancy between different cultures in terms of the speakers' perception of the variable and their verbal behavior in enacting a certain speech act (Chun, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Kang, 2011; Rose, 2000; Yu,

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2004). The effects of power relationship on the participants' choice of strategies and of politeness markers have been examined in terms of the three levels: addressee with higher power; addressee with equal power; and addressee with lower power.

2) The Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

This study adopted DCT to collect data on the choice of strategies for the speech act of gratitude. *DCT is among the most frequent forms employed in interlanguage studies* (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1994). Although this method has been criticized mostly because of lack of interactivity and elicited data (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005: 11), it has been used as the most popular method to collect language samples in an authentic manner (e.g., Yu, 2004). Kasper (2008) also supports the use of DCT as an effective tool to collect oral production data, pointing out that "DCTs and other questionnaire formats elicit intuitional data rather than data on language use and behavior" (Kasper, 2008: 294).

Given this effectiveness of the DCT method, the present study was conducted with the questionnaire consisting of 11 situational descriptions (See Appendix), followed by a space in which the participants had to provide the appropriate linguistic form of the speech act. Originally, 30 situational descriptions were developed in English in reference to Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) and the researcher's interviews with 5 college students. Then, 11 situations were selected for different power relationships and feasibility to elicit gratitude expressions.

4. Data analysis

1) Coding Scheme

To establish the coding scheme for the classification of response strategies, this study mainly referred to two previous studies that were the most relevant to the topic and framework of the current study (Coulmas, 1981; Yu, 2004). Coulmas' distinction of two major functions of gratitude expressions provided two major categories for this study: recognizing the object versus denying the object. Similar distinction has been presented in the study of speech act of 'responses to compliment' (Yu, 2004), i.e., acceptance and nonacceptance of the object of compliment. Based upon these studies, this study has adopted four main categories for gratitude strategies: (1) acknowledging the object of gratitude; (2) returning the object of gratitude given to the addressee; (3) showing modesty; (4) avoiding addressing the object of gratitude. Each and every response of the participants to a given DCT situation was assigned to one specific strategy. However, with reference to

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Eisenstein and Bodman (1986), the present study does not deal with the thanking expressions which are automatically produced as phatic and ritualized response, e.g., to a cashier, or as a conversation ending remark.

Based upon the collected DCT responses, the researcher identified 13 strategies. Each strategy is presented with an example below.

(1) Acknowledging the object of gratitude
Strategy 1: Thanking and appreciating as in "Thank you", "I appreciate it."
Strategy 2: Complimenting such as "This is really great"
Strategy 3: Reassuring such as "This is exactly what I wanted"
Strategy 4: Expressing pleasure as in "I'm glad to hear that."
(2) Returning the object of gratitude
Strategy 5: Promising a future acts such as "I'll pay you back as soon as possible."
Strategy 6: Offering repayment as in "Let me buy you a cup of coffee."
Strategy 7: Expressing indebtedness such as "I owe you one."
(3) Modesty
Strategy 8: Expressing lack of necessity as in "You shouldn't do that."
Strategy 9: Apology of "I'm sorry."
Strategy 10: Downgrading as in "I just did my work."
(4) Avoiding addressing the object of gratitude
Strategy 11: Joking
Strategy 12: Accepting as in "Okay."
Strategy 13: Silence as in "…" or "(nothing to say)"

In addition to the semantic strategies, two politeness markers, i.e., intensifiers (e.g., "really, terribly, so, very") and interjections (e.g., "Oh, Wow") were investigated in terms of the interplay between the social variable of power relationship and the occurrences of the markers. According to House and Kasper (1981), these modality markers are important to determine the degree of politeness. Thus, the use of intensifiers and interjections, which were commonly embedded into the gratitude expressions by the participants in this study, constituted another dependent variable for systematic examination.

2) Reliability of Coding

From each group, 30% of the data were randomly selected to be independently coded by a second rater. A native American English speaker coded the two sets of English data, and a native Korean speaker coded the native Korean data. A corrected-for-chance level of kappa of at least .85 was considered acceptable, following Yu (2004)'s study. The interrater

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agreement coefficients were 91%, 91%, 89% for the native English data, the Korean learner data, and the native Korean data respectively.

3) Analyses

After the participants' responses were identified and classified into one of the above-noted four main categories, frequencies of responses within each strategy could be obtained for each group. The perception of status has been compared between American and Korean groups, through the comparisons of the frequency and percentage of the situations selected as very high versus very low. For the other independent variable, power relationship, the differences among the three groups (ENS, KLE, and KNS) were tested with Chi-square statistics.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, the responses of the English learner group (KLE) were qualitatively compared to those of the two native groups (KNS and ENS). These interviews aimed to gain some qualitative insights into the participants' views, beliefs and opinions regarding gratitude expressions and politeness. As interviewing was not the main research instrument of the study and was simply used as a supplementary tool, only five informants were interviewed (5 KLEs). Given that the statistical findings focused on the participants' use of strategies, the qualitative analysis mostly concerned their explanation of their questionnaire responses.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results on how the perception of power affects the participants' performance of a speech act in L2. The section first presents the overall pattern in the uses of semantic strategies and politeness markers in the gratitude speech act. Then, the participants' perception of addressee's status is analyzed, followed by the description of how the speech act of gratitude is performed in accordance with different power relationships.

1. Overall Pattern of the Uses of Politeness Markers and Strategies

1) Semantic Strategies in Total

Table 1 shows the overall pattern of the occurrences of semantic strategies in terms of the rankings of 1-5 in each group. Direct thanking, e.g., "thank you", has been used by all the participants in the current study. This core strategy was used the most by ENSs, next by

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KLEs and the least by KNSs, as shown in the in-group frequencies, i.e., 67.52% by ENSs, 49.71% by KLEs, and 47.75% by KNSs (Table 1). This result indicates that Americans are more direct than Koreans in expressing gratitude. Many KLEs depended on a complimenting strategy than the other groups, as a way to mark politeness in the target language.

TABLE 1
Distribution of Semantic Strategies in Total

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	F	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	449	67.52	1	434	49.71	1	308	47.75
2	2	92	13.83	2	197	22.57	5	89	13.80
3	5	41	6.17	4	83	9.51	2	82	12.71
4	4	29	4.36	5	61	6.99	8	39	6.05
5	3	14	2.11	14	22	2.52	4	36	5.58
	N= 665			N= 873			N= 645		

d.f=28 X^2=204.135 P-value=0.000

(Str: Strategy number; f: frequency of the strategy used)

2) Politeness Markers in Total

In the examination of two politeness markers, the participating respondents to Korean questionnaires (KNSs) were found to emphasize their gratitude with intensifiers (e.g., "really, terribly, so, very") and interjections (e.g., "Oh, Wow") relatively in lower frequency than the other groups. They restrained from using these markers most to the addressees of higher status. Their characteristics, shown in the use of markers, match well with their hesitance to express gratitude directly, which reveals a culture-specific norm of expressing gratitude in Korean society. Traditionally in Korea, silence is more highly valued than physical words, and direct thanking is often reserved. Consequently, the uses of politeness markers were reserved and limited only to addressees with higher power. These markers were more frequently produced by female participants in KLE and KNS groups, whereas more male ENS participants used intensifiers in their gratitude expressions.

KLEs' high frequency of these intensifiers and interjections among the three groups is in accordance with their overuse of complimenting expressions. In the target language, they produced these markers along with a complimenting strategy to formulate polite responses (Table 2). For example, they often said, "Oh, this is so nice" as a response, which is a compliment expression including two politeness markers.

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This overall pattern of performance of the speech act of gratitude may be relevant to the notions of positive versus negative politeness. As to the politeness levels, Brown and Levinson (1987) presented three hierarchical dimensions of politeness, which are to compensate for the face-threatening act (FTA): off record (not committing FTA); negative politeness; and positive politeness. These hierarchical dimensions also index the levels of politeness, from high to low. On the dimension of negative politeness, speakers are most concerned with maximizing distance from the listener, which is the essence of "respect behavior", and thus being more polite. They may also be keen to the wants of the listener, i.e., positive politeness, and use strategies such as noticing the listener, expressing an interest in him/her, using markers of in-group identity, or seeking ways to agree or avoid disagreement. The strategies studied in the current study may be characterized either as positive or negative politeness strategies. Returning strategies (5, 6, and 7) and modesty strategies (8, 9, and 10) may be addressed as negative politeness strategies as they acknowledge distance between the speakers. The in-group percentage of these strategies was the highest with KNS participants (26.53%), next high in KLEs (11.46%) and lowest in ENSs (9.32%). In terms of politeness levels, Koreans tended to depend on more polite strategies (negative) than Americans did

TABLE 2
Distribution of Markers in Total

Rank	ENS		KLE		KNS	
	Male (N=22)	Female (N=21)	Male (N=24)	Female (N=23)	Male (N=22)	Female (N=22)
Interjections	30	48	31	32	20	21
Intensifiers	126	90	155	168	49	54
Total	N= 294		N= 376		N= 144	

2. Perception of Power

As the major independent variable of this study is the power relationships perceived by the participants, the perceptions of the given situations were compared between American and Korean participants in terms of the relative status of the addressee. The questionnaire included the following 11 situations.

Situation 1: Birthday present from a friend
Situation 2: Offer of pay raise from the speaker's boss
Situation 3: Borrowing some money from a friend

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Situation 4: Borrowing a book the speakers (a graduate student) needs from an undergraduate freshman
Situation 5: Lunch treat from the speakers' secretary
Situation 6: Speaker receiving a direction from a stranger on the street
Situation 7: Dinner at the professor's home
Situation 8: Mother's offer to give a ride to the speakers' school when the speaker is in a hurry
Situation 9: A waiter (waitress) brings the wallet left at the table to the speaker in a parking lot
Situation 10: Help from their spouse
Situation 11: A new neighbor shows the way to the post office

As shown in Table 3, both American and Korean participants rated the professor in situation 7 and the boss in situation 2 as having a higher status. They chose a younger freshman (situation 4) as a low-status interactant, ranking first with Americans and third with Koreans. The result confirmed the age factor is critical to the judgment of the status relationship between the interactants, common to the two cultures. For the Korean group, the waiter/waitress (situation 9) and the secretary (situation 5) ranked the first and the second for low status. Both groups indicate the status of mother rather low, which seems due to the high intimacy they carry. The difference between the two groups, however, was notable in that Korean participants were rather sensitive to the fixed social hierarchy such as a company president versus secretary and restaurant customer versus waiter/waitress.

TABLE 3
Status Rank

Rank	Very High						Very Low					
	American			Korean			American			Korean		
	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%
1	7	35	44.9	7	79	47.9	4	18	32.1	9	46	27.7
2	2	21	30.8	2	74	44.8	9	15	26.8	5	44	26.5
3	8	3	3.8	8	3	1.8	5	9	16.1	4	25	15.1
	N= 78			N= 165			N= 56			N= 166		

(Sit: Situation number; f: frequency of the responses corresponding to status level of the addressee)

Overall, Koreans and Americans interpreted the factor of social status implicit in the given situations in an almost homogeneous pattern. However, slight differences in rankings have shown how differently these two groups perceive the social factor. For example,

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Koreans were sensitive to fixed social hierarchy represented in the titles or roles immediately defined in a workplace such as the company president. This is another interesting instance that shows a cultural difference between Korean and American societies. One of the interviewee's responses explains this pattern of perception, as shown in the following.

> *"Well, I will definitely say 'thank you very much' to my boss, or to my professor. But, I don't think I would say 'thank you' to my husband if I were married. We have to do something for each other as a couple, right? I don't remember saying 'thank you' to my mom. Maybe several times, but never to my dad. I don't really interact with them. And I would just say 'okay' or nothing. Not that I am rude. It just seems weird to say 'thank you' to my parents or my siblings. I would feel like they are strangers if I had to say 'thank you' or 'sorry'" (KLE01)*

According to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), L2 learners' situational assessment is a critical factor that generates a sociopragmatic transfer in the performance of L2 speech acts. That is, L2 learners tend to use their native sociopragmatic norms, rather than the norms of the target language culture in evaluating relevant situational factors in a context. This sociopragmatic transfer, then, will be manifested in their choices of strategies to perform a speech act. The following section presents how the Korean learners of English handle the tasks of producing gratitude in a specific context according to their interpretation of the context.

3. Performing Gratitude by Power Relationship

The questionnaire included three different power relationships: addressee with higher power (+ power); addressee with almost the same power (0 power); and addressee with less power (- power). On the basis of the results of the perception assessment, 7 situations were assigned to these three power relationships: situations 2 and 7 for + power (the boss and the professor); situations 1 and 3 for 0 power (friends); and situations 4, 5, and 9 for – power (young college freshman, secretary, and waiter/waitress). Those situations were limited to participant-known, non-service situational categories.

1) Choice of Semantic Strategies

The test of in-group strategy choice by power relationship was significantly different for each of the three groups, which confirms the contribution of the power variable to the choice of gratitude expressions and the markers: X^2= 50.479 with P-value=0.000 for

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ENS; X^2= 82.729 with P-value=0.000 for KLE; X^2= 102.953 with P-value = 0.000 for KNS.

(1) Addressee with more power

In the situation in which the boss offers a pay raise (situation 2), the groups selected different strategies, although the first ranked strategy was direct thanking (strategy 1) over the three groups. ENS participants tended to compliment (strategy 2) their addressees frequently, saying for example, "this is great". Korean participants, both KLEs and KNSs, offered future acts (strategy 5), e.g., "I'll do my best" or "Deo-wook Yulsimhi hagessum-ni-da ('I will work harder')". This result indicates that KLEs often transfer their knowledge of Korean speech act to English

In the other situation of + power, i.e., the professor (situation 7), both ENSs and KLEs and used of strategies accorded with ENSs in the pattern of strategic choices. The direct thanking, complimenting the food and expressing pleasure served as three major expressions selected by the two groups, ranking the first, second, and third respectively. In this leave-taking situation, KNSs preferred Korean formulaic expression such as "Jal nol-da gamnida ('I'm leaving after having a great time')" or "Jal meok-ko kamnida (I'm leaving after having a great food)" (strategy 4).

To calculate the sum of the occurrences of the strategies used in these two higher status situations, the three groups employed the strategies significantly differently (Table 4). An interesting point to note is that KNSs used the apologetic expressions in situation 7, such as "Sill-ga manna-ssuumnida (my apology for the inconvenience)" with the frequency of 3. This strategy represents a Korean formulaic expression which shows that the speaker takes the object of gratitude as something to apologize for.

TABLE 4

The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (+power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	79	58.96	1	86	51.81	1	49	40.83
2	2	32	23.88	2/4	27/27	16.27/16.27	4	22	18.33
3	4	16	11.94	5	17	10.24	2/5	16/16	13.33
	N= 134			N= 166			N= 120		

d.f = 18 X^2 = 37.387 P-value = 0.005

(Str: Strategy number; f: frequency of the strategy used)

Two points are to be noted regarding the ways the KLE participants deal with

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compliments in these two situations. According to Huth (2006), the speech act of compliment is a positive assessment of affairs, of an object, or of an action. A response to this speech act becomes conditionally relevant for the participants in the moment-by-moment talk in the interaction, and thus, the way the recipient of a compliment responds to it reveals what contingency the participants are dealing with. Upon receiving a compliment from the boss along with an offer of pay raise, the Korean participants were more likely to promise a future act saying "I will pay you back for your kindness by working harder" (strategy 5) than ENS participants. In other words, the Korean participants' handling of compliment shows that they attend to the indebtedness associated with the action of the compliment. The other point to note is that they project this understanding of compliment in order to deal with 'deference', as shown in the following response of an interviewee.

> *"I've never been invited to my professor's place. If I were, I would really appreciate the invitation, although I would not be completely comfortable during the time at his/her place. He is my teacher after all and I need to say something nice and respectful to him/her and his/her family members because I should be polite to everybody." (KLE02)*

According to Eun-Sook Lee (2008), 'deference' denotes the attitude of courteous respect or regard for others which is a critical factor in Korean politeness. As the interviewee said, apparently, Korean participants in this study, as college students, felt compelled to express deference by means of honorific forms as the power relationship was finely defined between the professor and the student even in this non-academic setting. Therefore, in Korean culture, deference is a critical factor that distinguishes one context from the other.

All of the interviewees indicated that they had never had explicit instruction regarding the speech act of gratitude. What is to be noted is that they were conscious of difference in the norms of interaction between the two cultures, but in practice, they hardly related the difference when performing the act of gratitude. One of the interviewees commented on the difficulties as in the following.

> *"In Korean, I would say something like 'Thank you. I had a really great time'. In addition, I would say to the professor's wife "I'm sorry for staying too late", because I would feel really sorry for any possible inconvenience. In English, I don't think I should say something exactly like the Korean expressions. But at the same time I don't think 'thank you' is enough." (KLE03)*

This response confirms the instructional needs on this speech act, which draws attention from L2 educators in Korea's EFL context. In other words, KLEs need not only

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appropriate and extensive instruction regarding a variety of ways to respond to gratitude expressions in a classroom, but also the differentiated uses of various expressions by context.

(2) Addressee with equal power

Situation 1 included an informal event of receiving a birthday present from a friend and the three groups expressed gratitude directly (strategy 1) most frequently, with a number of intensifiers and interjections. They also complimented the presents (strategy 2) and expressed pleasure (strategy 4) in common. The reason why the three groups showed the same pattern of strategy choice could be the fact that the participants in the present study were quite familiar with informal events with friends.

When borrowing some money urgently from a friend in situation 3, ENSs and KNSs commonly promised to pay the money back (strategy 5) showing the highest frequency next to direct thanking, e.g., "I'll pay you back as soon as possible." Again, KLEs used compliment strategy frequently, e.g., "you are really a good person". The group difference was also significant in the two friend situations as shown in the results of chi-square statistics (Table 5).

TABLE 5

The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (0 power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	F	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	89	60.96	1	82	46.07	1	72	49.32
2	5	20	13.70	2	55	30.90	5	31	21.23
3	2	15	10.27	4/5	11/11	6.18/6.18	2	21	14.38
	N=146			N= 178			N= 146		

d.f=24 X^2=50 P-value=0.001

(Str: Strategy number; f: frequency of the strategy used)

(3) Addressee with less power

When the participants were situated in a college as graduate students, and borrowed a book from a young freshman (situation 4), they expressed gratitude with direct thanking most frequently (strategy 1). Promising to return the book constituted the next major strategy in ENS and KLE groups, followed by complimenting (strategy 2). KNSs, however, frequently offered to treat the addressee to something to eat, e.g., "Na-jung-e cheom-shim-salkye ('I'll treat you to lunch later')" (strategy 6). KLEs used this strategy as a way of

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expressing gratitude in performing the act of English gratitude. This strategy was specific to the Korean participants. This additional remark to a thanking expression indicates that the participants use this strategy to deal with indebtedness to a person with less power, such as a freshman.

Another situation for this power relationship was the boss being treated to lunch by his/her secretary. In the evaluation of perception, Koreans showed a higher frequency in low status than Americans by 26.5% versus 16.1%. As with situation 4, KNSs' choice of returning expression (strategy 5) explains how differently Koreans perceive the indebtedness by the power variable, and which semantic strategy is in use, to reflect the different perception. Rather than accepting the object of gratitude, they tried to promise to return it, e.g., "Daum-en nae-ga sa-ji ('next time it's on me')". Some of them apologized, e.g., "ee-geo mean-haesseo eo-ttuk-haji ('I am so sorry')" (strategy 9). By contrast, ENSs tended to express gratitude with direct thanking, complimenting the food and expressing pleasure, such as "Thanks! The food was great. Next time, it's my treat". KLEs in general followed the pattern of ENSs in this situation, while the frequency of direct thanking was much lower than ENSs (Table 6).

To the waiter (waitress) who brought the wallet to the parking lot (situation 9), the participants frequently used a direct thanking expression. Whereas this strategy was the sole strategy for KNS group, ENSs showed the gratefulness by compliment, e.g., "you're a life savior" or offered a tip to the addressee. KLEs depended more on the complimenting expressions, and expressed indebtedness, such as "how can I say thank you?"

TABLE 6

The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (- power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	122	67.03	1	119	48.37	1	79	46.20
2	2	25	13.74	2	45	13.01	5	40	23.39
3	5	21	11.54	5	32	18.29	2	23	13.45
	N= 182			N= 246			N= 171		

d.f=24 X^2=81.467 P-value=0.000

(Str: Strategy number; f: frequency of the strategy used)

2) Politeness Markers

In the examination of the different use of these politeness markers of gratitude, situation 9 was excluded, because most of the interjections in gratitude expression in this situation were to express embarrassment and surprise upon forgetting the wallet rather than to

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emphasize their gratitude.

KNSs' pattern of using markers by power relationship was very different from that of ENSs and KLEs. KNSs used more than half of the intensifiers and interjections in the gratitude expression to the addressees of equal power, i.e., friends, much less to the addresses of less power, i.e., secretary, and the least to the addresses of more power, i.e., the boss (Table 7).

Although KLEs rarely showed a highly differentiated pattern of strategic uses by power just as KNSs did, they appeared to make some distinctions, using the most markers to equal powers and the least to the addressees of less power. By contrast, + power and 0 power relationships hardly affected the uses of markers in ENS given the result of the same in-group frequency of the politeness markers. In the following comment, a KLE participant indicates how to perform gratitude speech act in Korean and English, which shows that he is conscious of difference ways to use politeness markers along with English gratitude expressions.

> *"I usually add 'jungmalro' ('really') to emphasize my gratitude in Korean. I may joke with my friend instead of saying 'thank you'. For example, when my friends compliment my looks or give me a birthday present, I would say 'Nado arra. Naega jungmalro jalsaeggin-geo ('I know that I'm really good-looking'). But I won't joke in English. I can compliment the present or my friend back, like 'you look great today, too.' That should be okay in English, right?"* (KLE 02)

TABLE 7

Politeness Markers by Status

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Power	f	%	Power	f	%	Power	f	%
1	P+/P0	76/76	39.8/39.8	P0	95	41.7	P0	39	58.2
2				P+	79	34.6	P-	15	22.4
3	P-	39	20.4	P-	54	23.7	P+	13	19.4
		N= 191			N= 228			N= 67	

(P+: Addressee with more power, P0: Addressee with equal power, P-: Addressee with less power, f: frequency)

Overall, KLE participants used the markers similar to ENSs in terms of the different power relationships (Figure 1).

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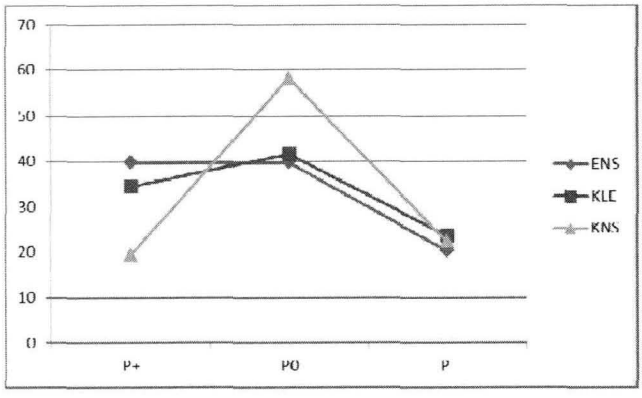
FIGURE 1
Politeness Markers by Status



(P+: Addressee with more power, P0: Addressee with equal power, P-: Addressee with less power)

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the pragmatic competence of Korean learners of English with a focus on the behavior of 'gratitude'- a quite common, yet rarely studied act. Interestingly, there was little difference between American and Korean participants' perception of power relationships. However, the three groups showed significant in-group difference in their choices of gratitude strategies, which was statistically significant as well, and KLEs and KNSs showed very similar patterns of using politeness markers in accordance with perception of politeness.

The findings of this study support that nonnative English speakers are more sensitive to politeness, and make more distinctions between polite and impolite speech behaviors. The in-group frequency of direct thanking, e.g., 'thank you', was the highest in the ENS group, next in the KLE group and lowest in the KNS group. In terms of positive and negative politeness, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978), American participants in the current study used the strategies of positive politeness as they acknowledged and accepted the object of gratitude. Koreans, by contrast, preferred to return the object of gratitude and to be modest, drawing upon the strategies of negative politeness. The learners' group (KLEs) was found to be very conscious of politeness in the performance of gratitude speech act as revealed in in the qualitative interviews. This sensitivity to politeness and deference generated contradictory aspects in performing the L2 speech act of gratitude. While they used negative politeness strategies more than native English speaking participants, they, at the same time, used more complimenting expressions, which are normally regarded as an

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action to fulfill the addressee's positive face, and emphasized the degree of gratitude by means of politeness markers, i.e., interjections and intensifiers. Actions of compliment in L2, thus, represented the level of indebtedness and deference perceived by the L2 learners. This is a point that needs further research on Korean norm of performing the speech act of compliment in terms of positive versus negative politeness. What is crucial, however, is that L2 learners in this study projected their assessment of the social context and deference into the verbal actions of a complimenting expression. Therefore, the group of higher level English learners brings nonnative-like norms of L2 use to L2 verbal encounters, which corroborates the sociopragmatic transfer.

This study supports and extends the teachability of L2 pragmatic competence. Since the relative appropriateness of which strategy to choose depends, to a great extent, on the socio-cultural context in which the interaction takes place, Korean EFL learners should be trained so that they can interpret the context and produce the speech act according to the L2 norms. Apparently, expressing gratitude appropriately and effectively in different contexts is a challenging task for L2 learners. They, however, can take advantage of the results of this study, and incorporate systematically the contextual information into their L2 speech acts. In other words, a speech act can be introduced into the foreign language classroom as sequences of talk which include diverse contextual factors such as power. Teachers, then, can facilitate the students to discuss explicitly the cultural differences and the possibility of L1 transfer. L2 learners may be able to understand pragmatic factors of the target culture better, in order not only to speak grammatically, but also to interpret appropriately what they hear, and to interact effectively with members of the target culture.

Specific and authentic examples of conversational sequences need to show clearly that a direct thanking expression is a natural and acceptable action to enact the speech act in various conversational encounters in English. In addition, Korean learners need to be aware that complimenting the addressee in English may be used cautiously as a way to express gratitude, since complimenting acts are separate from, and thus do not replace 'gratitude'. Teachers, therefore, need to provide information how strategies are differently distributed by power.

These implications may need to be cautiously generalized to EFL classrooms because of several limitations of this study. The limitations include the methodology of data collection. Although the DCT taken in the present study did allow looking at the patterns of the speech act that might have been difficult to study through other methods, there still exists the need to collect natural data (Schnurr & Chan, 2011). The authentic discourse data may overcome the representational power of oral production, and thus should have more immediate implication to the specific context in which the speech act occurs. Another limitation concerns the age group that participants in this study belong

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to. Since many of the participants were college students, it would be difficult to generalize the findings to all the adult native or nonnative speakers. Future research may also design an ESL Korean learner group, in addition to the three groups defined in this study, which, as Yu (2004) claimed, may help to explain cultural effect on the ESL group in a more effective manner.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire items

1. It's your birthday and you are having a few people over for dinner. Jenny, a friend of yours brings you a present. You unwrap it and find a blue T-Shirt. You say, "

2. You have worked for a company for 6 months. The personnel manager calls you into his office and tells you to sit down. He says, "You're doing a good job. In fact, we are so pleased with you that I'm going to give you $50.00 a week raise." You say, "

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3. You find yourself in sudden need of money, $200.00. You mention it to a friend, Martin. He immediately offers to lend it to you. You are surprised and very grateful. He gives a check to you. Taking the check, you say, "

4. You are a graduate school student. Today you find a freshman of your department (who is 5 years younger than you) has a book which is very necessary but hard to find. You ask him to lend it to you. He says, "Sure, here it is." You say, "

5. You are running a small company. Today your secretary says that she likes to treat you to a lunch. She takes you to a very nice restaurant and you have a wonderful meal. She pays. Getting up to leave, you say, "

6. You're on a street strange to you. Looking for a building and feeling a little nervous about being lost. You approach a man, and ask him the way to the building. He says, "O.K. I'll show you the way, Follow me." You feel at ease and say, "

7. You have been invited to the home of your professor. You have dinner with him and his wife and a few other people. The food was great, and you enjoyed the evening. As you leave, you say to him, "

8. You are a college student. This morning you got up late and might be late for school. Your mother says, "Don't worry. I'll give you a ride to your school". You say, "

9. You just finished dinner, and you were leaving the restaurant. You are about to get into your car, when a waiter (waitress) runs up to you and hands you your wallet, and says, "You forgot your wallet, sir." You say, "

10. You have a demanding job. Tonight you should work till late at your home. Your wife says, "Honey, I'll help you out." You are pleased, for you just wanted that. You say, "

11. You moved into a new apartment a week ago. You want to go to the post office, but don't know where it is located. You ask a neighbor you have greeted a couple times for help. She shows the way very kindly. You say, "

.....

Please review the 11 situations you have responded to. Pick any 2 of them that you feel very high and low in the addressee's status and write the number of the situation in the corresponding box.

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	Very High	Very Low
Status of the addressee	,	,

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: College

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