English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 20, No. 2 Summer 2014

Korean EFL Learners' Pragmatic Strategy Use in Responding to Rudeness

Soo Weon Ko
(Korea University)

Ko, Soo Weon. (2014). Korean EFL learners' pragmatic strategy Use in responding to rudeness. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 20*(2), 117-141.

The present study investigates Korean EFL learners' pragmatic strategy use in responding to rudeness. To investigate the difference between proficiency groups and gender difference, Discourse Completion Task (hereafter DCT) and statistical analysis were used. The Korean EFL data were gathered from Korean university students and the students were assigned to high and low proficiency group in accordance to their University's English proficiency test. The result showed that learners of different proficiency levels had basically the same range of pragmatic strategies. However, the most frequently used strategy was different between lower and higher proficiency group. Higher proficiency group used 'Insult' the most while lower proficiency group used 'Apologize' the most. In terms of gender difference, male used 'Insult' the most while female used 'Apologize' the most. The current study also compared the data of EFL students' with those of English native speaker's. The biggest difference between English native speakers and EFL students in the usage of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness was that English natives used 'Acquiesce' and 'Argue' strategy. Lastly, some implications of the study are given in terms of the learning and acquisition of pragmatic strategies in EFL context.

[pragmatic strategy/rudeness/gender/English acquisition]

I. INTRODUCTION

Communicating effectively and efficiently in any given language requires more than just linguistic knowledge. The ability to use this linguistic knowledge appropriately in the sociocultural context is also essential for second language (L2) learners to understand and be understood in their interactions with native speakers (hereafter NSs). Hence, the goal of second language acquisition (hereafter SLA) research is to describe and explain not only learners' linguistic competence but also their pragmatic competence. Pragmatics

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

is the term used to refer to the field of study where linguistic features are considered in relation to users of the language (Levinson, 1983). The importance of pragmatics has been emphasized in the area of language learning. In particular, the study of interlanguage pragmatics has been widely investigated in the field of SLA. Interlanguage pragmatics investigates the learners' development and use of pragmatic knowledge in second language contexts. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) claim that the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge includes learning speech act categories, contextual distributions of speech acts and the function of principles of politeness of L2 culture.

This study aims to investigate the interlanguage pragmatics of Korean learners learning English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) by comparing higher proficiency EFL students and lower proficiency EFL students. Also this study examines how male and female EFL learners differ in their use of pragmatic strategies. In addition, the EFL learners' data are compared with those of native speakers of English.

The justification for this study lies in the fact that although there are studies on English as a Second Language (hereafter ESL) students' interlanguage competence and the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic proficiency, there is little, if any, which investigated Korean EFL students' pragmatic strategies comparing by proficiency level and gender. Also understanding of these developmental patterns will help EFL teachers give stage appropriate pedagogical interventions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Studies on Rudeness

Earlier studies on interpersonal communication focused on politeness and impoliteness was either ignored or simply treated as a pragmatic failure to meet the politeness principles of talk (Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987). More recently, however, the research in the field of impoliteness/rudeness is increasing (Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann 2003; Bousfield, 2008; among others).

The dynamics of social interaction allow speakers to use various linguistic strategies which promote, maintain, or attack an addressee's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In some situation, a speaker may use a communicative strategy that deliberately creates social conflict with the addressee, thus causing disharmony between the interlocutors. In conflict discourse, rudeness can constitute a serious attack on an addressee's individual and social face wants. Although there are some studies that have moved on to include impoliteness or rudeness (Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper et al. 2003; Harris, 2001, and Kienpointner, 1997, among others), still lots of interlanguage pragmatic studies are

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

focusing on politeness in a limited set of speech acts.

Clearly, responding to rudeness with reactive rudeness seems to be the accepted social norm. However, what is perceived as rude behavior varies both intraculturally across social contexts and cross-culturally. As Beebe (1995) pointed out, responding to rudeness is a delicate skill that reflects communicative competence, and most nonnative speakers are neither emotionally nor linguistically armed to deal with rudeness.

Beebe and Waring (2005) investigated different ways of responding to rudeness by lower proficiency students and higher proficiency students. The data were gathered from college-age ESL students at a large English language institute at a major American university, consisting of 20 lower proficiency students and 20 higher proficiency students. These two groups were compared in terms of their use of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness and resulted in the following outcomes: (a) Range and frequency of pragmatic strategies used by higher and lower proficiency ESL learners were similar; (b) However, individual strategies showed some differences. Lower proficiency learners preferred Acquiescing Strategies over Persisting Strategies and preferred the Persisting Strategies over the Aggressing Strategies. The higher proficiency learners also showed the same preference. Despite a similar profile, they showed the two-way contrast between basically assertive strategies (i.e., Aggressing Strategies and Persisting Strategies) and basically passive strategies (i.e., Acquiescing Strategies). It was found that lower proficiency learners used predominantly Acquiescing Strategies while higher proficiency learners preferred to be assertive. Beebe states that ESL students should learn how to respond to rudeness in appropriate ways.

Limberg (2009) addressed the phenomenon of impoliteness by looking at a particular type of face-threatening strategy, i.e. verbal threats and their immediate responses. Limberg examined native British students at various high schools in the United Kingdom. To elicit responses to threats, the DCT[1] containing hypothetical scenarios was used.

Gender and power of the threatener was equally divided among six scenarios. The result of the Limberg's study revealed that power seems to be one important social factor which affects addressee's responses.

2. Studies on Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Grammatical Competence

Interlanguage pragmatics studies have examined the use of speech act realization

[1]A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is a tool used in linguistics and pragmatics to elicit particular speech acts. A discourse-completion task consists of scripted dialogue representing various scenarios, preceded by a short prompt describing the setting and situation.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

strategies by learners at different proficiency levels. A consistent result of these studies is that learners have access to the same range of pragmatic strategies as native speakers when performing a speech act, irrespective of proficiency level. This is documented in studies of request realization by Japanese learners of English (S. Takahashi & DuFon, 1989), the refusal strategies used by Japanese learners of English (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), and the performance of apologies by Danish EFL learners (Trosborg, 1987) and the pragmatic strategies used by Japanese ESL learners (Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, & Ross, 1996).

However, the majority of L2 pragmatic studies that have looked at the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence show that higher proficiency learners are generally better at producing requests (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Ellis, 1992; Francis, 1997; Schmidt, 1993; S. Takahashi & DuFon, 1989; Trosborg, 1995), complaints and apologies (Trosborg, 1987, 1995; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989), and compliments (Billmyer, 1990).

On the other hand, some studies have shown that high levels of grammatical competence do not ensure equally high levels of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Bardovi-Harlig & Taylor, 2003; Bisshop, 1996; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Takahashi, 2005, among others). For instance, Jianda (2006) investigated Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge by using six types of methods, i.e., the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCT), Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), Discourse Role Play Talks (DRPT), Discourse Self-Assessment Talks (DSAT), and Role-Play self-assessments (RPSA). The findings indicate that the participants of higher grammatical proficiency did not necessarily possess higher concomitant pragmatic competence. In a similar vein, Takahashi (2005) examined Japanese EFL learners' pragmaliguistic awareness by using a noticing-the-gap activity. The result indicated that the learners' awareness of the target pragmaliguistic features did not correlated with their proficiency. Moon (2001) also claims that failures of nonnative speakers' pragmatic features are not primarily caused by their limitation of grammatical knowledge but mainly caused by the limitation of sociopragmatic knowledge.

As shown above, even advanced language learners often show a marked imbalance between their grammatical and their pragmatic knowledge with pragmatic competence lagging behind grammatical knowledge. The disparity between learners' and NSs' pragmatic competence may be attributed not only to grammar competence alone but also to other few factors: L1 pragmatic transfer, input, and biological factors.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

3. Studies on Gender

The linguistic forms used by women and men contrast – to different degrees- in all speech communities. It is generally contented in L1 research that women are more linguistically polite than men and that women and men emphasize different speech functions (Holmes, 2008). Lakoff (1973) argues women use hedges or fillers more often than men to express uncertainty. Hedging devices explicitly signal lack of confidence and women use hedges or fillers more often than men. Examples of lexical hedges or fillers are *you know, sort of, well, you see* and so on. In addition, women tend to use 'Superpolite' forms such as 'indirect request, euphenisms' and avoid strong words which make them sound polite. Also women use 'Hypercorrect' grammar which means using the standard verb forms consistently.

It is generally accepted that politeness is a face-saving strategy that the use of standard language is a mechanism for maintaining face in interactions in which the woman is powerless. In addition, women tend to be more cooperative conversationalists who prefer personal concern and emotional content (Tannen, 1990). On the other hand, men tend to be less responsive to the speech of others and to their conversational needs.

There have been a great number of empirical studies on cross-cultural speech acts focusing on gender differences (Cha, 2007; Ellis, 1994; Han, 2012; Kim, 2012, among others). In general, second language acquisition studies have shown that women generally perform better than men (Ellis 1994:202-204). For instance, Holmes (1998) reported that women give and receive more apologies than men. According to Holmes, apologies are politeness strategies, and "knowing when and how to apologize is an important component of politeness" (p.218).

Compliments are similar to apology in that it pays attention to the face needs of the addressee. Studies have reported findings that women give and receive more compliments than men (Cha, 2007; Holmes, 1986, 1988, 1998; Herbert, 1986, 1990, among others). For example, Cha (2007) examined 60 Korean EFL students and found that female students respond to compliments more positively than male students. The fact that women's greater use of apologies and compliments may relate not only to their own face-protection needs, but also to those of the people they are talking to.

In terms of complaining, Han (2012) investigated 51 undergraduate and graduate EFL students. Han found that female group showed high frequency use of downgraders (e.g., understaters, hedges, and appealers) than that of male group. On the other hand, male participants preferred to use upgrader (e.g., lexical intensification) which serves to increase the impact of the utterance. The result of Han's study accords with that of Lakoff (1973)'s study which showed that female were more polite than male in their use of language forms such as qualifiers, hedges and tag questions.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Kim (2012) compared 91 Korean EFL students with 43 English native speakers (ENS) in terms of their choice of pragmatic strategies while performing gratitude speech act. ENS participants were undergraduate and graduate students in U.S.A. and Korean EFL students were graduate students or senior level undergraduate English major students. A discourse completion test and a subsequent interview showed that Korean EFL learners and ENSs use different pragmatic strategies. Korean EFLs depended on complimenting strategies while performing gratitude speech act. Gender difference was found both in Korean EFL learners and English Native speakers. Females depended on the strategy of compliment while performing the speech act of gratitude.

Even though there is a great number of researches comparing male and female speech, the gender difference in responding to rudeness have not yet been empirically investigated. Beebe and Waring (2005) examined the difference in responding to rudeness with different English proficiency levels but did not address gender difference in their study. Hence, it would be interesting to investigate gender difference when they encounter rudeness. In addition, comparing English natives' and Koreans' gender difference would provide information about the role that gender play in L2 pragmatic development.

This paper was inspired by previous research (Beebe & Waring, 2005), which focused on comparing pragmatic strategies used by different proficiency group. However, Beebe and Waring did not address their participants' L1 and relatively small participants (n=40) were examined. Hence, it would be worthy to narrow down various ESL students to Korean EFL students. Building on the classifications identified by Beebe and Waring, the current study compared data from English native speakers and EFL Korean students. Since Beebe and Waring did not examine gender difference in their study, present study considered gender as a variable. Thus, the research questions to be answered in this study are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: How do lower and higher proficiency Korean EFL learners differ in their use of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness?

Research Question 2: How do Korean male and female EFL learners differ in their use of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness?

Research Question 3: What are the differences between English native speakers and Korean EFL learners in their use of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness?

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

III. METHODS

1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 400 Korean university students and 20 English native speakers in Korea. Demographic variables were English proficiency and gender. This was noted in order to examine any effects that English proficiency and gender would have in responding to rudeness. Table 1 shows the description of the participants.

TABLE 1
Description of the Participants

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
EFL Lower Proficiency	100	100	200
EFL Higher Proficiency	100	100	200
English Natives	10	10	20

1) Korean EFL learners

Data were gathered from students in 'A' University, Korea, in September, 2012. The University has its own English proficiency test and those test scores were used to divide students into a lower and higher proficiency group. To increase to the reliability of this separation, the middle section of the proficiency rank scales is ignored and compared only the students belonging roughly to the bottom and top quarters of the proficiency range. The test items do not require prior knowledge of ideas, do not test on vocabulary taken out of context, or require formal logic. Test items are drawn from a variety of content areas. Participants' major were Business, German, Korean and Child Education. Participants who have experience of living abroad in an English speaking country were excluded in order to avoid any effect of living abroad. Initially, 408 students participated consisting of 200 males and 208 females. To balance the number of gender, however, 8 females were excluded randomly. After screening the demographic information, the participants were divided into two groups according to the proficiency level: 200 lower proficiency students and 200 higher-proficiency students. All of the participants' age was 19.

2) English native speakers

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

In order to investigate interlanguage features of Korean EFL learners, it was necessary to first establish base-line cross-cultural norms. Therefore 20 English native speakers, which consisted of 10 male and 10 female, participated in the principal study to investigate the different usage of pragmatic strategy with EFL students if there are any. They were all English instructors at Universities in Korea and their age were between 25~35.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The DCT was used as a data collection instrument. Table 2 describes the DCT used in the present study.

TABLE 2

Description of the Rudeness Situations Used in DCT

No.	Location	Interlocutor	Interlocutor's age	Interlocutor's gender
1	phone call	Receptionist	N/A	N/A
2	bookstore	Clerk	N/A	N/A
3	garage	garage attendant	N/A	N/A
4	bookstore	Employee	N/A	N/A
5	elevator	Passenger	N/A	N/A
6	parking lot	Passenger	N/A	N/A
7	grocery store	Customer	Old	N/A
8	playground	Child	Young	N/A

The DCT test was build upon Beebe and Waring (2005)'s study. However the DCT were controlled in the collection method to some degree. All of the interlocutors' gender in the DCT used by Beebe and Waring's study was changed to neutral. For instance, 'a lady' in situation No. 1 was changed into 'a bookstore clerk' and 'a woman' in situation No.6 was changed into 'a passenger' to avoid any effects of interlocutors' gender if any. In addition, two new situations (i.e., situation no. 7 and 8) are added. In the DCT used in Beebe and Waring (2005)'s study, all the interlocutors in six situations (i.e., situation No.1~6) are assumed to be adult age and strangers or may be with minimum familiarity (e.g. garage attendants, bookstore clerk) as shown in Table 7. However, the interlocutors in the added new situations are also strangers, but they have different age status. In situation 7, the interlocutor is an old man, and in situation 8 the interlocutors a kid. These two situations are added to examine whether the participants use different pragmatic strategies depending on the interlocutors age.

For statistical analysis, all the quantitative data obtained through participants' DCT

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

was analyzed with SPSS English version 12. To examine the gender and proficiency differences, *t*-test was conducted. In order to examine the significance of the correlation the level of significance value will be set as $p < 0.05$.

Data were gathered from five 'English Reading and Listening' classes at 'A' University in the spring semester of 2012. The Researcher was present in each class and explained the instructions to the students. The researcher did not intervene once they started and all DCTs were completed within one hour. All of the data was analyzed by measuring frequency of occurrence rates. While examining the data based on the 12 strategies used by Beebe and Waring (2005), it became obvious that some modification would be needed in analyzing the data set of the principal test. After reviewing the collected data, "switch to native language" strategy were added into the original list of pragmatic strategy. Some of the participants switched to native language and wrote in Korean.[2] Among 400 students, 20 of higher group and 30 of lower group, total 8% (n=50) of the students used 'Switch to Native Language' strategy. The rates are calculated differently according to each pragmatic strategy (n=13): Insult, Threaten, Challenge, Criticize, Sarcastic, Argue, Justify, Request, Apologize, Thank, Acquiesce, Opt-out, and Switch to Native Language. Table 3 shows an example of each 13 strategy.

TABLE 3
Pragmatic Strategies Used for the Analysis

No	Pragmatic strategy	Example
1	Insult	"You must be a fool."
2	Threat	"I want to talk to the manager of this store."
3	Challenge	"I want to see THAT book."
4	Criticize	"You are giving a bad example for your child."
5	Sarcastic	"You are really kind."
6	Argue	"I have right to see that book even if I don't have intention to purchase it."
7	Justify	"But I'm not from here and I don't want to be lost."
8	Request	"Could you draw the direction for me"?
9	Apologize	"I'm sorry. It's my fault."
10	Thank	"Okay, thank you."
11	Acquiesce	"Okay, yes, sir. I will try."
12	Opt out	Non verbal: Say nothing. Or Verbal: "Whatever"
13	Native language	"*Why are you doing this to me*.(왜 이래)"

[2] 'Switch to Native Language' was not found in the pilot study. This may be due to the larger pool of participants in the principle study than in the pilot study.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Judging pragmatic responses is subjective and so is subject to error. McNamara (1996) reported that raters may exhibit variability in one or more of several areas and rater training has been found to be as significant factor as rater experience in terms of consistent, reliable marking or scoring. Also, Cohen (2004) reported the importance of recognizing individual rater characteristics as these influence the raters' reactions to participant responses. In order to sustain validity for DCT responses, this study had 4 raters including the researcher. The raters were English instructors at university and they were given opportunity to become familiar with the pragmatic strategies. The examples of each strategy were given to the raters and practice in categorizing DCT responses was carried out. The raters scored the responses together and agreement rate was 99%.

Following the categorization of all the data, statistical analyses were conducted in order to facilitate accurate interpretation of the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study in addition to a discussion with reference to the research questions.

1. Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by Proficiency Level

Research question 1 focused on comparing the usage of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness by higher proficiency group and lower proficiency group. Overall, the number of participants in the principal study was 400, and the number of questions used on the DCT test is 8, which means the total number of pragmatic response samples used on the test would be 3200. To examine the significance of each pragmatic strategy, Chi-Square test was used. Table 4 shows the result of Chi-Square test on 8 DCT items. The number refers to the 8 questions used in the DCT. As shown in Table 4, pragmatic strategies used in each DCT questions were significant.

TABLE 4
Significance of Pragmatic Strategies

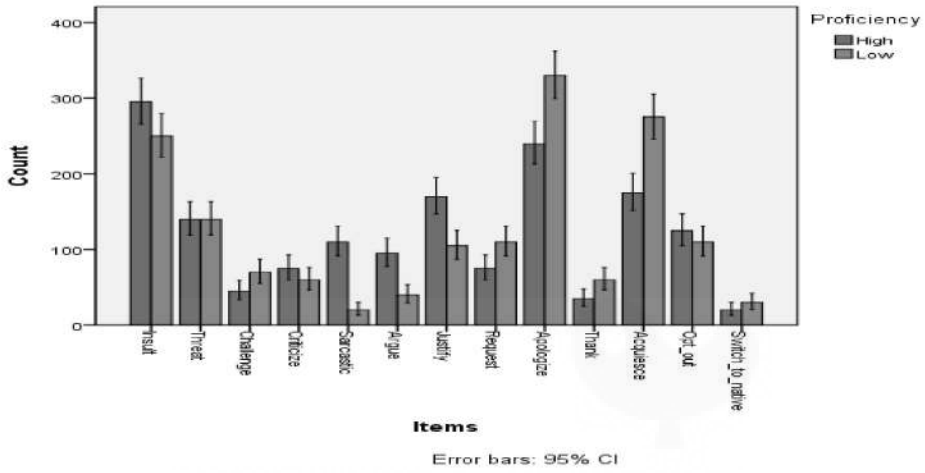
	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4	No.5	No.6	No.7	No.8
Chi-Square	444.875	126.500	299.000	306.750	1047.875	404.375	536.000	598.250
df	8	11	11	10	8	8	11	10
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

The results of the frequency of individual pragmatic strategy used by proficiency groups are also graphically displayed in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategy Used by Proficiency Groups



The results showed that both higher and lower proficiency EFL learners used all 13 pragmatic strategies as shown in Figure 1. This supports the past studies that learners of different proficiency levels had basically the same range of strategies in the context of responding to rudeness. As Figure 1 reveals, there are mean differences between different proficiency groups and pragmatic strategies. In order to see whether mean differences are significant *t*-test was carried out. Table 5 shows the results of the *t*-test by each proficiency level.

TABLE 5

Results of *t*-test by Proficiency Levels

Pragmatic Strategy	Equal Variances	*t*-test for Equality of Means			
		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Insult	Assumed	1.837	398	.067	0.225
	Not assumed	1.837	396.007	.067	0.225
Threat	Assumed	.000	398	1.000	0.000
	Not assumed	.000	389.068	1.000	0.000

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Challenge	Assumed	-2.184	398	.030*	-0.125
	Not assumed	-2.184	362.776	.030*	-0.125
Criticize	Assumed	1.318	398	.188	.075
	Not assumed	1.318	383.705	.188	.075
Sarcastic	Assumed	7.392	398	.000*	.450
	Not assumed	7.392	287.402	.000*	.450
Argue	Assumed	4.606	398	.000*	.275
	Not assumed	4.606	305.850	.000*	.275
Justify	Assumed	4.139	398	.000*	.325
	Not assumed	4.139	354.796	.000*	.325
Request	Assumed	-2.430	398	.016*	-.175
	Not assumed	-2.430	373.701	.016*	-.175
Apologize	Assumed	-4.342	398	.000*	-.450
	Not assumed	-4.342	389.408	.000*	-.450
Thank	Assumed	-2.268	398	.024*	-.125
	Not assumed	-2.268	353.060	.024*	-.125
Acquiesce	Assumed	-4.934	398	.000*	-.500
	Not assumed	-4.934	373.363	.000*	-.500
Opt-out	Assumed	0.917	398	.360	.075
	Not assumed	0.917	393.840	.360	.075
Switch-to-Native Language	Assumed	-1.252	398	.211	-.050
	Not assumed	-1.252	335.144	.212	-.050

*p<0.05

A statistical analysis of the data in Table 5 reveals that the *t*-value of 'Challenge (.030, p<0.05)', 'Sarcastic (.00, p<0.05)', 'Argue (.00, p<0.05)', 'Justify (.00, p<0.05)', 'Request (.016, p<.05) 'Apologize (.00, p<0.05)', 'Thank (.024, p<0.05), and 'Acquiesce (.00, p<0.05)' is significant. Therefore, we can say that there is significant difference between lower and higher proficiency groups in using 'Challenge', 'Sarcastic', 'Argue', 'Justify', 'Request', 'Apologize', 'Thank' and 'Acquiesce' (the significance is less than 0.05). According to the result of *t*-test, the gaps of mean scores turned out to be statistically significant. Higher proficiency group used 'Insult' the most while lower proficiency group used 'Apologize' the most. Higher proficiency students used 'Apologize' the second most and lower proficiency students responded with 'Acquiesce' the second most. The thirdly most used strategy for higher proficiency students is 'Acquiesce' and for lower proficiency students is 'Insult'.

In terms of 'Sarcastic' strategy, higher proficiency group used about 5 times more than lower proficiency group. For instance, higher proficiency student answered 'What a nice

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

thing to say', 'You are so kind' in a sarcastic way. However, 'Sarcastic' strategy was the least used strategy for lower proficiency student.

Overall, higher proficiency group used almost twice more 'Argue' and 'Justify' strategy than lower proficiency group. For example, in the 'map situation' (situation No.3), in which the garage attendant says to the direction seeker, "What do you want me to do, draw you a map?" a higher proficiency learner says, "Please tell me how can I get there. It's one of your jobs, isn't it?" In the same situation, a lower proficiency learner says, "Sorry." Also in the 'Book store' situation (situation No. 2), in which the bookstore clerk says "If you want to browse, go to the library", lower proficiency learners used more 'Acquiesce' strategy like "OK, I'll go to the library." On the other hand, higher proficiency learner used more 'Justify' strategy such as "But I would like to see the book and decide whether to buy the book or not.", "I'm a customer and I have right to see the book", and "I would like to see if this is what I'm looking for. I will not damage your book." As shown in the examples, 'Argue' and 'Justify' are not aggressive or abusive, but they show that the speaker would like to be treated fairly. In terms of 'Threat' strategy, 8.75% of the higher group and lower group responded to the interlocutor by threatening, by saying "I want to see your boss here.", "I'll never buy books here." and so on. This result supports Trosborg (1987)'s study in that arguing and justifying is both linguistically and cognitively more difficult than denying or responding with a routine formula of expression. In Beebe and Waring (2005)'s study, higher proficiency group used 'Insult' the most which corresponds with present study's result. However, lower proficiency group in Beebe and Waring (2005)'s study used 'Acquiesce' the most while present study used 'Apologize' the most. This difference might result from the fact that apologies carry a specific cultural value. The role of apology is to maintain, restore and enhance the interpersonal relationship. In addition, apology is inextricably tied to humility and hence it reflects one's humility to the interlocutor. Specifically, Korean society has been greatly influenced by Confucianism for a long period of time and hence emphasized the value of humility more than Western societies (Kim, 2001). We can conclude that this cultural value of Korean apology seems to influence the result of the present study.

The result of this study revealed that lower proficiency responded with more 'Apologize' and 'Opt Out' than higher proficiency learners might be an indicator of the lower proficiency students' linguistic insecurity.

2. Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by Gender

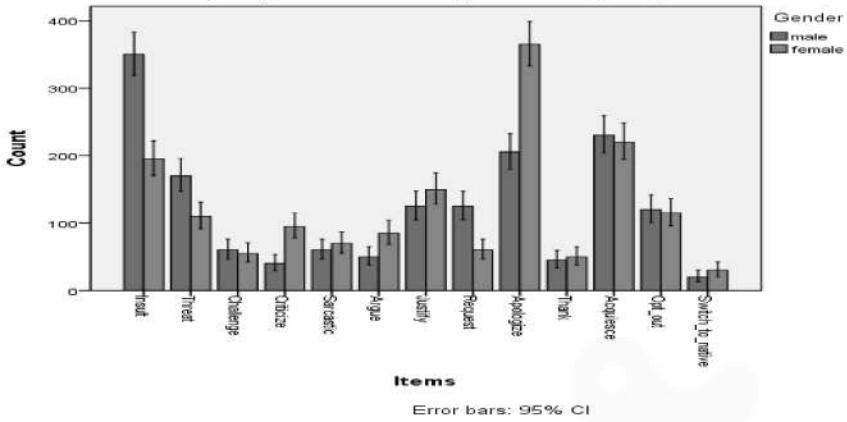
In order to examine gender difference on choosing pragmatic studies, research

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

question 2 was investigated. Figure 2 presents the frequency of each pragmatic strategy by gender.

FIGURE 2

Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by Gender



As Figure 2 show, the second most used strategy is 'Acquiesce' for both female and male group. In order to see whether the gaps of mean scores are significant or not *t*-test was computed. Table 6 shows the results of the *t*-test by gender.

TABLE 6

Results of *t*-test by Gender

Pragmatic Strategy	Equal Variances	t-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Insult	Assumed	6.639	398	.000*	.775
	Not assumed	6.639	336.161	.000*	.775
Threat	Assumed	3.748	398	.000*	.300
	Not assumed	3.748	379.689	.000*	.300
Challenge	Assumed	.434	398	.664	.025
	Not assumed	.434	396.586	.664	.025
Criticize	Assumed	-4.970	398	.000*	-.275
	Not assumed	-4.970	324.765	.000*	-.275
Sarcastic	Assumed	-.771	398	.441	-.050
	Not assumed	-.771	397.826	.441	-.050

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Argue	Assumed	-2.886	398	.004*	-.175
	Not assumed	-2.886	396.623	.004*	-.175
Justify	Assumed	-1.564	398	.119	-.125
	Not assumed	-1.564	388.687	.119	-.125
Request	Assumed	4.598	398	.000*	.325
	Not assumed	4.598	324.214	.000*	.325
Apologize	Assumed	-8.147	398	.000*	-.800
	Not assumed	-8.147	390.272	.000*	-.800
Thank	Assumed	-4.51	398	.652	-.025
	Not assumed	-4.51	393.809	.652	-.025
Acquiesce	Assumed	.479	398	.632	.050
	Not assumed	.479	370.761	.632	.050
Opt-out	Assumed	.305	398	.760	.025
	Not assumed	.305	392.743	.760	.025
Switch-to-Native Language	Assumed	-1.252	398	.211	-.050
	Not assumed	-1.252	335.144	.212	-.050

*p <0.05

A statistical analysis of the data in Table 6 reveals that the *t*-value of 'Insult' (.00, p<0.05), 'Threat (.00, p<0.05)', 'Criticize (.00, p<0.05)', 'Argue (.004, p<0.05)', 'Request (.00, p<0.05),' and 'Apologize (.00, p<0.05),' is significant. According to the result of *t*-test, the gaps of mean scores turned out to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, we can say that there is significant difference between male and female using 'Insult', 'Threat', 'Criticize', 'Request' and 'Apologize' (the significance is less than 0.05). As shown in Table 6 and Figure 2, male used 'Insult' the most, while Female used 'Apologize' the most. For example, in the 'Elevator' situation (Situation No. 5) where the interlocutor says "Have you ever heard the word, 'excuse me'?", most of the male used 'Insult' strategy by saying "Are you crazy?", "I didn't even touch you, you foolish!!!" and "You are rude!". However in the same situation, many female used 'Apology' strategy by saying "I'm sorry." To take another example, in the 'Bookstore' situation (Situation No. 2), where the bookstore clerk says "If you want to browse, go to the library!" males used 'Insult' the most such as "What are you talking about?!!!", "Are you trying to be difficult or what?!! Do your job properly!!" and "I never see the clerk like you. You are so rude!" On the other hand, females responded with 'Apology' strategy the most which supports Holmes (1998)'s study. However, the second most used strategy that both group used is 'Acquiesce'. "I see. I'll go to the library." and "Okay" are some examples of 'Acquiesce' strategy.

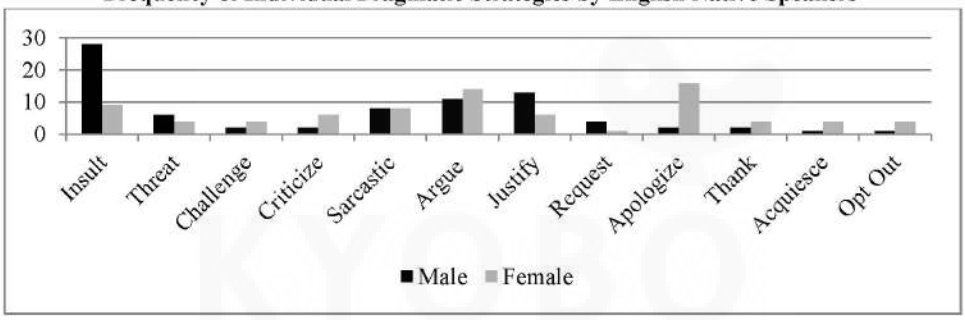
교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

3. Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by English Native Speakers

Research question 3 focused on the difference between English native speakers and Korean EFL learners in their use of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness. English native speakers used 'Insult' strategy the most and the second most used strategy is 'Argue' followed by 'Justify' as shown in Figure 3. Figure 3 shows the frequency of individual pragmatic strategies by gender. In terms of gender, the most frequently used strategy was same as EFL Korean data. English native male used 'Insult' the most (29.1%) while female used 'Apologize' the most (15.3%).

FIGURE 3

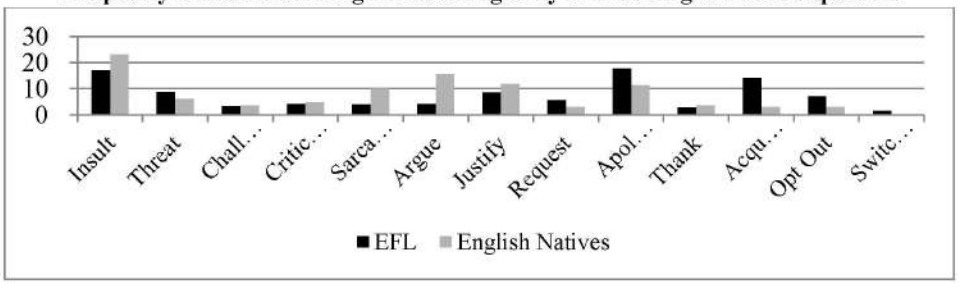
Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by English Native Speakers



For example, in the 'Book store' situation (situation No, 2), in which the bookstore clerk says "If you want to browse, go to the library," ENS males respond "What! You are so rude!" On the other hand, ENS females respond "Sorry." The result of the current study shows that the gender difference between EFLs is similar with those between native speakers of English in the tendency of choosing pragmatic strategies. Figure 4

FIGURE 4

Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by EFL vs. English Native Speakers



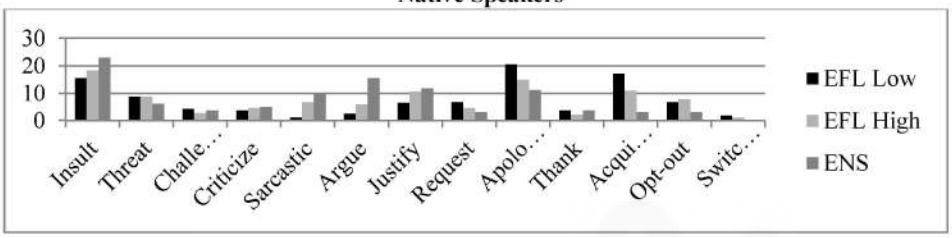
교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

shows the difference of individual pragmatic strategies by EFL and English native speakers.

As shown in Figure 4, EFL learners used 'Apologize' the most while English Native speakers used 'Insult' the most. To investigate whether there is a pattern between EFL low, EFL high and English Natives, Figure 5 was made.

FIGURE 5

Frequency of Individual Pragmatic Strategies by EFL Low vs. EFL High vs. English Native Speakers



As shown in Figure 5, the noticeable pattern was found. In terms of 'Insult', 'Sarcastic', 'Argue' and 'Justify', EFL low proficiency used the least while English Natives used the most. On the other hand, regarding 'Request', 'Apologize' and 'Acquiesce', English Natives used the least while EFL low proficiency used the most. The biggest difference between English native speakers and EFL students in the usage of pragmatic strategies in responding to rudeness was that English natives used 'Acquiesce' strategy the least (3%) while 10% of EFL students used 'Acquiesce' strategy. Korean EFL students may not have been competent enough to identify the 'rudeness force' inherent in the questions. Alternatively, it is also possible that they may have simply ignored the pragmatic force in order to avoid any unpleasant confrontation.

In situation 3, where you are asking the garage attendant for the directions, the garage attendant who was not very helpful in giving directions said in sarcasm: "What do you want me to do, draw you a map?" All of the English native speakers responses elicited from this situation were realized as a sarcastic tone, where as only 1% of EFL participants responded in sarcasm. It is interesting to note that the question "What do you want me to do, draw you a map?" is sarcastically-marked and a typical response from an English Native speaker from this situation was "Yes, please. You are very kind." On the other hand, only 1% of Korean participants responded in sarcasm with sarcasm. 56% of Korean participants answered with apology. For instance, "I am really sorry to bother you. But please draw me a map." , "Oh, I am so sorry, could you please be more specific." and "I am sorry, I am a stranger here, please help me with a map." These responses may result from the fact that some Korean participants were not competent

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

enough to identify the sarcasm inherent in the question. Alternatively, it is also possible that they may have simply used 'acquiesce' and 'apology' strategy in order to avoid any unpleasant confrontation.

However, when the DCT is categorized by each question there are more distinct differences. When the interlocutor is an old person (as in situation No. 7), 52% of the participants chose 'Apologize' strategy and 25% chose 'Acquiesce' strategy. In situation No. 7, you are waiting in a line at the cashier and suddenly an old man cut in line in front of you without an excuse. When you ask him to get in line he says "Old man first! You are so rude!" In this situation, more than half of the participants apologized to the old man by saying "I'm sorry". However, 22% of native speakers of English responded with 'Insult' and 10% with 'Apologize'.

On the other hand, when the interlocutor was a kid (as in question No.8), none of the participants chose 'Apologize' strategy (0%) and chose 'Insult' strategy (30%) the most, followed by 'Threat' (25%). For example, participants said to the kid "You are a kid. You are very rude!", "Who is your parent?", and "Go away, you idiot!" However, 20% of native speakers of English responded with 'Insult' and 5% responded with 'Apologize'. This result shows that the EFL participants were aware of the age status of the interlocutor, while native speakers of English didn't seem to consider the age status of the interlocutor. In terms of age, it seems to be the critical factor affecting the use of pragmatic strategies in Korean EFL learners. Kim (2001, p.59) demonstrates that the ascribed power originating from age difference overwhelms achieved power and status in Korean society. In addition, Kim proves that age factor affects Korean speakers' production of interlanguage apologies. Similarly, Byon (2004, 2005) also claims that age is a crucial factor in performing apologies.

Since the Korean language itself has different levels of speech, it is almost impossible for Koreans to talk without taking age into consideration. It seems that Korean EFL learners transfer this L1 pragmatic norm to English in choosing pragmatic strategies.

V. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

The current study investigated the pragmatic strategies used in responding to rudeness situation. Mainly this study compared the lower and higher proficiency Korean EFL students and gender differences. Also the data of Korean EFL students are compared with native speakers of English. The result showed that lower proficiency EFL students used 'Apologize' the most while the higher proficiency EFL students used 'Insult' the most. Regarding gender, the data comparing males and females revealed that males used 'Insult' strategy the most while females used 'Apologize' the most. The result of this

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

study supports the past studies in that women have a tendency to express more indirectly than men and have a more collaborative conversational style. In addition, the study indicated that Korean EFL learners didn't seem to identify the sarcasm inherent in the interlocutors' question in the DCT. On the other hand, English native speakers' responses from the sarcastic situation revealed that they realized the sarcastic tone of the interlocutor. Also it was found that gender difference among English native speakers is in accordance with the gender difference among Korean EFL.

In interpreting the results of the present study, several limitations should be considered. First, it is difficult to generalize the results of the study to a larger population due to the non-random nature and the relatively small number of the subject pool. Second, there were age difference between the Korean EFL group and English natives group. The age of Korean EFL group was all 19, while English native speakers had a range between 25 and 35. This age difference might have an effect on the result. Third, since the data used in this research were collected only from written DCT tests without using data from actual discourse, the data is not adequate enough to examine the speech acts of the learners. DCT lacks paralinguistic features such as the interlocutor's tone, vocal qualities, facial expressions which could potentially provide important clues regarding the pragmatic intentions of the interlocutors. Lastly, the presence of the researcher and the tasks presented to the participants, might have lead them to pay attention to their choice of pragmatic strategy as Labov (1972) noted "Observor's Paradox." This factor might have an effect on the participants' answer.

Despite these limitations, strength of the present study is that it has attempted to fill a niche in interlanguage pragmatics by examining pragmatic strategies used by comparing different proficiency and gender. The insights afforded by this study can serve as a basis for further research into Korean EFL learners' pragmatic development.

First, understanding the pragmatic development of EFL students allows the EFL teacher to administer stage-appropriate instructions to enhance students' pragmatic development. Past studies found that ESL learners showed improvement as a result of instruction in pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Chang, 2000; Park, 2000; Porter, 1986; Wildner-Bassett, 1994, among others). EFL learners, however, show imbalance between grammatical and pragmatic competence and this imbalance may be due partly to a lack of input since EFL learners have input only in the classroom. Also another reason may be the pedagogical focus on grammatical competency in the expense of other competencies in EFL classroom and text books. The results of the present study suggest that stage-appropriate pragmatic instruction and authentic input are needed, particularly in the EFL setting.

Second, present study shows the importance of the gender aspect for successful communication in the target language context. Research into the dynamic of gender will

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

reflect the complex nature of linguistic behavior in the EFL classroom (Tannen, 1994)

Third, as shown in the present study, EFL learners have hard time signaling sarcastic tone. It seems crucial for EFL learners to understand and use the tone of voice appropriately when having a conversation with English native speakers. Tannen (1986) describes "tone of voice" as one of the "subtle signals" which, along with other signals such as intonation, pitch, and facial expression, work to frame each utterance as serious, joking, teasing, angry, polite, rude, ironic, and so on. Hymes (1972) also refers to key of speaking is "tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done (p.62)." Since EFL learners do not have a lot of opportunity to meet English native speakers, English instructors should teach a variety of tone.

Lastly, as noted, responding to rudeness in an appropriate manner is a crucial skill for nonnative speakers of English in that it would save the face in face-threatening situation. In order to appropriately prepare the nonnative speakers of English for such unpleasant verbal confrontation, teachers should inform the nonnative students of various pragmatic strategies. It is also important for teachers to make students aware of any gender differences that exist in communicative event, and provide them with accurate linguistic models and authentic examples.

It is hoped that the present study will contribute to the growing body of research at the interlanguage pragmatics, and that future research will be able to draw from and build upon the findings presented here.

REFERENCES

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pramatics. *Laguage Learning, 49(*4), 677-713.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Taylor, R. M. (2003). *Teaching pragmatics.* Retrieved November 22, 2012, from http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/

Beebe, L. M. (1995). Polite fictions: Instrumental rudeness as pragmatic competence. In J. Alatis, C. Straehle, B. Gallenberger, & M. Ronkin (Eds.), *Linguistics and the Education of Language Teachers: Ethnolinguistic, Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives,* (pp.154–168). Washington: Georgetown University Press.

Beebe, L. M., & Waring, H. Z. (2005). Pragmatic development in responding to rudeness. In C. Holten and J. Frodesen (Eds), *At the heart of It all: Discourse studies and language teaching and learning* (pp.67-79). Festschrift in Honor of Marianne Celce-Murcia. Boston: Heinle and Heinle, Thomson Learning.

Billmyer, K. (1990). *"I really like your lifestyle": ESL learners learning how to*

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

compliment. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED335937)

Bisshop, C. (1996). *"I am apologize...": Asian speakers of English saying sorry in the Austrailian context*. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne.

Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1986). Too many words: Length of utterances and pragmatic failure. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 8,* 165-180.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, House, Juliane, Kasper, Gabriele (Eds.), (1989). Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Request and Apologies. Albex Publishing Company, Norwood.

Bousfield, D. (2008). *Impoliteness in Interaction.* Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cha, Y. J. (2007). Pragmatic transfer in Korean learners of English on compliment response. *East West Education, 24*, 1-17.

Chang, Bok-Myung. (2000). Developing pragmatic awareness through English teaching materials. *English Language & Teaching, 6*, 179-197.

Cohen, A. D. (1996). Developing the ability to perform speech acts. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 18*, 253-267.

Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics, 25*, 349–67.

Culpeper, J. Bousfield, D. & Wichmann, A. (2003). Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics, 35*(10), 1545–1579.

Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. W. (1986). 'I very appreciate': Expressions of gratitude by native and non-native speakers of American English, *Applied Linguistics, 7*, 167-185.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1992). Learning to communicate in the classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 14*, 1-23.

Francis, C. (1997). Talk to me!: The development of request strategies in non-native speakers of English. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED410190)

Han, B. K. (2012). *Analysis of speech act of complaint among Korean learners of English.* Unpublished master's thesis, Korea University, Seoul, Korea.

Harris, S. (2001). Being politically impolite: extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse. *Discourse and Society, 12*, 451–472.

Herbert, R. K. (1986). Say "thank you" or something. *American Speech, 61*(1), 76-88.

Herbert, R. K. (1990). Sex-based differences in compliment behavior. *Language in Society, 19*(2), 201-224.

Hoffman-Hicks, S. (1992). Linguistics and pragmatic competence: Their relationship in

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

the overall competence of the language learner. In L. F. Bouton & Y. Kachru (Eds.), *Pragmatics and language learning*, monograph series vol. 3 (pp. 66-80). Urbana-Champaign, IL: Division of English as an International Language)

Holmes, J. (1986). Compliments in compliment responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics, 28*(4), 485-508.

Holmes, J. (1988). Paying compliments: a sex-preferential politeness strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics, 12*, 445-465.

Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men and Politeness.* New York: Longman.

Holmes, J. (2008). *Introduction to sociolinguistics*. England: Pearson Education.

Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 53-72), England: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd.

Kasper, G., & Schmidt. R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies of Second Language Acquisition*, *18*, 149-169.

Kienpointner, M. (1997). Varieties of rudeness: Types and functions of impolite utterances. *Functions of Language, 4*(2): 251–287.

Kim, D.Y. (2001). A descriptive analysis of Korean and English apologies with implication for interlanguage pragmatics. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Florida.

Kim, J. Y. (2012). Intimacy and Gender in expressing gratitude in L2. *Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea, 20*(2), 115

Labov, W. (1972). The social stratification of (r) in New York City department Stores. In N. Coupland, & A. Jaworski (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics : A reader and coursebook* (pp.168-178). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and woman's place. *Language in Society, 2*(1), 45-80.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London and New York : Longman.

Levinson, S. (1983*). Priciples of Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Limberg, H. (2009). Impoliteness and threat responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *41*(7), 1376-1394.

Maeshiba, N., Yoshinaga, N., Kasper, G., & Ross, S. (1996). Transfer and proficiency in interlanguage apologizing. In S. Gass, & J. Neu (Eds.), *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language* (pp. 155-187). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

McNamara, T. (1996). Measuring second language performance. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Moon, K. (2001). Speech act study: Difference between native and nonnative speaker complaint strategy. Retrieved June 12, 2012 from http://www.cas.american.edu/cas/tesol/

Park, Kyung-Ja. (2000). The importance of interlanguage in teaching English as a

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

foreign language. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 6*, 113-142.

Porter, P. A. (1986). How learners talk to each other: Input and interaction in task-centered discussions. In R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition* (pp. 200-222). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Schmidt, R. W. (1993). Consciousness, learning and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper, & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21-42). New York: Newbury House.

Takahashi, S. (2005). Pragmalinguistic awareness: Is it related to motivation and proficiency? *Applied Linguistics, 26*(1), 90-120.

Takahashi, S., & Dufon, M. (1989). Cross-linguistic influence in indirectness: The case of English directives performed by native Japanese speakers. Unpublished manuscript, Department of English as a Second language, University of Hawaii at Manoa (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED370439)

Takahash, S., & Beebe, L. M. (1987). The development of pragmatic competence by Japanese learners of English. *JALT Journal, 8*, 131-155.

Tannen, D. (1986). That's not what I meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relations with Others. New York: William Morrow.

Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York: Ballentine Books.

Tannen, D. (1994). *Gender and discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Trosborg, A. (1987). Apology strategies in natives/ nonnatives. *Journal of Pragmatics, 11*, 147-167.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Request, complaints, and apologies*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wildner-Bassett, M. (1994). Intercultural pragmatics and proficiency: "Polite" noises for cultural appropriateness. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 32*, 3-17.

APPENDIX A

Discourse Completion Test

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. You responses are strictly confidential and they will not be used for purposes other than this academic research.

Directions: In the blank marked "You would say," please write the words you think you would actually say in order to handle the situation in a socially appropriate way. If you say nothing, write "say nothing" in the blank.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

1. You are a student calling to make an appointment to see your professor. You ask when the professor is free. The receptionist says, "YOU'RE an adult. YOU pick a time."
You would say: _____

2. You go to a tourist bookstore where books are kept behind the counter. You ask to see a book on display. The clerk behind the counter says, "If you want to browse, go to the library."
You would say: _____

3. You are at a garage. You ask the garage attendant for directions for getting out of the city. All the reference points are unfamiliar to you, so you keep asking questions. The garage attendant says, "What do you want me to do, draw you a map?"
You would say: _____

4. You go to a bookstore and ask an employee if they have a new mystery called *Dead Reckoning*.
The employee says, "I have NOOOO idea!" You ask if it's published yet. And again, the employee makes no attempt to help you, saying "I have NOOOOO idea," sounding annoyed that you would ask.
You would say: _____

5. You are in an elevator. You reach carefully in front of the other passengers to push the "down" button without bumping them. One of the passengers says, "Have you ever heard the word, 'excuse me'?"
You would say: _____

6. You are an overweight man/woman parking your car near a crosswalk. A passenger with a child is afraid you'll run over them. You get into an argument, and the passenger yells, "OH SHUT UP, you fat pig!"
You would say: _____

7. You are in a grocery store waiting in a line to pay at the cashier. You waited for a long time but suddenly an old person bumps with you and cut in line without an excuse. You ask to get in line and the old person says "Old person first! You are so rude!"
You would say: _____

8. You are trying to study for an important test and kids playing in the playground in front of your house are yelling and blasting their music. You open the window and ask

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

the kids to be quiet, and the kid says, "Oh yeah? Why don't you just go to the library, you nerd?"
You would say: _____

Gender: (female / male)
Age: ( )
Year of school: (1 / 2 / 3 / 4)
Experience staying in an English-speaking country(es): YES / NO
If YES, period of stay: Year ( ) and Months ( )
Name(s) of country(es):

Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary, Post- Secondary

Soo Weon Ko
Dept. of English Language & Literature
College of Liberal Arts
Korea University
1, 5-Ga, Anam-dong, Seongbuk-gu
Seoul, 136-701, Korea.
Tel: (02) 3290-1980
Fax: (02) 3290- 1980
Email: lovesooweo@korea.ac.kr

Received in April 15th, 2014
Reviewed in May 26th, 2014
Revised version received in June 5th, 2014

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre