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A Study of Apology Strategies between Genders in EFL College Students

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This study investigates the use of different speech act of apology strategies between male and female EFL college students by comparing the components of intensity, stylistic competence, and semantic formulas. The data was collected from 37 participants who were studying freshmen English reading course at the Department of English Education of C University in Seoul. Most students were English majors taking pre-teacher course of teaching English for secondary school students. The participants were divided into two gender groups of male and female. The discourse completion test (DCT) which was revised from the speech act of apology by Olshtain and Cohen (1990) was provided with the participants after the researcher explained the speech act of apology in ten situations. The speech act of apology depends on situation variables: social solidarity, severity of offense, and social status. The results show that in the preference of intensity, male and female have almost the similar ratio in high (female: 24.7%, male 24%) and low intensity (female: 75.3%, male: 76%). In the use of stylistic competence, male group (21%) expresses more diversely formal features than female group (12%), while female (87%) use more informal features than male (66%). Most of participants show a limitation in the use of speaking four types of semantic formulas: expression of apology (APOL), acknowledgment of responsibility (RESP), offer of repair (REPR), and promise of forbearance (FORB). As nonnative speakers, the participants cannot conduct the semantic formula in some situations regardless of the tasks provided. The results suggest that English teachers should recognize pragmatic variations in which students feel difficulty in appropriate speaking strategies on apology. This study also contributes to teaching learners the strategies and speaking patterns in the course of various apology situations.

[pragmatics/apology/discourse completion test (DCT)/discourse analysis/speech communication]

I. INTRODUCTION

When learners practice speaking activity of second language, speakers may lack their pragmatic knowledge though the speakers are fluent in grammar and vocabulary of the target language (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 1999). They point out that it is not easy for second language learners to master the pragmatic competence appropriate to the social and cultural context of native speakers. Furthermore, pragmatic competence requires communicative ability to meet the given cultural or social settings, especially in second language environment.

In the studies of speech acts, researchers focused on various aspects of the goals (Kasper & Rose, 2001; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Kasper and Rose (2001) classified the broad categories such as commissives, declarations, directives, expressives, and representatives. They classified the specific speech acts such as apologies, requests, complaints, and refusals. Studies on the speech act of apology have been conducted by providing the task and comparing it with other type of speech act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, the volume of research on apology has been relatively higher than other areas such as complaints and refusals (Kasper & Rose, 2001). The research studies mostly focused on the ESL settings and the subjects who have experienced the situations where the native speakers lived.

This study, on the other hand, focuses on the EFL situation and the participants who have studied English for pre-teacher course. The purposes of this study are as followed. First, this study is to identify the patterns and deviations that nonnative English speakers' use on apology by selecting instances. Second, this study analyzes the frequency of participants' apology in order to find out their strategies of speech act on apology between male and female.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Apology

Cohen (1999) argues in his article that the word "apology" derives from the Greek root logos, meaning "speech" or "word." Though originally associated with a formal justification, defense or explanation, apology also refers to remarks made following an injury, whether intentional or unintentional. In this respect, an apology is defined as "an explanation offered to a person affected by one's action that no offense was intended, coupled with the expression of regret for any that may have been given; or a frank acknowledgment of the offense with expression of regret for it by way of reparation"

(Oxford English Dictionary, 1989 in Cohen, 1999). The typical expression of apology is "I'm sorry." However, the expression "I'm sorry" implies different interpretations for a listener as well as a speaker. Cohen (1999) insists that the meaning of difference results in three elements in apology: (i) admitting one's fault, (ii) expressing regret for the injurious action, and (iii) expressing sympathy for the other's injury. The notion of apology in his elements explains that the features can be applied to the situations appropriate to the speakers.

Goffman (1971) thinks of apologies as a kind of remedial work which involves the splitting of the speaker's self into two parts, the one guilty of having offended the addressee, the other aligning him or herself with the addressee and with the violated norm (Sbisà, 1999). Brown and Levinson (1987) consider apology to be a face threatening act, which damages to some degree the speaker's positive face. By speaking apology to the hearer, the speaker admits that he or she has done a transgression.

Fraser (1981) argues that apology may be performed just in case of two basic conditions, and the speaker acknowledges responsibility for having performed some acts, while the speaker conveys regret for the offense as a result of commission of the act. On the other hand, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) think of apology as a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer when he or she is affected by a violation. They conclude that admission of fault and responsibility plays an essential component of apology.

2. The Studies of Speech Act on Apology

Murphy and Neu (1996) argue that a speech act set is a combination of individual speech acts, so it is necessary for a speaker to develop the overarching communicative purpose. Chen (1996) insists that a speaker produces three separate speech acts: (i) an expression of regret, "I'm so sorry," followed by (ii) a direct refusal, "I can't come to your graduation," followed by (iii) an excuse, "I will be out of town on business."

An apology implies one or more components in speech act: an apology, "I'm sorry," an acknowledgement of responsibility, "It's all my faults," an offer to compensate, "I'll replace it," a promise of forbearance, "It will never happen again," or an explanation, "It was an accident." (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). The researchers analyze the speech acts in various aspects such as refusals, complaints, and apology.

The studies of speech acts on apologies have been studied in Korean context. Kim (2000) studied the effect of both informal language input and cultural identity on determining an ESL learner's level of proficiency in performing apology. The researcher also analyzed how social distance between interlocutors affects responses. Fifty Korean adult learners of English at New York University were asked to complete written dialogue tasks and a background questionnaire. The findings indicated that greater degree of

informal input had positive effects on learners' pragmatic competence. However, cultural identity was not found to correlate significantly with the apology performance results. Jo (2002) compared the strategies and gender-based features of apologies of Korean NNSs and English NSs performing apologies. As an experimental approach, a questionnaire, a DCT, and an informal interview were used to obtain data about on apology strategies and gender-based features. The result concluded that the different frequencies of apology strategies and gender-based features were derived from the differences of sociolinguistic competence between NNSs and NSs, and the different perceptions of apologies between males and females.

Yang (2002) examined the pragmatic features of the thanking and apologizing moves which appeared in requestive email of Korean speakers of English as a foreign language and American English native speakers. She concluded that there were significant differences in the use of thanking and apologizing moves in the requestive email between Koreans and Americans. That is, the data showed that Koreans use fewer moves of thanking and more moves of apologizing than Americans in three different situations. Jung (2004) identified the areas for pedagogical instruction based on the analysis of how Korean nonnative speakers of English apologize with respect to different social statuses. The study involved open role plays as a data collection method and examined three types of apologies (English apologies by the native speakers of English and English as well as Korean apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English). The findings indicated that despite the nonnative speakers' high linguistic proficiency in a second language, there were still gaps between the L2 apology speech acts by the Korean nonnative speakers of English and those by the native speakers of English.

The studies on the speech act of apologies were accomplished based on the real discourse data. Jeon (2006) examined the aspects of expression connected with the speech act of apologizing. The study found that the act of apologizing was a speech act which the speaker tries to make better his or her damaged human relationship with a listener after the speaker's recognizing the mistakes. In the study, acts of apologizing were not often seen in Korean culture, and the researcher insisted that comprehensive studies on largely spoken corpus and special features of speech act of apologizing should be done. Han (2007) analyzed the indirect speech act presented in the discourse of Hotel and Tourism English. In the course of language interaction, the speaker usually tried to respect the hearer`s psychological attitude in hotel and tourism English. Hotel and Tourism English discourse showed that the declarative utterances represent request, suggestion, confirm, and apology.

III. METHODS

1. Participants

To find out the pragmatic differences of apology between male and female students, this study was conducted the use of apology in different situations. The participants were 37 undergraduate students at the Department of English Education of C University in Seoul. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 27 years old. All participants were Korean speakers who speak English as a foreign language. This study was conducted at English reading practice course which was a compulsory subject for the first year students of the department. The participants consisted of 16 freshmen, 5 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 12 seniors. The majors of the participants were two groups: English and non-English majors. 31 participants majored in English education and English literature, while 6 students majored in computer science and sociology.

In order to analyze and compare the data, the participants were divided into two gender groups and they were asked to write their bio-data in the DCT questionnaire: 11 male (30%) and 26 female (70%). The time spent or studied in English speaking countries was not considered because this study tries to focus on the pragmatic variations and their reactions between genders in EFL setting.

2. Materials

DCT has been used as the basis of many speech act studies such as study of complaints by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987), and study of refusals by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). All participants were given Discourse Completion Test (DCT) where they were asked to write their responses to ten situations. The responses made by the participants could be evaluated for the presence and quality of the speech act components (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993) between different groups. As a result, responses of the participants were reviewed for evidence of common components of speech act. In this study, the situations represented four components (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993): cultural competence and stylistic competence, variables of social status, and familiarity.

The ten DCT items used in this study were the revised form of the study on the speech act of apology by Olshtain and Cohen (1990)[1]. Their questionnaire on apology consisted of eleven situations of written response and seven situations of choice for pre-questionnaire, and six situations of written response and three situations of choice for post-questionnaire

[1] The DCT items on apology have been mostly used the revised or edited form of the researchers in almost all articles.

of apology. The participants were provided with a DCT (see Appendix 1). In the written survey before the DCT, they were asked only to provide basic information (age or grade, gender, and English test score). The DCT was composed of ten situations which were created to elicit specific speech acts on apology. The situations suggested equal or unequal power in the relationships of the speakers in the scenarios (Sbisà, 1999). The relationship of participants in the scenarios involved a subject and a classmate, a subject and a professor, a subject and a stranger, a subject and a neighbor, and so on. In each situation, the subject was familiar or unfamiliar with the interlocutor (Sbisà, 1999). Each situation occurred in a university, in the transportation, in the street, at home, and so on. The ten situations were listed in random order based on speech acts within the DCT. An example of situation 1 in the DCT is provided below:

Answer the questions for a situation.

You completely forgot an important meeting with your professor. After two hours, you called him to apologize.

3. Procedures

Participants were asked to take part in the study in person by the researcher. They were provided with a survey of their personal information and the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). They were asked to complete the information and then listen to the purpose of the test. They completed the DCT by writing what their oral response would be to each situation. They were encouraged to respond quickly as they read each situation. They, however, were asked to write their responses as closely as possible what they might actually say. Responses were returned to the researcher personally as they finished it.

Most participants took about 20 minutes to complete the survey in the researcher's presence. Ten participants delayed more than 30 minutes and returned it after the class was finished. The collected data was analyzed by the researcher for the components of apology in speech act: “I'm sorry, ” “I am very sorry,” “I am really sorry,” “Excuse me,” “I am afraid,” “I apologize to you,” and so on. The components were calculated in order to find out the frequency in each response.

IV. RESULTS

1. Components of Speech Act

Each of the participants' responses was analyzed for individual speech acts of apology for each situation. Ten situations of apology selected were designed to assess cultural

competence among nonnative speakers of English. The characteristics in DCT situation are listed in Table 1.

The variables which can be considered to be a significant style are status between the participants of the dialog. For example, a professor keeps higher status than a respondent, while a friend or family has the equal status each other and cousin is lower status rather than a respondent. Familiarity means the degree of the relationship between the people in the situation. For example, a stranger is the least familiar, while your family is the most familiar in the situation. Severity of offense means the strength of seriousness which they should meet. For example, situation 1 indicates that the subject could not keep an important appointment with a professor, so the situation is serious for the part of a subject. In this situation, severity of offense requires high, while situation 3 is not stronger than in the context of situations 1, 5, or 10. Situation 8 renders the least burden on the subject: *You have to get off the bus at the next stop. You're sitting on the window seat and there is a person sitting next to you. You want to get off and say.*

TABLE 1

Situation Variables in DCT [2]

Interlocutor	Social status	Familiarity or solidarity	Severity of offense
1. professor	S<L	F	H
2. old lady	S<L	S	M
3. neighbor	S=L	S	M
4. mother	S<L	F	L
5. cousin	S>L	F	H
6. professor	S<L	F	M
7. neighbor	S=L	S	M
8. passenger	S=L	S	L
9. family	S=L	F	L
10. flight crew	S>L	S	H

(S: speaker, L: listener, F: familiar, S: stranger, H: high, M: mid, L: low)

Familiarity or solidarity means the relationship between the subject and an interlocutor in personal context. It sometimes determines the intensity, high or low, in a degree of intimacy between them. There are five familiarities and five strangers in the situations, respectively. A student response on familiarity in situation 1 is: *I am really sorry, professor.*

[2] The situation variables in Table 1 and Intensity of Regret in Table 2 are similar to other data or articles because of similar situations of the DCT and its research method.

I completely forgot about our meeting (Youn H. W.)[3]. On the other hand, stranger response in situation 3 is *Excuse me for having forgotten to buy those* (Cha H. S.). The two responses can lead the weight of answer type.

2. Components of Intensity

This study modified Fraser's (1981) list and made four semantic formulas based on the research of Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The first formula consists of four subformulas in expressing apology.

1. An expression of apology
   a. An expression of regret ("I'm sorry")
   b. An offer of apology ("I apologize")
   c. A request for forgiveness ("Excuse me" or "Forgive me")
   d. An expression of an excuse (not an overt apology but an excuse which serves as an apology)
2. An acknowledgment of responsibility
3. An offer of repair
4. A promise of forbearance

TABLE 2
Intensity of Regret

Interlocutor	High intensity	Low intensity
1. professor	0	
2. old lady	0	
3. neighbor	0	
4. mother		0
5. cousin		0
6. professor	0	
7. neighbor	0	
8. passenger		0
9. family		0
10. flight crew	0	

These situations specifically intend to assess intensity of regret on apology such as high intensity for "I'm very sorry." and low intensity for "I'm sorry." (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

[3] The initial in the parenthesis means the real excerpt from the participant's response in the DCT.

The high intensities are the situations such as forgetting an important meeting with your professor, bumping into an old lady and causing her to drop a bag, forgetting a promise with your neighbor, forgetting on returning a book to the professor, disturbing your neighbor, and delaying the time at the airport. Table 2 summaries the two types of intensity and the relationship to ten situations.

In this study, the situations of high intensity are situations 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10. The situations of low intensity include messing the house making your mother angry, breaking your cousin's computer, disturbing a passenger sitting next to you in a bus, and preparing a bad meal for your family. The low intensities in this study are situations 4, 5, 8, and 9. In ten situations of the DCT, the intensity is various depending on the context. The relationship between an interlocutor and a subject determines the types of intensity. In situation 1, for example, the professor can be a status of high intensity over a student because the student could not keep the promise with the professor and should give his/her professor any excuse. In situation 4, on the other hand, a student's mother can be a status of low intensity though the participant did not follow the direction of his/her mother to clean the shoes before entering the house. In the number of items, there are more items of high intensity than those of low intensity in the table but the result does not agree with the number of intensity of items. That is, the result of responses does not conform to the classification of the intensity of regret in Table 2.

TABLE 3

Frequency of Intensity [4]

Interlocutor	High intensity	Low intensity
1. professor	22	15
2. old lady	8	29
3. neighbor	3	34
4. mother	2	35
5. cousin	4	33
6. professor	12	25
7. neighbor	6	31
8. passenger	0	37
9. family	0	37
10. flight crew	5	31
Total	62 (17.3%)	307 (82.7%)

[4] The frequency of intensity in Table 3 is adopted partly from the previous analysis of DCT (Shim, 2007).

In Table 3, the frequency in item 1 indicates the equals to the data (22 responses of high intensity versus 15 responses of low intensity). However, the result of other items does not agree with the classification of intensity that the researcher had intended. For example, the results of frequency are opposite to the type of intensity in almost all situations such as 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10. In situation 2, the example of high intensity should be *I am really sorry. I never saw you in front of me* (Chung S. H.), or *Oh, I am really sorry. I'll carry this luggage to the upper stair* (Kang D. H.). Eight participants speak the type of high intensity, while 29 cases speak that of low intensity.

The data shows that the speech act is not equal to the context of real situation. In the excerpt of situation 10, most participants do not understand the context exactly and fail to give their responses appropriately. Only five participants respond to the task correctly enough to meet the situation where the situation requires them to speak with high intensity. The examples of high intensity are: *I'm really sorry. I am late because heavy traffic in the ...* (Byun Y. H.), or *I am so sorry, and thank you for your endurance. Please let me go into the flight* (Cha J. Y.). Some participants feel confused in accepting the situation and respond to the task for gratitude rather than apology: *Thank you for waiting. Because of heavy traffic, I am late* (Kang D. H.), or *Excuse me, I am in a hurry. Please let me take an air flight as soon as possible* (Chung S. H.). The result shows that the participants cannot exactly understand the task of intensity in some situations. The finding implies that they may not have appropriate strategies of expression in the given situation. In their study, Olshtain and Cohen (1990) consider the ability the pragmatic proficiency in the given situations comparing to the norm of four different languages (Hebrew, Canadian French, Australian English, and German).

TABLE 4

Gender Ratio of Frequency of Intensity (Female: 26, Male: 11)

Interlocutor	High intensity		Low intensity	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1. professor	16(62%)	4(36%)	10(38%)	7(64%)
3. neighbor	1(4%)	2(18%)	25(96%)	9(82%)
5.cousin	2(8%)	2(18%)	24(92%)	9(82%)
mean	(24.7%)	(24%)	(75.3%)	(76%)

In order to find out the difference between genders in the intensity, three interlocutors are selected from ten situations depending on the situation variables of Table 1: professor(S<L), neighbor(S=L), cousin(S>L). The three interlocutors represent the social status in each situation in Table 4. In the table, male shows a significant preference to

female in high intensity (male: 24%; female: 24.7%), but they have almost the similar ratio in low intensity.

3. Stylistic Competence in Situation

Other way of speaker's response was intended to assess stylistic competence (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). The stylistically appropriate use of apology has two types of responses: more formal and more informal. More formal expression is "I wish to apologize," while more informal apology is "I'm sorry," in the given situation. They include apology for forgetting a meeting with your professor or someone, bumping into a stranger, disturbing your neighbor's sleeping at night, and so on. Table 5 indicates the frequency of stylistic competence in each situation. The data can also determine the levels of the participant in pragmatic knowledge. Most participants write most of their answers in informal style. Thirty-five participants speak one or two responses of formal styles in ten situations, but a few participants who have higher pragmatic competence write more than five answers in formal style.

A participant dominant in formal competence can be a model which provides other learners with a good pragmatic competence of apology in cultural and social understanding. She writes seven answers in formal competence out of ten situations, in which she expresses and produces in most native speakers' speech act on apology.

TABLE 5

Stylistic Competence (unit: the number of answer)[5]

Interlocutor	More formal	More informal
1. professor	6	31
2. old lady	0	37
3. neighbor	7	30
4. mother	11	26
5. cousin	5	32
6. professor	12	25
7. neighbor	2	35
8. passenger	33	4
9. family	25	12
10. flight crew	15	22
Total	116 (30.0%)	254 (70.0%)

[5] The stylistic competence is adopted partly from the previous analysis of DCT (Shim, 2007).

In situation 4, after listening to her mother's talk, the participant reacts to it with more polite manner: *That's a long story, mom. Give me a towel first. I don't want to screw up the floor* (Jung E. H.). Other typical formal expression is in the situation 6 where the speaker forgot to return books to a professor. The participant produces her regret and offers alternatives to the interlocutor: *I owe you an apology for forgetting the book. I won't be again* (Jung E. H.). The participant has no trouble in eliciting quite natural utterance similar to a native speaker in some situations: in a bus in situation 8, *Excuse me. May I get off, please?,* and at home in situation 9, *These are not so good than I expected, but please help yourself* (Jung E. H.).

In stylistic competence in Table 6, they show significant differences in the use of more formal and more informal strategies between genders. Male (21%) prefers more formal competence to female (12%) in three situations. However, female (87%) usually prefer more informal strategies than male (66%), which indicates that female participants feel much more intimacy and less burden than male in speaking with interlocutors. Furthermore, a few students cannot write with stylistic expression because four male students cannot respond to his neighbor with stylistic with in situation 3 (2 responses in more formal, 5 in more informal) and two female students cannot express the stylistic competence with her cousin in situation 5 (2 responses in more formal, 22 in more informal). The result may suggest the fact is somewhat related to the use of politeness strategy when making requests in Korean culture (Yang, 2002).

TABLE 6

Gender Ratio of Stylistic Competence (Female: 26, Male: 11)

Interlocutor	More formal		More informal	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1. professor	4(15%)	2(18%)	22(85%)	9(82%)
3. neighbor	3(12%)	2(18%)	23(88%)	5(45%)
5.cousin	2(8%)	3(27%)	22(85%)	8(72%)
Mean	12%	21%	87%	66%

4. Semantic Formulas in Situation

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) studies the different patterns between two or three groups of subjects whose language background and its ability are various. They insist that there are some deviations of nonnative English speakers in their formulas of apology in English. The instances are due to negative transfer from native cultural patterns. The nonnative English

speakers' deviation is a result of negative transfer, and some patterns are less likely to occur in their speaking than native English speaking. They argue that there are four types of negative transfer of semantic formulas in nonnative speakers: expression of apology (APOL), acknowledgment of responsibility (RESP), offer of repair (REPR), and promise of forbearance (FORB).

The semantic formulas, however, can hardly be seen in EFL setting, especially in college learners. It is not easy to calculate and analyze the participants' data based on the semantic formulas because of their limited utterances. In this study, therefore, the researcher selected a participant who is above middle level, and provided her with an excerpt as a sample of semantic formulas. Table 7 shows the categories of semantic formulas from a participant (Park J. H.).

In the excerpt quoted from the participant, more semantic formulas can be seen than in those of other participants. The participant expresses three categories of formula in situations 2, 3, and 6. The response to bumping into a lady in situation 2 is: *I'm sorry. I lost my mind. I'll pick up your packages. It's my fault* (Park J. H.). In forgetting a promise with her professor in situation 3, the answer is: *I am sorry that I forgot promise. So, I will buy some fruits exactly next time. Forgive me!* (Park J. H.). Though the prompts from the participant represent rather good semantic formulas, other speakers suggest their lack of speaking semantic formulas compared with the results of other studies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Fraser, 1981).

TABLE 7

Semantic Formulas in Situation

Situation	Semantic formula			
	APOL	RESP	REPR	FORB
1. forgetting a meeting	0			
2. bumping into a lady	0	0	0	
3. forgetting a promise	0	0		0
4. making dirty of a room	0	0		
5. breaking a laptop	0	0	0	0
6. forgetting to return books	0	0		0
7. making a noise	0	0		
8. disturbing a passenger	0			
9. cooking wrong	0			0
10. disturbing flight crew	0	0		

V. LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations in choosing and collecting data from subjects: the scope of subject group and the research instrument, the Discourse Completion Test. First, the data was collected from 37 participants in EFL college learners. For an objective result in DCT, a large number of participants may contribute to analyzing various features in their speech act tasks. The diverse groups or the courses which students major in provide a lot of different features depending on different situations. However, this study shows that the two groups in each gender make use of the different apology strategy.

Second, the participants are skewed to female (70%) comparing with male participants (30%) because of the characteristics of the course, English for pre-teachers, which the students take. Though male students are relatively less than their opponents, the data proves that the tasks are different in two groups. Third, the majors in the participants need to be more classified in order to produce various traits in each group. Other learners who are not familiar with pragmatic knowledge might provide specific utterances as a mirror data. However, this study does not focus on various features from different academic fields but relies on the apologetic features in gender.

Lastly, as mentioned by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), the discourse completion test may not be the best way to obtain authentic data. Participants can write their response on it that is less possible in a naturalistic spoken setting. Hendriks (2002) also insists that another enhancement should produce an oral version of the DCT, in which participants respond orally to the prompts. The researcher suggests that audio recordings should be made and transcribed and various DCT items should be developed implying various situations. Even though the DCT method has some problems, the researchers argue that the DCT is an effective instrument in treating or analyzing the speech acts, especially in socially different groups of language learners.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study illustrates several aspects of speech act of apology in EFL college male and female students. Apology consists of one or more components in speech acts: an expression of apology, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer to compensate, a promise of forbearance, or an explanation (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). This study analyzes the speech act of apology from 37 undergraduate students of the Department of English Education at C University in Seoul. They completed the DCT by writing what their oral response would be in ten situations. They were encouraged to respond quickly as they read each situation.

Ten apology situations were selected and designed to assess cultural competence among nonnative speakers of English. Situational variables were classified with three boundaries: social status, familiarity or solidarity, and severity of offense. The situations were specifically intended to assess intensity of regret in expressing an apology such as high intensity or low intensity. The situations of high intensity are forgetting an important meeting with your professor or bumping into an old lady causing her to drop a bag. The situations of low intensity include forgetting a promise with your neighbor or stylistic competence, male group disturbing a passenger sitting next to you in a bus. In ten situations of the DCT, the intensity differs depending on the context, and the relationship between an interlocutor and a subject determines the types of intensity. Male and female have almost the similar ratio in high (female: 24.7%, male 24%) and low intensity (female: 75.3%, male: 76%). In the use of up (21%) expresses more diversely formal features than female group (12%), while female (87%) use more informal features than male (66%).

The other way of speaker's response was intended to assess stylistic competence (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). The use of a stylistically appropriate apology has two types of responses: more formal and more informal. There are four types of negative transfer of semantic formulas in nonnative speakers: expression of apology (APOL), acknowledgment of responsibility (RESP), offer of repair (REPR), and promise of forbearance (FORB). The semantic formulas, however, are hardly observed in this data, especially in EFL college level groups. They feel difficulties in treating semantic formulas as a speech act of apology. As college level students, the participants cannot conduct the semantic formula in some situations regardless of the tasks provided. The result implies that though non-native speakers may not have knowledge of the semantic formulae, especially those with little opportunity for interaction (Kasper, 1997), specific speech act instruction can lead non-native speakers to greater pragmatic competence.

Today the interest to second language researchers and classroom teachers is whether and in what formal instruction can promote the development of appropriate use of the target language. Most formal instruction is closely related with the use of textbooks in ESL classrooms, so developing pragmatic awareness should be provided in English teaching materials (Chang, 2000). The result in this study may contribute teachers to understand learners' strategic competence on apology. To help students achieve pragmatic success, teachers need to make students aware of appropriate strategies on apology. Students should be taught an appropriate semantic formulae or speech act in order to understand and produce speech act components on apology in various situations.

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APPENDIX

DCT: Apology

1. Department and grade: 2. Name: 3. Age:
4. Language test score (Type of English test: Score:) 5. Gender (Female, Male)

Write your answers in each situation.

(1) You completely forget an important meeting with your professor. After two hours, you called him to apologize.

_____

(2) When you tried to catch a subway, you accidently bumped into an old lady and caused her to drop her package.

_____

(3) You promised to your neighbor that you would buy some fruits at a grocery story, but you forgot it.

_____

(4) When you entered your house with dirt and mud all over your shoes, your mother just finished vacuuming the floor of your house. She said, “What happened to you?”

_____

(5) You borrowed a laptop computer from your cousin and broke it.

_____

(6) You borrowed a book from your professor and promised to return the book within two days. But you forgot to return it to him.

_____

(7) You played the piano at night for tomorrow's performance. Your neighbor called you and complained as follows. “I couldn't fall asleep.”

_____

(8) You have to get off the bus at the next stop. You're sitting on the window seat and there is a person sitting next to you. You want to get off and say:

_____

(9) You prepared a meal for your family, but the taste of the meal was not so good than you had expected.

_____

(10) You were late for your flight because of heavy traffic in the downtown. Fortunately, you took the flight. You could talk to the flight attendance as follows:

_____

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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