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A Path to Speaking Excellence: Exploring Causes and Effects among Speaking Barriers*

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Past studies conducted on the students' verbal participation both in and out of class have explored and identified variables affecting the process of learning to speak English. However, little is known about the causes and effects of these variables. A survey form developed from a previous study was administered to 468 university students taking English conversation classes from native speakers of English. To better understand the causes and effects of speaking barriers, path analysis was administered as the main tool of investigation. The results of the study indicate that familiarities toward NS (Native Speaker) teachers, learner faithfulness, *che-myon*[1], NS teachers' classroom management skills, and NS teacher's trustworthiness account for 50.72% of speaking grades. These factors are causally related to learner attitudes. However, with regard to speaking grades, all of the above factors except *che-myon* are also causally related with each other. Therefore, it was concluded that learner attitudes can be improved by minimizing *che-myon,* however, *che-myon* itself cannot be a predictor of speaking grades. To validate the findings of the study, related research work is discussed and implications are provided.

[speaking barriers/attitude/speaking ability/path analysis, 영어회화

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1) Literally "face" or "saving face", meaning to maintain honor or appearance

장애요인/태도/말하기능력/경로분석]

I. INTRODUCTION

Improving students' verbal participation in class is the goal of most, if not all, language teachers. Although one should avoid either making the sweeping generalization that talking equals learning (Allwright, 1980), or forcing students to participate when they are not ready (Allwright & Bailey, 1991), one cannot deny that participation is very important in language learning. When students respond to the teachers' or other students' questions, raise queries, and give comments, they are actively involved in the negotiation of comprehensible input and the formation of comprehensible output (Swain, 1985), which are essential to language acquisition. Further, from a pedagogical point of view, contributions from students help to create the content of the lesson (Katz, 1996).

By emphasizing the quantity and quality of talk in class, interactionists propose an idealized language acquisition model, which can be summarized as input, interaction, and output. They hypothesize that when learners are exposed to the idealized environment, the rate of language acquisition will be accelerated. Since the 1980s, the interactionists' model has been well documented, and their claims have been tested and supported by the numerous empirical studies (Ellis, 1994; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long, 1983; Swain, 1985).

Although interactionists offer an idealized language acquisition model, mainly by adopting psycholinguistic analysis, they have failed to explain why their model is not ideal for use with specific groups of learners (Park, 2000). Rather than investigating from the researcher's perspective (top down approach) of the group of learners, there was a strong need to examine participants' perspectives (bottom up approach), description, and the diversity of the language learners (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Qualitative inquiry, specifically ethnography, was thought to be a promising approach in fulfilling the need to explore learner attitudes and behaviors from their own perspectives.

Regarding the reasons why it is difficult for students to speak up in English in and out of class, the results of ethnographic studies indicate that this can be explained by the institutional, linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, and personal

reasons involved in the speaking process (Chen, 2003; Jackson, 2002; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Park, 2004a; Park, 2004b; Song, 1993; Tsui, 1996). The participants of the studies were from East Asian countries – specifically, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

The results of the above-cited studies indicate eight factors voiced by the participants. These are: 1) a school culture where discussion is not common; 2) students' fear of being evaluated by the teacher from the questions raised in class; 3) students' habit of waiting to be singled out; 4) students' uneasiness with correcting the errors of peers with whom they are not familiar; 5) the notion that if a student cannot speak English well, he or she should just remain quiet; 6) influence of the educational system in the home country; 7) negative attitudes toward speaking English; and lastly, 8) peer evaluation (*che-myon*). Among learner identified sociocultural barriers in speaking, factor three and five appeared in more than five of above-mentioned studies. This result indicates that these two factors are quite prevalent among all of East Asian students.

With regard to institutional factors hampering oral interaction in and out of class, 16 factors were identified from the participants of the studies. These are: 1) the topic of discussion; 2) psychological distance from the teacher; 3) unequal turn distribution; 4) teacher characteristics; 5) mood of a class; 6) setting (i.e. teacher fronted vs group activities); 7) wait time; 8) incidence of NS teachers talking too much; 9) little feedback from teachers; 10) NS teachers′ teaching experiences; 11) NS teachers′ intolerance of silence; 12) lack of opportunities for students to talk; 13) large class size; 14) conflicting goals; 15) conversational partners′ unwillingness to talk; and finally, 16) EFL contextual factors. Within these institutional factors of speaking barriers, factor 12 was voiced from four studies.

In relation to psychological reasons, two factors were nominated from the language learners. These are 1) lack of confidence in speaking English and 2) fear of making mistakes. Between these two items, item one frequently appeared from five mentioned studies. Therefore, one can say that East Asian students are not confident in speaking regardless of their origin of nationality.

Regarding linguistic barriers, five factors were reported. These are: 1) translation problems due to the lack of vocabulary; 2) listening difficulties; 3) limited linguistic resources; 4) pronunciation problems; and finally, 5) lack of

basic language skills. Factors two and three frequently appeared from ethnographic studies.

Finally, as to personal reasons for speaking barriers, ten factors emerged. These are: 1) the need to think deeply before talking; 2) an uneasiness expressing an opinion to other people; 3) fear of speaking out in a classroom situation; 4) laziness; 5) reluctance to be the center of attention; 6) lack of aspirations for self-improvement; 7) having a reserved nature; 8) being an active listener; 9) having an outgoing character; and finally, 10) intolerance of ambiguity.

Although these ethnographic studies offer some explanation as to why it is difficult to voluntarily speak up in English in and out of class, the exploration of speaking barriers needs to be further investigated in terms of 1) generalizability of the findings; 2) understanding of the relationships and causalities of learner identified variables; and 3) the need to look at the product as well as the process, and to confirm and understand the unique features of Korean learners exclusively in relation with speaking barriers. It is often pointed out that these learner-identified factors from ethnographic studies are too context dependent and thereby hard to generalize. Also, caution needs to be paid in interpreting the numbers of codings that do not necessarily show importance (Kim, 1998). There is a strong need for testing and verifying the importance of learner voiced speaking barriers.

Based upon the results of the qualitative studies on student verbal participation in class and target language use out of class, it is evident that East Asian students share commonalities in terms of perceiving speaking barriers. Among the studies mentioned above, Park's (2004a) and Park's (2004b) studies are quite distinctive in that they looked at participants' interactional contexts from diverse settings, that is, ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). In addition, these studies exclusively investigated Korean university students. Therefore, survey items employed in the current study were developed using the coding results of Park's (2004b) study.

The purposes of this study are: 1) to better understand the relationships and causes of learner nominated speaking barriers and 2) to develop an interactional barrier model exclusively expounding Korean students' unique characteristics in

interacting with NS teachers in an EFL context. With this framework, this study addresses the following question: What are the relationships and causalities among the speaking barriers identified from the previous studies?

II. METHOD

1. Subjects

The subjects of this study are university students (N=468). 267 (57%) students are female whereas 201 (43%) are male. The range of students' ages is diverse — from 18 to 35. Regarding the number of students taking native speaking teachers' classes, 232 (51%) of students have taken them for the first time. Others have taken them for the second (N=89, 20%), third (N=46, 9%), and fourth time (N=89, 20%) respectively. As to the experience of studying English abroad, 430 students (93%) have not been exposed to English in foreign countries. Only seven percent of the students (N=33) reported the experience of studying English abroad. Regarding time investment in studying English out of class, 95 percent of the students (N=397) studied English either one or two hours a day. On the contrary, only five percent of the students (N=23) studied English either three or four hours a day. Surprisingly, ten percent of the students (N=48) reported that they never study English out of class. Table 1 summarizes the subjects' majors.

TABLE 1
The Subjects' Majors

Majors	Numbers	Percent
Computer science	114	23
English	86	18
Business administration	80	16
Social welfare	53	11
Language related area	43	9
Law	30	6
Education	30	6
Theology	28	6
Accounting	11	2
Music	9	2
Etc.	4	1
Total	488	1.00

As shown in Table 1, subjects' majors vary from computer science to music, but are mostly within the humanities. Finally, subjects′ speaking abilities were measured by their grades in speaking class. They were divided from highest (A+) to the lowest (F) ranging from 1 to 9. The lowest numbers indicated better grades in speaking English. Among 468 students, 173 (37%) students were from grade 1 which is A+. The others were from grade 2 (N=91, 19%), grade 3 (N=163, 35%), and grade 4 (N=41, 9%) respectively. Students from grades 5 to 9 did not participate in this study.

2. Procedure

Because the researcher was a colleague of ten native speaking teachers in a university, gaining access to them was unproblematic. In informal meetings with the teachers, the researcher expounded the purposes and procedures of the study and obtained their permission. Among 25 English conversation classes, ten classes were randomly selected where the class sizes were 50 to 60. Before the survey was administered in class, the researcher also explained the purposes of administering survey to the students and received their permission. The

students were told that they were invited to participate in the survey, but those who did not wish to were free to leave the class, since the questionnaires were distributed near the end of the class. Although all of the volunteering students answered the questionnaires, the questionnaires that entailed partial or inaccurate information (N=20) were removed from the analysis. Overall, surveys from 468 students were the primary data for analysis of this study. The questionnaire was administered to the subjects in July 2005.

3. Instrumentation

By using qualitative inquiry as a main tool of analysis, Park (2004a) identified sociocultural, institutional, psychological, and linguistic factors as hampering their current learning processes as well as product. Among these factors, teacher characteristics and *che-myon* were extended to their current learning situation, and had a negative impact on their interactional processes in class. Under the major four domains, 27 interactional barriers are identified from the participants' perspectives. The survey items in this study were developed from Park's (2004a) study. The participants of the study responded based on five point likert scales. Compared to the previous survey studies in EFL, what makes this approach unique is it really reflects participants' perspectives rather than researchers' or teachers'.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To answer the research question of this study, factor analysis, validity testing, correlation, and path analysis were conducted. These will be reported in turn. Table 2 reports the correlations among survey items.

TABLE 2
Correlations among Items

	1	2	3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	5	6	7	8
1	1										
2	.15	1									
3	.26	.47	1								
4.1	.15	.23	.27	1							
4.2	.13	.15	.26	.41	1						
4.3	.21	.13	.20	.30	.35	1					
4.4	.27	.40	.44	.24	.18	.36	1				
5	.30	.27	.34	.15	.03	.24	.55	1			
6	.32	.22	.36	.18	.17	.25	.37	.51	1		
7	.34	.14	.22	.09	.11	.33	.30	.37	.43	1	
8	.05	.10	.14	-.06	.01	.15	.17	.10	.07	.08	1

	9	10	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9	1										
10	.36	1									
12	.25	-.01	1								
13	.38	.16	.43	1							
14	.32	.25	.09	.27	1						
15	.13	-.10	.09	.03	.02	1					
16	.24	.18	.26	.19	.16	.06	1				
17	.44	.37	.11	.23	.40	.06	.13	1			
18	.27	.25	.07	.21	.02	.26	-.01	.15	1		
19	.32	.19	.11	.29	.14	.21	.09	.20	.52	1	
20	.29	.07	.29	.15	.19	.04	.18	.18	-.01	.01	1

Table 3 reports means and standard deviations of survey items.

TABLE 3
Item Means and Standard Deviations

	Item	M	SD
1	An interesting topic always draws my attention.	4.21	.713
2	If I am attentive in class, I always talk.	2.79	.933
3	I usually talk if a teacher calls on me.	3.09	.897
4.-1	My English conversation teacher is always punctual.	3.15	.917
4-2	My English conversation teacher always takes attendance at the beginning of the class.	3.28	.981
4-3	If an English conversation teacher is faithful (as in 4.1. and 4.2.),I usually rely on and trust her or him.	3.90	.861
4-4	If I trust the teacher, I usually talk more.	3.39	.880
5	The more I get together with a native speaking teacher out of class, I usually talk more in class.	3.50	.962
6	I would be more than willing to see my English conversation teacher out of class at least once a week.	3.67	.922
7	I feel close to my English conversation teacher if he/she is willing to learn Korean.	4.13	.728
8	My English conversation teacher always offers equal opportunities of turn taking to almost all of the students in class.	3.39	.863
9	I always talk in a class where the class size is 60!	2.42	.877
10	I can easily make friends with others in a university.	2.68	.967
11	I can keep up with the speed of my English conversation teacher's speaking.	3.15	.868
12	I think my pronunciation is clear enough to have other people understand.	2.68	.853
13	I think my classmates will welcome my voluntary speaking in class.	2.42	.770
14	If I do not talk in class, I will eventually save face.	2.86	.865
15	If I feel close to my English conversation teacher, I usually talk.	3.75	.817
16	I always talk even if the mood of the class is blue.	2.38	.849
17	I am always worried how other people might think about my speaking English.	2.73	.872
18	I am always worried about my making mistakes in English.	2.52	.954
19	My English teacher always deals with the topics that are very practical to our daily lives.	3.28	.795
20	In learning to speak English, I meticulously plan and invest time on it.	2.43	.775

To verify the validity of the items and confirm common factors, factor analysis was conducted. The purpose of conducting factor analysis was to confirm unobserved factors based on the observed variables. The results of the factor analysis were yielded using the Verimax rotation method, in which the criteria of more than ±.30 for factor loading were adopted.

TABLE 4
Factor Loadings of Each Item

Items	Factors				
	FTNST	LF	*Che-Myon*	NSTCMS	NSTT
x15	**.740**	.165	.040	.057	.059
x5	**.738**	.244	-.058	.082	-.056
x6	**.684**	.086	-.010	.139	.131
x7	**.671**	-.107	-.072	.071	.096
x4-4	**.589**	.277	.017	.298	.190
x1	**.588**	-.084	.136	-.009	.096
x3	**.438**	.261	.357	.311	.234
x16	.097	**.725**	.092	.044	-.047
x13	.073	**.711**	-.096	.087	.075
x10	.089	**.577**	.258	-.199	.012
x9	.183	**.572**	.325	.304	.097
x20	-.095	**.518**	-.015	.282	.188
x2	.294	**.457**	.154	.201	.125
x17	-.065	.093	**.812**	.006	-.037
x18	-.017	.240	**.729**	.094	-.042
x14	-.096	.035	**.547**	.058	-.063
x11	.264	-.023	.222	**.656**	.178
x19	.172	.182	-.066	**.655**	-.011
x8	.056	.065	-.068	**.652**	-.116
x12	.040	.318	.351	**.392**	.224
x4-2	.083	.047	.076	-.022	**.785**
x4-1	.112	.254	.062	-.072	**.740**
x4-3	.301	-.034	-.112	.168	**.610**
Variance %	14.322	11.685	8.698	8.263	7.756
Accumulation%	14.322	26.007	34.705	42.968	50.724

Note. FTNST: Familiarities toward NS teachers
LF: Learner faithfulness
NSTCMS: NS teachers' classroom management skills
NSTT: NS teacher's trustworthiness

Table 4 reports the results of factor analysis on the twenty-three items. Five factors were derived, and they were combined according to the consistency of the concept that the researcher was asking about. Factor loading values of five factors were above ±3, indicating that these five factors were appropriate and valid in explaining English speaking grades. Regarding accountability of the factors, FTNST (Familiarities toward NS teachers) explains 14.32% of speaking grades, and LF (Learner faithfulness), 11.68%, *che-myon*, 8.69%, NSTCMS (NS teachers' classroom management skills), 8.26%, and NSTT (NS teacher's trustworthiness), 7.75%. Overall, these five factors identified from the survey explain 50.72% of speaking grades.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to check the validity of survey items, determining whether they were composed of homogeneous items, which reflect internal consistency. As indicated in Table 5, the mean score of reliability coefficient on speaking grades among survey items was .830.

TABLE 5
The Results of Reliability Testing among Factors

	Factors	Numbers of items	Cronbach alpha
Speaking Grades	FTNST	7	.808
	LF	6	.724
	Che-Myon	3	.790
	NSTCMS	4	.768
	NSTT	3	.616
	Total	23	.830

FTNST (Familiarities toward NS Teachers) is related to the following items:

15. If I feel close to my English conversation teacher, I usually talk.
5. The more I get together with a native speaking teacher out of class, the more I talk in class.
6. I will be more than willing to see my English conversation teacher out of class at least once a week.
7. I feel close to my English conversation teacher if he/she is willing to learn Korean.

1. An interesting topic always draws my attention.
4-4. If I trust a teacher, I usually talk more.
3. I usually talk if a teacher calls on me.

LF (Learner Faithfulness) is related to the following items:

16. I always talk even if the mood of the class is blue.
13. I think my classmates will welcome my voluntary speaking in class.
10. I can easily make friends with others in a university.
9. I always talk in a class where the class size is 60!
20. In learning to speak English, I meticulously plan and invest time on it.
2. If I am attentive in class, I always talk.

Che-Myon is related to the following items:

17. I am always worried how other people might think about my speaking English.
18. I am always worried about my making mistakes in English.
14. If I do not talk in class, I will eventually save face.

NSTCMS (NS teachers' classroom management skills) is related to the following items:

19. My English teacher always deals with the topics that are very practical to our daily lives.
11. I can catch up with the speed of my English conversation teacher's speaking.
8. My English conversation teacher always offers equal opportunities of turn taking to almost all of the students in class.
12. I think my pronunciation is clear enough to have other people understand.

Finally, NSTT (NS teacher's trustworthiness) is related to the following items:

4-1. My English conversation teacher is always punctual.
4-2. My English conversation teacher always takes attendance at the beginning of the class.
4-3. If an English conversation teacher is faithful (as in 4.1. and 4.2.) I usually rely on and trust her or him.

Table 6 summarizes the relationships among five factors (independent variables of the study) and speaking attitudes and grades (dependent variables of the study). Learners' attitudes toward speaking were measured from the survey item asking, 'If I speak English voluntarily in class, I believe my speaking grades will be improved dramatically.' The subjects' speaking abilities were measured by their grades from speaking classes. Table 6 reports the results of analysis on correlations among speaking barriers, attitudes, and speaking grades.

TABLE 7
Correlations among factors, attitudes, and speaking grades

	SA	SG	FTNST	LF	*Che-Myon*	NSCMS	NSTT
SA	1	.181***	.396***	.585***	.274***	.370***	.332***
SG	.181***	1	.202***	-.009	.002	.180***	.197***
FTNST	.396***	.202***	1	.386***	-.004	.416***	.597***
LF	.585***	-.009	.386***	1	.242***	.395***	.296***
Che-Myon	.274***	.002	-.004	.242***	1	.138***	-.025
NSCMS	.370***	.180***	.416***	.395**	.138***	1	.329***
NSTT	.332***	.197***	.597***	.296***	-.025	.329***	1

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001
Note. SA : speaking attitudes
SG : speaking grades
FTNST: Familiarities toward NS teachers
LF: Learner faithfulness
NSTCMS: NS teachers' classroom management skills
NSTT: NS teacher's trustworthiness

According to Table 6, speaking grades have a positive correlation with

attitudes (.181), which means that the more one has positive attitudes on speaking English, the more one's grade will improve. Attitudes toward speaking English show the highest correlation with learner faithfulness (.585). Speaking grades have the highest correlation with familiarities toward NS teachers(.202). Familiarities toward NS teachers show the strongest correlation with NS teacher's trustworthiness (.597). *Che-Myon* shows the highest correlation with speaking attitudes (.274). NS teachers' classroom management skills are highly related with familiarities toward NS teachers (.416). NS teacher's trustworthiness is strongly related with familiarities toward NS teachers (.597%).

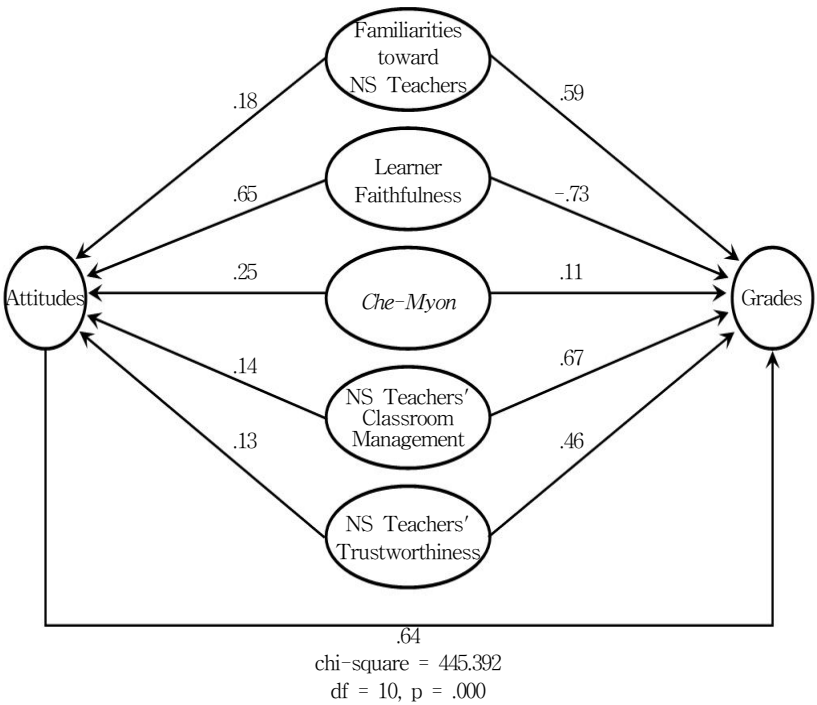
Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the appropriateness of the model by using Amos version 4.0 (Arbuckle, 1997). Table 7 reports the results of confirmatory factor analysis of the model. According to the Table, it was indicated that χ^2=458.14, df=11, p=.000, RMR (Root Mean Square Residual)=0.031, GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)=.921, AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)=.902, and NFI (Normed Fit Index)=.932. Therefore, it was concluded that the appropriateness of the model established from the research hypothesis was acceptable.

TABLE 7
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Model

	χ^2	Q Value	RMR	NFI	GFI	TLI
Confirmatory factor analysis of the model	458.14	2.52	0.031	0.932	0.954	0.91

FIGURE 1 depicts simplified diagram of the result of structural equation modeling and Table 8 demonstrates the statistical significance of path coefficient of the model.

FIGURE 1
Simplified Diagram of the Result of Structural Equation Modeling



chi-square = 445.392
df = 10, p = .000

TABLE 8
Statistical Significance of the Path Coefficient of the Model

Variables	Direction	Factors	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SA	<--	FTNST	0.178	0.052	3.435***	0.001
SA	<--	LF	0.647	0.054	11.93***	0
SA	<--	*Che-Myon*	0.246	0.056	4.416***	0
SA	<--	NSTCMS	0.136	0.054	2.542*	0.011
SA	<--	NSTT	0.128	0.046	2.785**	0.005
SG	<--	FTNST	0.586	0.197	2.98**	0.003
SG	<--	LF	-0.732	0.207	-3.54***	0
SG	<--	*Che-Myon*	0.114	0.213	0.536	0.592
SG	<--	NSTCMS	0.666	0.204	3.261***	0.001
SG	<--	NSTT	0.455	0.175	2.595**	0.009
SG	<--	SA	0.643	0.178	3.610***	0.000

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Note. SA : speaking attitudes
SG : speaking grades
FTNST: Familiarities toward NS teachers
LF: Learner faithfulness
NSTCMS: NS teachers' classroom management skills
NSTT: NS teacher's trustworthiness

By using Maximum Likelihood, the statistical significance of hypothetical paths was tested. The discussion will focus on the relationships among independent variables and speaking attitudes and grades separately. According to Table 8, in explaining the cause of attitudes toward speaking English, all of the independent variables of this study (familiarities toward NS teachers, learner faithfulness, *che-myon*, NS teachers' classroom management skills, and NS teacher's trustworthiness) show statistically significant results at p<.05, p<.01, or p<.001 level. Therefore, one can say that students who feel closer to NS teachers, are faithful in learning to speak English, and are sensitive to *che-myon*, show positive attitudes in learning to speak English from NS teachers. In addition, NS teachers' classroom management skills and learners' trust toward them also significantly contribute in increasing positive learner attitudes towards learning to speak.

Contrary to the fact that all of independent variables strongly affect speaking attitudes, the results indicate that *che-myon* does not necessarily affect speaking grades.

However, the other independent variables of the study, familiarities toward NS teachers, learner faithfulness, NS teachers' classroom management skills, and NS teacher's trustworthiness show statistically significant results at $p<.01$ or $p<.001$ level. Among the five factors, learner faithfulness shows statistical significance with negative direction. This indicates that learner faithfulness affects speaking grades more strongly than any other factors, directly or indirectly. In contrast, all of other factors show statistically significant results, and their direction is positive. Therefore, these findings suggest that students who feel closer to NS teachers and are faithful in learning to speak English demonstrate good grades in learning to speaking English. Moreover, if a NS teacher is skilled at handling Korean students' interactional processes in a classroom context and builds a sense of trust among students, students' grades in speaking will be improved. Interestingly, *che-myon* does not affect speaking grades although it directly affects learner attitudes. Finally, concerning the effect of attitudes on speaking grades, it is concluded that the more positive a student's attitude is towards speaking English, the higher the grade he or she is likely to achieve.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to better understand the casual relationships among learner identified speaking barriers, speaking attitudes, and speaking grades. The analysis of the structural equation model indicates that familiarities toward NS teachers, learner faithfulness, *che-myon*, NS teachers' classroom management skills, and NS teacher's trustworthiness are causally related with learner attitudes. However, when correlated with the speaking grades, all of the above factors are causally related to one another, except *che-myon*. Therefore, it is concluded that *che-myon* can be a causal factor in learner attitudes, but it does not directly explain speaking grades.

Two limitations of this study should be pointed out. First, as Park (2006) also

noted in her study, the number of questions representing each factor (ie. FTNST, LF, etc.) in the survey is not equally distributed. Second, the operational definition of *che-myon* needs to be clarified and elaborated in relation to the studies focusing on the attitudes and achievement in speaking English. With these limitations in mind, the results of this study will be discussed in the broader context of related literature.

In explaining language-learning success in general, some researchers offer diverse views, which can be summarized as cognitive, psychological, linguistic, and sociocultural perspectives. Firth and Wagner (1997) claimed that language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, or the product of an individual's brain; it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively in a variety of contexts and for myriad purposes. Firth and Wagner (1997) proposed a reconceptualization of SLA research that would enlarge the ontological and empirical parameters of the field. They claim that methodologies, theories, and foci within SLA reflect an imbalance between cognitive and mentalistic orientations, and social and contextual orientations to language, the former orientation being unquestionably in the ascendancy (p. 285). The results of this study provide empirical evidence for Firth and Wagner's claim from the respondents' perspectives on why and how learners' social and contextual factors affect their current language learning. In addition, according to the respondents, these social and contextual factors play key roles in deciding their success in learning to speak English.

In her examination of the impact of anxiety on speaking performance, Park (1998) investigated the direction and magnitude of the relation between anxiety and motivation on class performance. The results of Park's study (1998) indicate that the effects of motivation on oral performance are supported, while those of anxiety on oral performance have limited evidence. The current study supports Park's (1998) study in that *che-myon* in the current study does not affect speaking grades. However, other studies report contradicting results (Lee & Oh, 2000; Park, 2006). Lee & Oh (2000) investigate correlation between Korean middle and high school students' English learning attitudes and achievement and report that one of the strongest attitudes affecting English ability is anxiety, followed by the attitudes toward learning English and interest in foreign languages.

Park (2006) examines the effects of Korean EFL learners' (N=193, university students) motivation and anxiety on their English speaking skills with a structural equation approach. She concludes that both integrative orientation and anxiety have direct effects on English speaking skills, affecting integrative orientation affirmatively but anxiety negatively. Although the direction of the effect of anxiety on the intensity of motivation is negative, she claims that anxiety is the most significant factor among other variables explaining speaking abilities. On the contrary, Park (2006) reported that in spite of the participants' (N=85, middle school students) high instrumental motivation, they rather show a negative attitude toward English learning. She concludes that affective variables involved in second language learning in one context can be different from those in other contexts, and attention teachers have to pay among affective factors should also be different accordingly. Park (2006) finally proposes that research based on ethnographical characteristics is inevitable and findings from such research will only meet pedagogical and practical demands.

Focusing on the learners' diverse contexts, Park (2004a) summarizes learner identified speaking barriers and reports teacher characteristics and *che-myon* as the most influential variables obtained from a two-year ethnographic study (N=219, university students). Although *che-myon* frequently appeared in Park's (2004a) study, there was no way of verifying its importance simply by looking at the frequency of the codings. The current study confirms the finding that *che-myon* surely affects learner attitudes but not speaking grades. The results of the analysis of the quantitative study confirm the importance of sociocultural barriers, especially *che-myon*. However, the current study also shatters the common belief that frequency from qualitative data does not necessarily indicate the rank of importance, as Kim (1998) pointed out. The results of the analysis of structural equation modeling extend the level of understanding among sociocultural barriers, attitudes, and grades in speaking. This study verifies Park's (2004a) ethnographic study in that it accepts the importance of *che-myon* but also rejects its impact on speaking grades.

One term that needs to be clarified is the operational definition of *che-myon* and anxiety. Lim and Choi (1996) argue that the Korean concept of face is different from its Western counterpart: *Che-Myon* is a double-faced concept. On the one hand, it is the image of personal self that is claimed and negotiated

through social interactions. On the other hand, it is the image of sociological self that is defined by society and must be protected by passing the normative standards of positiveness of relevant social values (p.124).

Although *che-myon* shares many commonalties with its Western counterpart of 'face' (cited Goffman's (1967) term), the difference is in emphasizing not the image of personal or psychological self, but sociological self (Choi & Choi, 1991). This line of thinking might support a claim made by Bulam, (a participant interviewed in Park's (1998) study) that 'we [Korean people in general] identify ourselves within a group'. The informant assumed that his fellow Koreans expected him to possess a good command of English. If not, he might have failed to meet the group's norm regarding his speaking English, and loose his *che-myon*. The slang version of *che-myon*, *jok-pal-li-da*, was widely used among Koreans from informal conversations with the researcher.

In the same context, the researcher proposes that *che-myon* and anxiety do share commonalities but also differences, depending on whether its focus originates from the individual or the group. Further investigation is needed to clarify the operational definition of these two concepts. If they are indeed different, reconceptualization of anxiety is essential to eventually reveal the idiosyncrasies of Korean language learners. This would enable teachers and researchers to gain insights in developing teaching techniques enhancing Korean learners' attitudes towards speaking English.

Among learner identified sociocultural variables, familiarities toward NS teachers and NS teacher's trustworthiness deal with human relationships among NS teachers and Korean students. Compared with ESL, in EFL contexts, perhaps this is the place where diverse cultures are encountered and negotiated. If so, then it is no wonder that lack of intercultural awareness might endanger speaking processes as well as outcomes. From the study, it is determined that students' expectations toward NS teachers are not culturally specific, but based on the same common sense and beliefs they held toward Korean teachers. For example, survey item 4-1, asking: 'My English conversation teacher always takes the register in the beginning of the class' shows a relatively higher mean score (3.28). This perception is related with establishing trust toward NS teachers, indicating a higher mean score (3.90).

Another issue that needs to be addressed is NS teachers' social interactions

with the students out of class. Not only NS teachers, but also Korean teachers who interact with Korean students in and out of class might eventually enhance students' level of interaction in class. In sum, these two sociocultural factors which affect learners' speaking grades point to a significant element often taken for granted: the importance of having frequent interaction with students outside of as well as in class. In theory, this method has been well agreed upon. However, in reality, such agreement is often ignored and rarely practiced.

As long as a NS teacher does his or her job properly, cultural conflicts may become a secondary issue. Raising intercultural awareness is helpful, but without establishing solid human relationships and trust between teacher and students, the teaching and learning of speaking skills may cause more problems than solutions for both sides.

Loughrin-Sacco (1990) proposed parameters affecting language learning that have not attained mainstream status in classroom research. These parameters include the study of institutional and social contexts and how they affect that learning. Based upon the empirical evidence, Loughrin-Sacco concludes that institutional and social contexts, taken together, impacted learning far more than the choice of teaching methods, materials, and techniques. The results of this study also support Loughrin-Sacco's claim.

Having frequent social interactions with the students sounds like a reasonable idea, but in reality, more consideration and caution is needed. In Park's study (2004a), Patrick, a NS teacher, offered his 550 students taking his course a chance to get together out of class on a weekly basis. From the first meeting to the end, only one student took part in the teacher-prepared program. It is clear that not all of the students want to meet their NS teachers out of class. For example, Sookhee (from Park's (2004a) study) began with high speaking grades but ended with a dramatic decrease. She expressed overheated antagonism with Patrick's teaching methods and his socializing with the students. As the verbal data indicate, what Sookhee needed was the balance between humanistic and cognitive ways of learning to speak English not exclusively those of the humanistic approach as her teacher believed. Obviously, Patrick failed to meet Sookhee's expectations, which resulted in teaching and learning failure. Rather than as a separate entity, therefore, sociocultural factors should be viewed as a result of interplay among numerous factors (Nam, 2005).

It is the teacher's responsibility to decide when, why, and how to teach. Further research on socialization with students might offer valuable educational insights into the NS teachers' decision-making processes.

NS teachers' socialization processes cannot be fully understood without considering the institutional contexts that NS teachers are exposed to. Like Patrick's case in Park's study (2004a), it is quite often the case where NS teachers have almost sixty students in a class and they are responsible for teaching ten or more classes per semester. This surely is a situation that cannot be easily resolved in a single day, nor can a single teacher's or specific groups of students' passion easily change it.

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예시 언어(Examples in): English
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