A Discussion of Korean Students’ Perception and Attitudes towards Grammatical Errors in English*

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This paper discusses the results of two questionnaire surveys which are designed to find out how Korean college students perceive some problematic English sentences and how their imperfect knowledge of English grammar affects their attitudes towards speaking English. The major purposes of the paper are: first, to analyze what erroneous sentences they find either correct or incorrect; second, to find out how much they can be lenient with problematic English sentences by analyzing what sentences they think are fine to understand and would use; third, to investigate how their lack of proper knowledge of English grammar affects their attitudes in using and learning English; and fourth, to discuss importance of grammar teaching in an EFL classroom. In line with recent studies on World Englishes, this research adheres to the idea that it is significant to give students opportunities to use the language without fear of making grammatical mistakes rather than emphasizing Standard English and the correct language. However, the results of the surveys show that the lower the level of their English proficiency, the more they want to speak grammatically correct English, and the lesser they show leniency towards deviant English structures.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is becoming an ever more powerful language in Korean society. Even though English is not yet an official language and still used as a foreign language throughout the nation, the situation is changing in many sectors of Korean society. For example, many major universities offer a number of courses in English. In those English-mediated-classes,

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there are some foreign students who study either on their own expenses or as exchange students. In addition, the number of Korean students who have lived abroad and return to study in their own country is also increasing. And it is expected that great numbers of Korean students who had left for English speaking countries to learn English when they were in elementary school or junior high school are returning to Korea to enter major Korean universities. Among many sectors of the Korean society, universities and colleges are at the forefront in globalization and internationalization.

In addition to Arirang TV, an English television channel which started broadcasting in 1997, TBS (Seoul Traffic Broadcasting) Radio added its English channel, e-FM, starting on December 1, 2008 for those expatriates and Koreans who want to learn English and/or enjoy the English language radio services in the regions of Seoul and Kwangju. There are three major vernacular daily English language newspapers, the Korea Times, the Korea Herald, and the JoongAng Daily besides various weekly and monthly English magazines published in Korea. Media-wise, Korea is not behind those ESL countries as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, etc. A lot of perfect and semi-bilingual Koreans return to their homeland to work as reporters, broadcasters, announcers, or program producers.

Yet, many Koreans, especially college and university students and graduates are still struggling with their ‘broken’ English. They have to communicate in English with their teachers, classmates, business partners, customers, and employers in various sectors of the society. While being afraid of making errors and concerned with being correct, they are reluctant to communicate in English, which unfortunately prevents them from using and practicing the language. The lower the level of their English proficiency, the more Korean college students are obsessed with using standard American English or British English and refrain themselves from using the language freely in this period of internationalization (Kyunghee Choi, 2007b).

Recently, those researchers studying World Englishes have discussed the concept of local varieties of Englishes (Kachru, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2002). In the field of World Englishes, some features of English spoken by local people that can be considered evidences of interlanguage or errors from the nonnative point of view are regarded as characteristics of a local variety of English (Alsagoff & Lick, 1998; Bao, 2003; Bautista, 2004; Bolton, 2000; Dayag, 2003; Ho & Wong, 2001; McArthur, 2003; Tayao, 2004). From the perspective of World Englishes the researchers have argued that, instead of insisting on the correct English or Standard English, it is more educational and helpful to give students more opportunities to speak and use the language. Forcing our students to learn and acquire Standard English spoken by native speakers, which our students may never be able to attain but rather makes them feel frustrated by being far from the standard, it is more practical and efficient for them to learn how to use the language (Kyunghee Choi, 2007b; Honna & Takeshita, 2000). We as English instructors need to teach our students...
‘understandable’ English for them to be better understood by their interlocutors and to better understand others so that they can communicate more efficiently. To teach and learn ‘understandable’ English, both teachers and students need to understand the concept of World Englishes and accept differences among various varieties of Englishes practiced around the world.

Even if some unique features are considered ‘errors’ and ‘incorrect,’ do all of them seriously hinder communication and lead to miscommunication? Don’t native speakers speak and write incorrect English? To find out how Korean students perceive some erroneous sentences, a grammaticality judgment test with 24 problematic sentences is conducted. It is intended to analyze whether the participants correctly recognize the sentences as incorrect, or erroneously perceive them correct, or consider them fine to understand and are willing to use them, which may indicate the degree of their leniency towards incorrect sentences. The second questionnaire conducted, on the other hand, asks how the respondents think about the way their knowledge of English grammar affects their English speaking attitudes. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1) How do the Korean students perceive the problematic sentences?
2) What is the relationship between their perception of the problematic sentences and their willingness to use them?
3) How does their imperfect knowledge of English grammar affect their attitudes in speaking English?
4) What differences do different English proficiency levels bring out in the results of the above questions?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Local varieties of English influenced by local languages and cultures have been studied by many researchers around the world (Alsagoff & Lick, 1998; Bao, 2003; Bao & Wee, 1999; Bautista, 2004; Benson, 2000; Bolton, 2000; Bolton & Bautista, 2004; Bolton & Butler, 2004; Gupta, 1991, 1994; Hung, 2000; Kachru, 1992; Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2002; McArthur, 2003, 2004; Peng & Ann, 2004; Tayao, 2004; Wee, 2003, 2004; Yang, 2005; Zhang, 2002). To introduce some examples of the studies of local varieties of English, Hung (2000) investigates the phonological system of Hong Kong English regardless of the fact that Hong Kong English has gained the status as a variety of English. Hung (2000) attests in his paper that he does not care whether there is a variety called Hong Kong English. However, he claims that there exists a system of identifiable Hong Kong accent. He argues that whether Hong Kong English is an interlanguage or a new
variety of English is not important. What matters is that native Hong Kong English speakers speak with an identifiable accent and it means that there is a common underlying phonological system.

Besides phonological systems, studies on grammatical structures of Hong Kong English have been conducted by many researchers including Gisborne (2000) and Lee (2001). Gisborne (2000) argues that the relative clause construction of Hong Kong English, influenced by Cantonese, is unique and independent of the relative clause systems of both standard native varieties of English and Cantonese. Lee (2001) pays attention to the divided usage of ‘need’ and suggests that it is used both as a lexical variant and as an auxiliary variant in both Hong Kong English and Australian English. However, the stylistic difference between the auxiliary and lexical ‘need’ is blurred in Hong Kong English. Lee and Collins (2004) further investigate that the lexical and auxiliary variants of ‘have,’ ‘dare,’ ‘need,’ ‘ought,’ and ‘used to’ are used among students and teachers in Hong Kong and Australia. While Australian English favors the lexical variant, Hong Kong English favors auxiliary variants. The researchers conclude that people in Australia, especially the younger generation favor American English and Hong Kongers are still in favor of British English while Hong Kong students show a tendency to favor American English more than their teachers.

Bao and Wee (1999), in the field of studying Singapore English, investigate the unique passive constructions influenced by the local languages of Malay and Chinese. They analyze that the kena passive structure derived from the substrate language of Malay has won over the give passive of Chinese and has been widely used by Singaporean people. In addition, the exonormative form of Standard English has mitigated the influences of substrate languages. Alsagoff and Lick (1998) study the combination of the substratal influence of Chinese and the superstratal norms in the uses of relative clauses and the relative pronoun one in colloquial Singapore English. Ho and Wong (2001) also claim that both the substratal and superstratal interplay in the uses of ever giving rise to its unique usage in colloquial Singapore English.

Kirkpatrick and Zhichang (2002) argue that the traits of China English\(^1\) influenced by the Chinese language should not be considered as ‘deviations’ but rather they are culturally more appropriate than the characteristics influenced by any Anglo varieties of English. They attest that those unique characteristics in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar of China English are more useful for the people of China since it is more likely that they use the local variety of English with English speakers in the Asian region than inner circle

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\(^1\) According to Yun and Jia (2003), the term “China English” was first proposed by Professor Ge Chuangui (1983) in 1980 who suggested that China English deriving from Chinese English is a variety of English with Chinese characteristics and culture.
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speakers. Kirkpatrick and Zhichang (2002) further suggest the model of China English as the one that should be taught in the classroom.

Bautista (2004) analyzes verb forms in Philippine English, focusing on the modal would. He examines the results of a 20-item Grammaticality Judgment Test conducted for 205 Filipino university students. The test included items related to tense harmony, verb forms, tenses, and modal auxiliaries. According to Bautista, the students did fairly well on all the items, except modal auxiliaries. Both the high and low proficiency levels had difficulties in recognizing the non-standard uses of the modal would. Bautista argues that, since such inadequate uses are found in local English newspapers and journals, it might be the convergence of imperfect learning of the modal and the tendency found in a second language variety of English to simplify complex nature of normative forms.

Lowenberg (1999) argues that the major prestigious English language newspapers published in Malaysia borrow some lexical items and phrases from Malay to fill lexical gaps and to neutralize national and ethnic identities. He adds that paying attention to these local features will help researchers better understand the basic dynamics of language spread, variation, and change not only in Malaysian English but also in other varieties of English. Gonzalez (2004), on the other hand, warns against such language changes and diversification. According to him, the process of diversification may result in rises of New Englishes that may not be mutually intelligible. Thus, as a countervailing force, mass media and governments may try to impose a unified and standardized variety for mutual intelligibility among its users. McArthur (2004) praises such an effort when he discusses Singaporeans’ effort to eradicate their ‘bad’ English grammar. He argues that “such a development may be more a consequence of, rather than a prerequisite for, Singapore’s success in using English” (p. 15). McArthur (2004) concludes that, even though governments tend to deplore high and low dichotomies in the uses of English, such a division is inevitable and will never disappear.

According to Pazaver and Wang (2009), Asian college students want to improve their grammatical knowledge and to narrow such a gap caused by the dichotomy. Even though the degree of their perceptions of the necessity of form-focused instruction varied widely based on their educational backgrounds, language learning experiences, language proficiencies, academic needs, and future career choices, most of the students in their study expressed that grammar is important in learning a language and teachers should teach grammar (Pazaver & Wang, 2009). Whether to teach grammar or not has long been a controversial issue in the field of second language teaching and learning (Ellis, 2006). After decades of debates on this issue, Ellis (2006) firmly suggests that “there is ample evidence that teaching grammar works” (p. 102), adding that the traditional way of teaching based on explicit grammar explanation may not result in the acquisition of implicit grammar, and thus suggesting to work on methods of grammar teaching that can
replace the old ways.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Participants

A total of 69 Korean students participated in the study. All of the 69 female students were enrolled in a college in Seoul, majoring in tourism at the time of the surveys being conducted. The first questionnaire (Appendix 1) was used to divide the group into two small groups: high and low. The number of incorrect answers by marking the incorrect sentences as correct was counted as a criterion to divide the low and the high. The questionnaire has 24 ill-structured sentences. The 37 participants who marked more than 7 incorrect sentences as correct was put in the Low Group while the 32 who marked fewer than 7 incorrect sentences as correct was categorized as the High Group. The high group participants marked more than 17 sentences either as incorrect or fine to understand out of the 24 problematic sentences.

2. Questionnaires

In the study, two different questionnaires are used. The first questionnaire (Appendix 1) contains 24 inadequate English sentences often used in spoken English, each of which has three multiple choices that are ‘incorrect’ (hard to understand), ‘fine’ (not quite correct but understandable) and ‘correct.’ Each sentence also has two additional choices ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to indicate whether the participants would use it. The second questionnaire (Appendix 2) asks the respondent’s thoughts about the influence of their erroneous knowledge of English grammar on their attitudes towards English speaking practices and abilities. The reliability coefficient of the first questionnaire measured by internal consistency methods is .776 (Cronbach’s Alpha). The second questionnaire’s reliability coefficient is .962 (Cronbach’s Alpha). Therefore, both questionnaires can be considered reliable.

All of the 24 inadequate sentences in the first questionnaire are somewhat deviant from a ‘Standard Variety’ of Anglo English. These problematic structures are selected based on their frequent usage often found in the spoken varieties of East Asia Englishes including Hong Kong English, Singapore English, China English, Philippine English, and Korea English (Dayag, 2003; Kang-Young Lee, 2007; Kyunghee Choi, 2007a; Kyung-Ja Park, 2005; Kyung-Ja Park, Hikyung Lee, & Yongkyun Ju, 2003; Yun & Jia, 2003; Xi, 2000). In Sentence (1) “Today was very difficult but exciting” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007; Kyung-Ja Park, 2005) where a dummy subject should be used, a special subject ‘Today’ is used. This
kind of sentence is often used both in Korea English and China English (Yun & Jia, 2003). Sentence (2) “Thanksgiving always is celebrated in November” (Kyung-Ja Park, 2005) is an example of a wrong word order. In Sentence (3) “No wonder you can’t sleep when you have coffee too much,” “so much” has to be used instead of “too much.”

Sentence (4) “know how to go” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007) shows an example of a subject deletion. In China English, similar examples can be seen. Xi (2000) illustrates that null-subject utterance is a feature of China English. For example, “Sometimes _____ just play basketball, and sometimes _____ go to the Beijing library.” Sentence (5) “In Korea have four season” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007) is another example of a null-subject sentence and missing of a plural “s” in the word “season.” The sentence should be “In Korea, there are four seasons,” or “Korea has four seasons,” or “There are four seasons in Korea.” Sentence (6) “I thanked for” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007) is an example of an object deletion. Xi (2000) also indicates that null-object sentences are quite often observed in the utterances spoken by Chinese people.

The sentences (7), (8), and (9) are examples of wrong uses of articles. In Sentence (7) “They had big dinner” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007), the indefinite article “a” should be inserted. In Sentence (8) “although it is a hard work, I enjoy it” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007), the unnecessary article “a” should be deleted. In Sentence (9) “The place is near the Gangnam Station,” an unnecessary definite article is used.

In Sentence (10) “I graduated gyeonggi high school” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007; Kyung-Ja Park, Hikyung Lee, & Yongkyun Ju, 2003), the preposition, “from” is omitted. In Sentence (11) “I want to study about many fields” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007; Kyung-Ja Park, Hikyung Lee, & Yongkyun Ju, 2003), the preposition “about” should be omitted. Sentence (12) “I’m leaving after two hours” is an example of wrong use of a preposition. Instead of “after,” “in” has to be used.

The sentences (13) “Her skin color was changed,” (14) “I was confusing,” and (15) “I disappointed” are related to passive voices but constructed problematically. For Asian English speakers including Koreans, passive and active voices are also quite confusing. Sometimes they use passive structures where active structures should be used as in

Sometimes they omit “be” as illustrated in Sentence (15).

Since you do not usually cut your hair by yourself and you have to go to a barber shop to have your hair cut, Sentence (16) “I cut my hair” is problematic. Therefore it should be “I had my hair cut” or “I had a haircut.” Again, you cannot pull your tooth by yourself. You have to go to a dentist and have your tooth pulled. Thus Sentence (17) “I had a horrible toothache. I pulled my tooth” should be “I had a horrible toothache. I had my tooth pulled.” People usually have their jackets dry-cleaned at a dry-cleaner. Sentence (18) “I dry-cleaned my jacket” should be “I had my jacket dry-cleaned.” These types of sentences are particularly difficult for Korean people.

All the sentences of (19) “He seems to be pleased when he saw me,” (20) “But as time goes by I was accustomed to it,” and (21) “So in the second semester, I attended every class and sometimes go to the lab and listen to tapes many times” are examples of wrong uses of tense. There is no agreement between verb tenses in each sentence. The improper uses of tenses are quite often observed in Asian Englishes including Philippine English (Dayag, 2003).

The sentences (22) “She gave me many helpful advices about living abroad” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007), (23) “Please pass me two pencil,” and (24) “Please send me more informations about your company” (Kang-Young Lee, 2007) show wrong uses of countable and non-countable nouns. Non-countable nouns are incorrectly pluralized in the variety of English spoken by many Korean people (Kang-Young Lee, 2007). On the other hand, when a countable noun should be pluralized, it is not properly pluralized as shown in Sentence (23).

The second questionnaire includes 6 questions that ask the relationship between the respondents’ attitudes in speaking English and their lack of proper knowledge of English grammar. Those questions ask how afraid they are of making grammatical errors when they speak in English, to what degree they tend not to speak English for fear of making grammatical errors, to what extent they hope to speak grammatically correct English, etc.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Table 1 shows, the total percentage of wrong answers by ticking correct is 30.2% (500 out of the total 1,656 answers). This paper intends to pay special attention to the sentences marked by more than 50% of the respondents as a meaningful criterion. The sentences marked by more than 40% are also paid attention as an alternative meaningful criterion. The sentences marked as correct by more than 50% of the participants are the sentences (8), (9), and (24). 56.5% (N=39) of the participants considered the sentence (8)
“Although it is a hard work, I enjoy it” correct while 59.4% (N=41) considered the sentence (9) “The place is near the Gangnam Station” correct. 60.9% (N=42) marked the sentence (24) “Please send me informations about your company” as correct. While the sentence (8) is concerned with an indefinite article, which should be omitted, the sentence (9) is concerned with a definite article, which is also unnecessary. The sentence (24) has a non-countable noun with plural -s ending. Thus, the most difficult areas the respondents find seem to be definite and indefinite articles and pluralization. As Hye-Sook Park (2002) argues, the English article system seems to be one of the most difficult rules for Korean English learners. Besides the three most difficult sentences, more than 40% of the respondents incorrectly checked the sentences (11), (15), (16), and (22) as correct. These problematic sentences are related to preposition, passive, and pluralization of uncountable nouns.

**TABLE 1**

| Result of the Grammaticality Judgment Test (N=69) |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Incorrect  | Fine    | Correct | Yes    | No     |
| (1) Today was very difficult but exciting. | 27.5%(19) | 60.9%(42) | 11.6%(8) | 36.2%(25) | 63.8%(44) |
| (2) Thanksgiving. always is celebrated in November. | 43.5%(30) | 44.9%(31) | 11.6%(8) | 21.7%(15) | 78.3%(54) |
| (3) No wonder you can’t sleep when you have coffee too much. | 30.4%(21) | 43.5%(30) | 26.1%(18) | 33.3%(23) | 66.7%(46) |
| (4) know how to go. | 44.9%(31) | 42.0%(29) | 13.0%(9) | 33.3%(23) | 66.7%(46) |
| (5) In Korea have four season. | 44.9%(31) | 44.9%(31) | 10.1%(7) | 31.9%(22) | 68.1%(47) |
| (6) I thanked for. | 53.6%(37) | 39.1%(27) | 7.2%(5) | 15.9%(11) | 84.1%(58) |
| (7) They had big dinner. | 23.2%(16) | 52.2%(36) | 24.6%(17) | 43.5%(30) | 56.5%(39) |
| (8) Although it is a hard work, I enjoy it. | 11.6%(8) | 31.9%(22) | 56.5%(39) | 76.8%(53) | 23.2%(16) |
| (9) The place is near the Gangnam Station. | 14.5%(10) | 26.1%(18) | 59.4%(41) | 81.2%(56) | 18.8%(13) |
| (10) I graduated gyeonggi high school. | 15.9%(11) | 44.9%(31) | 39.1%(27) | 59.4%(41) | 40.6%(28) |
| (11) I want to study about many fields. | 10.1%(7) | 43.5%(30) | 46.4%(32) | 85.5%(59) | 14.5%(10) |
| (12) I’m leaving after two hours. | 39.1%(27) | 42.0%(29) | 18.8%(13) | 29.0%(20) | 71.0%(49) |
| (13) Her skin color was changed. | 14.5%(10) | 58.0%(40) | 27.5%(19) | 53.6%(37) | 46.4%(32) |
| (14) I was confusing. | 34.8%(24) | 33.3%(23) | 31.9%(22) | 46.4%(32) | 53.6%(37) |
| (15) I disappointed. | 26.1%(18) | 33.3%(23) | 40.6%(28) | 62.3%(43) | 37.7%(26) |
Those marked by more than 50% of the respondents as ‘yes’ to indicate that they would use in their utterances are 13 sentences including (8), (9), (10), (11), (13), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (22), (23), and (24). Among the 13 sentences, the 3 sentences (8, 9, and 24) marked ‘correct’ by more than 50% of the respondents are included, and the 4 sentences (11, 15, 16, and 22) marked ‘correct’ by more than 40% are also included. To find out whether there is a meaningful relationship between the participant’s perception of the sentences as correct and their willingness to use them, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were computed. Table 2 shows that their perception of the sentences as correct and their willingness to use them is meaningfully related. Even though the sentences they indicated are in fact errors, once they believe they are correct, they would use them. Among the 3 sentences marked as correct by more than 50% of the respondents, the sentence (24) “Please send me more informations about your company” was ticked ‘correct’ by the most number of participants (60.9%; N=42) and was also ticked ‘yes’ by 82.6% (N=57) of them, the second most number of participants after the sentence (11).
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### TABLE 2
**Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients of Two Variables: Correct and Yes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct Pearson’s correlation coefficients</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.436**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes     Pearson’s correlation coefficients</td>
<td>.436**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>69</td>
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As Table 1 shows, the 6 sentences (1), (7), (13), (17), (20), and (21) were marked as ‘fine’ to understand by more than 50% of the participants. Among the 6 sentences the participants indicated fine, the sentence (20), which lacks tense consistency, was marked by the most number of the participants. 65.2% (N=42) of the participants considered it fine. However, only 31.9% (N=22) of the participants marked that they would use it. Among the 6 sentences, only 2 sentences (13) and (17) are included in the 13 sentences marked as ‘yes’ by more than 50% of the participants. This may indicate that the participants tend to speak the sentences only when they think they are correct even though, in fact, they are incorrect. Once they think the sentences are incorrect, they would not use them even though they think them fine to understand. To find out whether there is a meaningful relationship between the participant’s perception of the sentences as fine and their willingness to use them, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were computed. As Table 3 shows, their perception of the sentences as fine and their willingness to use them is not meaningfully related. Besides the 6 sentences marked as ‘fine’ by more than 50% of the participants, the sentences, (2), (3), (4), (5), (10), (11), (12), (18), (19), and (23) were marked as ‘fine’ by more than 40%. In fact, 44.5% of the total answers were indicated as ‘fine’ to understand.

### TABLE 3
**Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients of Two Variables: Fine and Yes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fine</th>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine   Pearson’s correlation coefficients</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes    Pearson’s correlation coefficients</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
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<td></td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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Only the sentence (6) was marked as incorrect by more than 50% of the respondents. The sentence (6) “I thanked for” in which an object is missing was marked as incorrect by 53.6% (N=37) of the respondents. On the other hand, the 11 sentences, (1), (2), (3), (4), (5),
(6), (7), (12), (14), (20), and (21) were marked as 'no' by more than 50% of the respondents. The sentence (6) without a proper object is considered to be the most problematic by the respondents. As Table 1 shows only 15.9% (N=11) of the participants expressed that they would use it. And 84.1% (N=58) expressed that they would not use it in their speech. The sentences marked as 'incorrect' by more than 40% are the sentences (2), (4), and (5). Sentence (2) has a problem in word order while the sentences (4) and (5) are related to a missing subject. Since the mother tongue of the Korean participant is not a pro-drop language, they may be able to find the sentences 'incorrect' relatively easily. To find out whether there is a meaningful relationship between the participant's perception of the sentences as incorrect and their willingness to use them, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed. Table 4 shows that their perception of the sentences as incorrect and their willingness to use them is negatively related. In other words, once they think the sentences are incorrect, they would not use them.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TABLE 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pearson's Correlation Coefficients of Two Variables: Incorrect and Yes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incorrect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pearson’s correlation coefficients</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pearson’s correlation coefficients</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>69</td>
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</table>

**P < .01**

The total 69 respondents are divided into low and high groups. Table 5 shows the percentages of the total answers marked as 'incorrect,' 'fine,' 'correct,' 'yes,' and 'no' by both groups. Below the percentages show the number of the sentences marked by more than 50% of the respondents. Differences between the Low Group and the High Group are statistically meaningful in each category as the result of the independent samples t-test shows in Table 5. None of the 24 sentences were marked as 'correct' by more than 50% of the High Group participants. Only 15.2% (117 out of the total 768 answers) of the answers were marked 'correct,' by the High Group participants. However, their willingness to use the sentences is not too low. 44.7% (343 answers) out of the total 768 answers were marked 'yes.' In the meantime, 9 sentences were marked as 'correct' by more than 50% of the Low Group participants. The 9 sentences are (8), (9), (10), (11), (15), (16), (17), (22), and (24). These problematic sentences are related to articles, preposition, passive, and pluralization of uncountable nouns. 43.4% (385 answers) out of the total 888 answers were marked as 'correct.' All of those 9 sentences are included in the 15 sentences marked as 'yes' by more than 50% of the Low Group participants.
The significance of Table 5 lies in the category of ‘fine.’ While more than 50% of the High Group participants selected 15 sentences as ‘fine’ to understand, more than 50% of the Low Group participants selected only 4 sentences as ‘fine.’ None of those 4 sentences were marked as ‘yes’ by more than 50% of the Low Group participants. In other words, the Low Group students tend to speak the sentences when they think they are correct to use. On the other hand, the High Group students tend to use the sentences because they think not only they are correct but also they are fine to understand even if they are somewhat grammatically ill structured. The lower the level, the more they would use the sentences they think correct. The higher the level, the more they would use the sentences they think are fine to understand and communicate even though they are deviant. This may indicate that while the High Group participants show leniency towards the erroneous sentences, the Low Group participants are stricter with them. Their leniency towards incorrect sentences seems to be low. The higher the level, the more lenient the participants are with problematic sentences.

**TABLE 5**

Result of the Grammaticality Judgment Test by the Low and High Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incorrect**</th>
<th>Fine**</th>
<th>Correct**</th>
<th>Yes**</th>
<th>No**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Group (N=37)</td>
<td>(t = -3.099)</td>
<td>(t = -5.773)</td>
<td>(t = 4.276)</td>
<td>(t = 3.682)</td>
<td>(t = -3.682)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.6%(192)</td>
<td>35.0%(311)</td>
<td>43.4%(385)</td>
<td>57.4%(510)</td>
<td>42.6%(378)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Group (N=32)</td>
<td>30.1%(231)</td>
<td>54.7%(420)</td>
<td>15.2%(117)</td>
<td>44.7%(343)</td>
<td>55.3%(425)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01**

Table 6 shows the result of the average Likert scale scores of each question in the second questionnaire. The Low Group students seem to agree more strongly with the first 3 statements while the High Group students seem to agree more strongly with the second 3 statements. However, the only statistically meaningful difference between the two groups is in Question 3. The Low Group students seem to be more afraid of making grammatical errors as they show the average score of 4.05 on the 5-point Likert scale in Question 1 “I am afraid of making grammatical errors when I speak in English” while the High Group students show 3.94. In Question 2 “I tend not to speak English for fear of making grammatical errors,” the Low and High Groups obtained scores of 3.51 and 3.19 respectively. As the meaningful difference between the two groups in Question 3 “I hope to speak grammatically correct English” indicates, the Low Group students are more obsessed with grammatically correct English. On the other hand the High Group students more strongly agree with the statements in Question 4 “I think that trying to have many opportunities to speak in English even with some grammatical errors helps me improve my speaking ability,” Question 5 “I do not think grammatical errors hinder any of my
communication in English,” and Question 6 “Even though I have poor knowledge of grammar and speak incorrect English, I try to speak English as much as possible.” The higher the level of their English proficiency, the more willingness they have to use the language and communicate with it. While the Low Group students tend to refrain themselves from using English for fear of making grammatical errors and in hope of using correct English, the High Group students seem to have more carefree attitudes in using English because they think having more opportunities to speak the language helps them improve their speaking ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result of the Second Questionnaire: Attitudes towards Grammatical Errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

V. CONCLUSION

The sentences the participants, especially the Low Group participants, find most difficult are related to articles, prepositions, passives, and pluralization of nouns. On the other hand, 53.62% of the participants already have the knowledge that the preposition “for” must have an object in such a phrasal verb as “thank for.” They marked 25.3% of the total 1,656 answers as incorrect, 44.5% as fine, and 30.2% as correct. Even though the participants marked almost half of the answers as ‘fine,’ there shows no meaningful relationship between the variables ‘fine’ and ‘yes.’ They tend not to use the sentences they think are problematic even though they may be fine to understand. This is also supported by the statistical result that the relationship between the two variables ‘incorrect’ and ‘yes’ is negatively related while the relationship between the variables ‘correct’ and ‘yes’ is positively related. The participants tend not to use anything wrong.

The comparison between the Low Group and the High Group participants shows that there are statistically meaningful differences in each category. Especially, in the category of ‘fine,’ the High Group students are more lenient with the erroneous sentences while the Low Group students are relatively stricter with them. More than 50% of the High Group students circled 15 sentences as ‘fine’ while more than 50% of the Low Group students circled only 4 sentences. The Low group students seem to be more obsessed with being
right or wrong, and tend to be less lenient with anything problematic.

This tendency is also reflected in the analysis of the second questionnaire. The Low Group students agree more strongly with the statement, “I hope to speak grammatically correct English.” The average difference between the degrees of agreement with this statement by the Low and High Groups is statistically meaningful. The High Group students are more lenient with problematic sentences and more willing to use them because they think those minor grammatical errors do not cause critical problems in communication. Instead of refraining themselves from using the language, they try to have opportunities to use the language as much as possible even though they make some errors. This way they seem to believe that they can improve their English. On the other hand, the Low Group students are more afraid of making grammatical errors and hope to speak correct English.

An implication drawn from this research is the importance of teaching the concept of World Englishes to help Korean English learners understand that their imperfect English is nothing to be worried about. There are many varieties of local English with somewhat deviant features from the native speaker’s point of view. What they need to realize is that it is better for them to use the language in any uncontrolled speaking situations instead of holding back for fear of making mistakes. This does not mean that any incorrect sentences should be excused or be taught.

In addition, another implication can be drawn and pondered upon from this research. Besides teaching the concept of World Englishes, teachers at the same time have to think seriously about how to help those low group students have more confidence in using their ‘imperfect’ language while getting rid of their fear of making errors and their obsession with correct English. Since their poor knowledge of English grammar makes them feel more inferior and less confident, teaching basic English grammar and structures may help students restore their confidence. This argument seems to betray the concept of World Englishes. In fact, it does not. In real classroom settings, teaching both World Englishes and norms of English structures is not only necessary but also practical. What is important here is how a teacher can understand the situation and have a balanced view on teaching World Englishes and proper ‘correct’ grammar. It can be suggested that teachers may teach their students English grammar in a communicative manner so that they can use it in their conversation in real situations. In other words, it would be helpful to teach their students how to effectively use grammar as they speak the language.

There are some shortcomings in designing and conducting this research. It did not use a different test or a survey to measure the participant’s English proficiency levels, but it used the same 24-ill-structured sentences in the grammaticality judgment test questionnaire. Another one is that there were only 69 Korean participants in the study. To have a more objective result and a stronger argument, a greater number of participants would be needed.
in answering and reviewing questionnaires. Also, there were only 24 problematic sentences. With that number of sentences, it is difficult to strongly argue that certain English features are critical in communication while others are not.

While doing this research, several other research questions have come up for further studies. Is it possible to generalize that the higher the English proficiency level, the more lenient the participants are with ill-structured sentences? It would also be interesting to learn whether there are differences in answering the first questionnaire used in this research between non-native and native English speakers, among different native English speaking nationalities, among different non-native nationalities, and among Korean people with different English educational backgrounds. The number of participants and the number of sentences to be analyzed can be a crucial factor. With greater numbers, then, it might be possible to analyze some unique features of the variety of English used by Koreans in Korea. Especially when a large number of Korean participants show common errors regardless of their English proficiency levels, it might be possible to find a way to suggest a model of Korea English.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
The First Questionnaire

(1) Female ( ) Male ( )

(2) What do you think of your English speaking ability?
   ① Very poor
   ② Fine (understandable, no difficulties in communicating)
   ③ Very good
   ④ Excellent
   ⑤ A native speaker

※ What do you think of the following sentences in oral speech? Please circle the number that you think is the most appropriate.

(1) Incorrect (hard to understand)
(2) Fine (not quite correct but understandable)
(3) Correct

* I would speak this way.  (yes)  (no)

1. Today was very difficult but exciting.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

2. Thanksgiving always is celebrated in November.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

3. No wonder you can't sleep when you have coffee too much
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

4. know how to go.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

5. In Korea have four season.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

6. I thanked for.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

7. They had big dinner.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

8. Although it is a hard work, I enjoy it.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

9. The place is near the Gangnam Station.
   (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)

10. I graduated Gyeonggi high school.
    (1)  (2)  (3)  * (yes)  (no)
11. I want to study about many fields.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

12. I'm leaving after two hours.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

13. Her skin color was changed.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

14. I was confusing.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

15. I disappointed.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

16. I cut my hair.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

17. I had a horrible toothache. I pulled my tooth.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

18. I dry-cleaned my jacket.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

19. He seems to be pleased when he saw me.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

20. But as time goes by I was accustomed to it.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

21. So in the second semester, I attended every class and sometimes go to the lab and listen to tapes many times.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

22. She gave me many helpful advices about living abroad.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

23. Please pass me two pencil.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

24. Please send me more informations about your company.
   (1) (2) (3) * (yes) (no)

APPENDIX B
The Second Questionnaire

※ This questionnaire includes six questions asking your opinion about the influence of grammatical errors when you speak in English. Please circle the number depending on how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements. (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree)
1. I am afraid of making grammatical errors when I speak in English.
   1 2 3 4 5
2. I tend not to speak English for fear of making grammatical errors.
   1 2 3 4 5
3. I hope to speak grammatically correct English.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. I think that trying to have many opportunities to speak in English even with some grammatical errors helps me improve my speaking ability.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. I do not think grammatical errors hinder any of my communication in English.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. Even though I have poor knowledge of grammar and speak incorrect English, I try to speak English as much as possible.
   1 2 3 4 5

Applicable levels: Tertiary education
Key words: World Englishes, Standard English

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