EFL Pre- and In-Service Teachers’ Pragmatic Attitude*

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The aim of this paper was to investigate the effect of pragmatic instruction on teachers’ attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatic competence. To this end, a study was undertaken in which sixteen pre- and in-service teachers as subjects took a course in sociolinguistics for a one semester-long period, and data were gathered by means of attitude scale. Attitude scale was designed on the basis of the assumption that pragmatic attitude was composed of four different components such as cognitive, affective, behavioral and teaching, and was administered on both the first day and the last day of semester. Among the findings of the study, most important, there was a statistically significant difference only in cognitive component of pragmatic attitude, which showed a positive effect of instruction on the change in subjects’ thoughts and opinions about the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatic competence. Based on the overall findings of the study, some pedagogical suggestions for fostering pragmatic instruction for EFL classes were offered.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Hymes’ (1971) argument for the critical role of communicative competence in language use against Chomsky’s narrow view of linguistic competence, the notion of communicative competence has enjoyed much popularity in both research and pedagogy within the field of second language acquisition. Many researchers including Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990) attempted to determine the nature of communicative competence to offer theoretical bases or frameworks leading to the description, explanation, and measurement of learner communication abilities while practitioners tried to come up with innovative, alternative teaching approaches or methods claiming to be effective and successful in building communication skills in classroom settings. As

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a result of continued effort centering on communicative competence, social, cultural, and functional aspects of language were brought to the forefront in L2 learning and teaching, and gave way to the rise of pragmatic competence, one crucial sub-component of communicative competence involving appropriateness of form and meaning in language use (Hinkel, 2006).

As pragmatic competence began to attract attention, and was viewed as essential for successful communication, it was soon evident that pragmatic competence should become the ultimate goal of L2 learning, and at the same time, stimulated abundant research (Brown, 2007). A cursory look at the literature on learners’ pragmatic competence shows a strong tendency of studies to investigate learner abilities to express various social functions in different situations mainly through speech acts. Such a tendency in L2 pragmatics research was greatly influenced by language philosophers such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who held that what humans do with language involves doing verbal acts for communication, and captures the nature of everyday interaction. Numerous studies made a comparison between native and non-native speakers of English in the production and comprehension of a variety of speech acts including requests, apologies, complaints, refusals and expressions of gratitude, among others under various situations. According to Bardovi-Harlig (2002), learners with various L1 backgrounds were found to differ from target language speakers in the performance of speech acts in several important ways. Both native and non-native speakers tended to produce different speech acts even in the same contexts, and to use different semantic formulas, content and form in the production of a given speech act.

Based on the clear, notable differences between native and non-native speakers in the performance of speech acts, many other studies have addressed the issue of teachability of L2 pragmatics, and looked into the effect of pragmatic instruction on the learning of pragmatic knowledge. A rationale for teaching pragmatic aspects of language comes from first language acquisition in which parents and caretakers tend to be active in explicitly teaching children about appropriate use of language as part of their socialization (Bryant, 2001; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Major findings of instructed pragmatics studies (e.g., Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Fukuya & Clark, 2001; House, 1996; Kasper, 2001) suggested positive influences of instruction on the promotion of pragmatic ability of learners. One notable characteristic of such instructed pragmatics studies is that the majority of studies tended to be undertaken in ESL learning contexts in which native English-speaking teachers who by their nature possess intuitive, implicit knowledge of pragmatics were easily available for study, and had few problems with implementing pragmatic instruction. This means that the success of L2 pragmatics instruction relies mainly on native English-speaking teachers who are equipped with knowledge of socio-cultural norms and principles in appropriate use of English, and
know how to use it accordingly. However, in spite of a relatively easy access to native English-speaking teachers in EFL learning contexts recently, it is true that the vast majority of English classes are still handled by non-native teachers with native teachers playing a very limited role in instruction. In light of the fact that learners in foreign language learning settings suffer minimal opportunities for exposure to L2 pragmatic norms and practice in using them for natural interaction, it is not difficult to note the crucial role of teachers in the promotion of pragmatic knowledge of their students (Jeon & Kaya, 2006). Despite many advantages of non-native teachers in EFL contexts (Braine, 2010; Medgyes, 2001), they are inferior to native English-speaking teachers in their knowledge and use of L2 pragmatics, which may lead to ineffective, unsystematic education, and hence, have a debilitating effect on the attainment of pragmatic competence of EFL learners. According to Medgyes (2001), native English-speaking teachers are more active in focusing on real language use, and providing cultural information, which suggests that native teachers are more skillful in handling and teaching pragmatic aspects of L2 than non-native teachers.

Given the inferiority of non-native English-speaking teachers over native English-speaking teachers in the implementation of L2 pragmatic instruction on the one hand, and the importance of achieving pragmatic competence as an ultimate goal of L2 learning on the other, in order for pragmatic instruction in EFL contexts to become more effective and productive, one thing of primary importance from a viewpoint of teacher education would involve making non-native teachers empowered in socio-cultural and pragmatic aspects of L2. Teachers’ increased understanding of these parts of language is likely to lead them to raise awareness about the need for pragmatic knowledge of their students, and address such a need for pedagogical purposes. As a result, non-native teachers’ increased, enhanced knowledge of L2 pragmatics may facilitate the formation of more positive attitude toward pragmatic instruction, and encourage them to be more active in implementing pragmatic instruction in their classes. The present paper began along this line of inquiry, and its goal was to look into the effect of teacher education on teachers’ attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics in EFL learning situations. More specifically, the paper attempted to determine whether or not taking a course in sociolinguistics over the course of one semester could influence teachers’ attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics. The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. Are there changes in teachers’ pragmatic attitude between the beginning and the end of a course in sociolinguistics which lasts for one semester?
2. How can teachers’ pragmatic attitude be described and explained in a semester-long course in sociolinguistics?
II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

In spite of a considerable number of studies on the effects of formal instruction on the acquisition of pragmatic ability of learners in ESL contexts, relatively few such studies are available in EFL contexts. For instance, Takahashi (2001) investigated the effects of types of instruction on the development of pragmatic ability of EFL Japanese students. After four 90-minute weeks of instruction on the performance of requests in four different types of conditions such as explicit instruction, form-comparison, form-search and meaning-focused, it was found that students in explicit instructional condition performed better on discourse completion task than students in any other learning condition. Likewise, Takimoto (2009) was interested in the relative effects of different types of learning tasks on the achievement of pragmatic knowledge by Japanese learners. Four groups of subjects participated in a study in which four different instructional treatments (i.e., structured task with explicit information, problem-solving task, structured task without explicit information and control group) were administered in four 40-minute instructional sessions. The results of the study indicated that students in structured tasks with or without explicit information and students in problem-solving task were able to perform equally well on various tests like discourse completion test, role-play and listening test. Han (1999) was among the first to offer the positive effects of pragmatic instruction on L2 pragmatic knowledge in EFL contexts in Korea. After a six-week period of instruction on English requests, her subjects, college students, were able to make their requests more indirect and more polite than they were at the beginning of instruction. Similarly, Yang (2006) had interest in effectiveness of two instructional methods (i.e., focus on form and function) in the enhancement of L2 pragmatic ability of college students of EFL. It was reported that each method was conducive to the increasing of subjects' knowledge of requests by including more target forms of request strategies into their requests in different situations. In a study examining developmental patterns of pragmatic ability of EFL Chinese students with Cantonese as L1, Rose (2000) divided elementary school students into three groups in terms of grade, and gathered data by means of a cartoon oral production task requiring the performance of requests, apologies and compliment responses. It was found that subjects in all three groups showed improvement in the performance of three speech acts. This finding offers indirect support for beneficial effects of instruction on pragmatic development since after its returning to Chinese sovereignty, Hong Kong gave up using English as a medium of instruction in favor of Cantonese though many parts of it have been still using English as ESL.

The literature on the role of teacher training in the promotion of teachers’ pragmatic knowledge is also underrepresented in L2 research. Yates and Wigglesworth (2005) were
concerned about the effectiveness of teacher workshops on teaching practices whose aim was to deepen native English-speaking teachers’ understanding of ways to make and soften the act of requests, and to prepare them to develop classroom materials. In a study in which five native teachers who made requests in different situations via a role-play task compared their requests with those by non-native speakers, and based on a comparison, developed teaching materials, it was reported that overall, teacher workshops were rewarding and beneficial particularly in enabling teachers to explore pragmatic aspects of English in specific ways and heighten their awareness about the need for teaching strategies in pragmatics. Similarly, Castro (2005) took a close look at a teacher-training program in Brazil to find out its impact on teachers’ attitude toward corrective feedback at the pragmatic level. A study was conducted in which for data collection, lessons of EFL teachers were observed before and after the intervention of a course in pragmatics in a teacher-training program, and each teacher was also given interviews and questionnaire. Among the findings, most important, a teacher-training program was ineffective as an awareness-raising course in pragmatics lasted only for seven and a half hours which was not long enough to change teachers’ attitude toward L2 pragmatics and their classroom practices.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The subjects who participated in the present study were sixteen pre- and in-service teachers of English who were enrolled in graduate school of a major university in Korea. They majored in English education, and ranged in age from twenty two to thirty five. Only three of the subjects were male, and self-rated English proficiency ranged from intermediate mid to advanced level. The subjects were taking a course entitled ‘Language in Society’ at the time of study whose aim was to help graduate students understand the learning and teaching of foreign language from a sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspective. A brief look at the curriculum of the graduate school to which the subjects belonged indicated that very few courses seemed to address and deal with sociolinguistic and pragmatic phenomena of L2 in any systematic, comprehensive manner other than the present course. As a result, most subjects were believed to have few opportunities for exposure to L2 pragmatics and to possess little knowledge of L2 pragmatics and its relationship to learning and teaching practices before taking this course.

2. Instrument and Procedures

Data in the study were gathered by means of an attitude scale. An attitude scale like
questionnaire is used frequently to measure attitude change or growth in educational settings. Based on Eagly and Chaiken's (1993) view of attitude toward a hypothetical, unobservable construct as being composed of three major components such as 'cognitive,' 'affective,' and 'behavioral,' the present study took a tri-component viewpoint of attitude toward the learning and teaching of socio-cultural, pragmatic aspects of L2, and thus designed the attitude scale to contain three different components: beliefs or thoughts ('cognitive'), feelings or evaluations ('affective') and actual actions ('behavioral') about the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics. In addition, since the study was also interested in changes in subjects' teaching practice as a result of a semester-long course, another component, 'teaching' was added. All together, twenty eight statements were created in the attitude scale with each component containing seven statements, and further, four more open-ended questions were included to get more information on subjects’ attitude about L2 pragmatics (see Appendix). The attitude scale was administered subjects twice, on the first day and the last day of class, to determine the effectiveness of a semester-long course on their attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics. In the attitude scale, the subjects were asked to read individual statements and respond to them in terms of a five-point scale, 'Strongly Disagree (1)' 'Disagree (2)' 'Undecided (3)' 'Agree (4)' and 'Strongly Agree (5).'

Regarding the course in sociolinguistics, it was concerned entirely with language use in context, centering on L2 learning and teaching from an interactional, interpersonal point of view. The course covered a variety of topics involving socio-cultural, pragmatic aspects of L2, mainly English, such as speech acts, politeness, pragmatic competence, face-threatening acts, and interlanguage pragmatics, among others. The course was taught by the researcher for one semester, sixteen weeks, and met once a week for two consecutive class hours. It proceeded through a combination of lecture, presentation, discussion, and microteaching demonstration across the semester. That is, for one third of the semester, the researcher gave lecture which introduced notions and theories underlying L2 pragmatics with a focus on the aforementioned topics while for the rest of the semester, the subjects were asked to read as many as sixteen research papers, submit one-page summary of each paper, and present what they knew from individual papers to the whole classmates. In presentation, the subjects had a chance to ensure their understanding of each paper by asking questions, getting engaged in a whole-class discussion and being given a researcher's condensed overview of class, all of which seemed to be conducive to the promotion of L2 pragmatic knowledge by the subjects. In addition, at the end of semester, one subject volunteered for microteaching demonstration in which she showed how to integrate pragmatic features of English into communicatively-oriented classes, and offered a good example of conducting pragmatic instruction in EFL contexts.
3. Data Analysis

The attitude scale used as a main data-gathering method in the study resulted in two different types of data: numerical and written data. For the analysis of numerical data, first, frequencies with which each one of the five-point scales was chosen in individual statements were counted. Since the attitude scale consisted of four components (i.e., ‘cognitive,’ ‘affective,’ ‘behavioral,’ and ‘teaching’), means of individual components were computed. Then means of the four components on the first day of class were compared with those on the last of class through a statistical technique of paired-samples t-test with the significance level set at .05 in order to see if there existed any change in subjects’ attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics between before and after the course. Meanwhile, written data were read with a focus on content carefully with a view to searching for recurring themes involving subjects’ thoughts, feelings or behaviors in the learning of L2 pragmatics and pragmatic instruction (Merriam, 1998). This procedure led to a group of categories representing subjects’ pragmatic attitude.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Comparison of Pragmatic Attitude between Before and After Course

The comparison between means of four components of the attitude scale on the first day of course and means of four components on the last day of course revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference in only one component of subjects’ pragmatic attitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Comparison of Means of 4 Components of Attitude Scale Between Before and After Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four components of attitude scale</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>-2.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>-1.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>-.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>-.149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P < .05

As seen in Table 1, it was the cognitive component of subjects’ pragmatic attitude that was found to have a statistically significant difference (t = -2.963, p = .025). This
indicated that pragmatic course implemented for a one semester-long period was helpful and beneficial in changing subjects’ beliefs and thoughts about the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics in EFL settings. To find out which of the statements of cognitive component made important contributions to a statistically significant difference, it was necessary to take a close look at the ways in which each statement was responded. There was a high degree of consistency in subjects’ response to statements 3, 4, and 6 between on the first and on the last day of course. An average of 90% of subjects on both occasions responded positively to statement 3 (‘I think pragmatic ability involves knowledge of social & cultural functions of language’). Similarly, in statement 4 (‘I think pragmatic competence should be one part of communication abilities’), an average of 96% of subjects on both occasions reacted positively to the statement. From the findings here, it follows that most subjects were believed to have had a basic idea of what L2 pragmatic competence is about before they participated in the present study. In addition, in statement 6 (‘I think misunderstanding or communication breakdown tends to be caused by pragmatic errors more often than grammatical errors’), 64% of subjects at the beginning of semester and 59% of subjects at the end of semester answered affirmatively. Apart from a small difference in response, a relatively low level of agreement among subjects on this statement seemed to indicate that though they had an overall understanding of pragmatic competence in relation to L2 learning and teaching throughout the semester, they might not have had sufficient knowledge of sub-areas of pragmatics such as role of pragmatic errors in L2 learning and effect of pragmatic failure on L2 communication.

Some notable differences were shown in subjects’ response to statements 1, 2, 5, and 7 over the course of one semester. In statement 1 (‘I think I have never heard the term ‘Pragmatic Competence’ before’), about 76% of subjects at the beginning of semester responded negatively (i.e., disagreed) to the statement whereas 88% of them at the end of semester did so. Since subjects took a course for one semester, all of them were supposed to have a good understanding of the notion of pragmatic competence at the end of semester. It appears that two subjects who said ‘Agree’ to the statement were confused about the way of responding to the negatively-written statement, and must have ended up with expressing their response in a positive way. As mentioned before, since there were few courses dealing with social and functional aspects of language use in the curriculum of the graduate school to which subjects belonged, a high percentage of disagreement on the statement 1 was rather surprising. Given the critical role played by pragmatic competence in social contexts, subjects’ heightened awareness about L2 pragmatic competence even on the first day of class is understandable and makes sense. Also it appears that the issue, ‘learning and teaching of appropriateness in L2 use’ is not limited to specific courses in sociolinguistics or pragmatics any longer, but is well-
known and popular in the current L2 teaching profession. Likewise, in response to statement 2 (‘I think correct use of English is more important than appropriate use of it’), 82% of subjects said negatively on the first day of class while 71% of them did so on the last day of class. As in statement 1, quite a few subjects must have been well aware of what role L2 pragmatic competence plays in everyday communication way before they took the course in the study. Also a small decrease in the percentage of subjects who disagreed with the statement between before and after the course can be understood as the positive effects of the one semester-long instruction on L2 pragmatics. That is, though socio-culturally appropriate use of L2 is important, it should be kept in mind that communicative competence containing pragmatic competence as one part of it needs to be based on grammatical ability to create an infinite number of new, accurate utterances in context. Another positive effect of the pragmatic instruction was also found in statement 5 (‘I think pragmatic errors have more negative effects on language use than grammatical errors’). 65% of subjects on the first day of class chose either ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ while 76% of them were able to do so on the last day of class.

An even greater difference was noted in subjects’ response to statement 7 (‘I think knowing how to express politeness is closely related to pragmatic ability’). Less than half of subjects (41%) were able to see the concept of politeness as an essential part of pragmatic ability on the first day of class while 94% of them did so on the final day of class. Numerous studies on interlanguage pragmatics have demonstrated that being linguistically polite whenever necessary had a direct relationship with appropriate use of language, and a failure to do this was due to lack of pragmatic ability. Despite differences from culture to culture in ways of expressing politeness, politeness is a universal phenomenon, and is indispensable in maintaining social harmony and bondage among people in any community. As children with grammatical competence grow, they learn socio-cultural norms, customs and principles in society in which they are raised, and become aware of what to do with language in order to behave politely in that society. Though L1 socio-cultural knowledge of politeness tends to be acquired through socialization mostly in an unconscious, effortless manner, such is not the case to L2 knowledge of politeness. Indeed, a lot of research indicated that even learners with high levels of grammatical competence experienced considerable difficulty in expressing politeness in a way that was accepted by target language speakers, which implies that grammatical competence does not necessarily guarantee pragmatically proficient use of language (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Takahashi, 1996; Takimoto, 2009; Thomas, 1983). The finding that subjects on the first day of class showed a weak agreement on the inclusion of politeness into pragmatic competence in the statement 7, and that they seemed to be vulnerable to politeness strategy-use suggests that there is a clear, definite need for pragmatic instruction on politeness in L2 classrooms.
Though the other three components of the attitude scale such as affective, behavioral and teaching were not found to have a statistically significant difference in subjects' pragmatic attitude over a one-semester period, there are several things of interest in each component that deserve attention. Concerning affective component, there were some notable differences in subjects’ response to statements 9 and 11. In statement 9 (‘I feel worried when my intended message is not communicated successfully in English’), only 18% of subjects responded positively on the first day of class whereas 76% of them reacted positively on the final day of class. It seems that a dramatic increase in subjects’ agreement on the statement around the end of semester was due to the pragmatic instruction conducted across semester. The semester-long instruction was believed to play a central role in making subjects more sensitized to emotional, affective aspects of L2 pragmatics, so that at the end of semester, they became more concerned about whether they were able to successfully understand and produce illocutionary meaning of message in L2 interaction. This finding suggests that everyday communication depends heavily on language users’ ability to accurately comprehend and produce intended meaning of utterance in a given context, and such ability would be difficult and tricky to achieve for L2 learners. Similarly, in statement 11 (‘I’m usually worried about whether I sound polite or not during interaction in English’), subjects differed notably in their response between on the first and on the last day of course. 47% of subjects chose either ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ in the statement on the first day of class while 65% of them did so on the last day of class. One main reason for a higher level of agreement among subjects at the end of semester lies in the pragmatic instruction in which politeness was treated in such a way that an inappropriate expression of politeness or lack of politeness during interaction produces emotionally negative reactions by interlocutors, and further creates a wrong image of a person who fails to use politeness in a successful manner. In this sense, it seems straightforward to see that there was a sharp increase in disagreement among subjects (35% -> 47%) between on the first and on the last day of class in statement 14 (‘I mind and even feel offended when I am corrected in pragmatic errors’). Rather than sounding impolite or being seen as having bad temperament, subjects around the end of semester must have had a strong willingness to get feedback on their inappropriate politeness behaviors from interlocutors, and, if possible, to self-correct them in an active, productive way, which would likely lead them to sound polite and look pragmatically competent.

Regarding the behavioral component of the attitude scale, subjects’ responses to three statements created some small differences over the course of semester. In statement 15 (‘I make efforts to promote my pragmatic knowledge by interacting with English native speakers as often as I can’), 65% of subjects on the first day of class said that they had interactions with English native speakers to develop their L2 pragmatic ability, and 71%
of them responded positively to the same statement on the final day of class. This finding is reminiscent of the statement 1 earlier in which more than 70% of subjects already had some knowledge of L2 pragmatics even before the start of course. From a relatively high level of agreement among subjects on the two statements, it follows that L2 pragmatics or L2 pragmatic competence has drawn attention from scholars and practitioners constantly, and become a umbrella term recently in L2 teaching profession whose ultimate aim is to equip learners with L2 pragmatic abilities leading to the socioculturally appropriate use of L2 in context (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002; Brown, 2007). Similarly, in response to statement 20 (‘I’m willing to take a teacher training program if it is thought to promote pragmatic ability’), 76% of subjects selected either ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ on the first day of class, and 88% of them did so on the final day of class. Subjects here showed a response pattern similar to that seen in statements 1 and 15. It is clear that most subjects who had some familiarity with L2 pragmatics on the beginning of semester became concerned with the way of enhancing or updating their knowledge of L2 pragmatics around the end of semester, and agreed that they would take a teacher training program for that matter. It is likely that such a growing concern among subjects with the development of L2 pragmatic skills would be conducive to more frequent and active implementation of pragmatic instruction in L2 pedagogical settings. In addition, in response to statement 18 (‘I often experience difficulties becoming polite when conversing in English’), 35% of subjects on the first day of class did not hesitate to mention difficulties of politeness expression in L2 while 47% of them on the final day of class addressed the same problem. A response pattern here is very similar to that shown in statement 11 in which an increasing number of subjects (47% at the beginning of semester → 65% at the end of semester) still felt unsure about how to become polite in L2 during interaction. The findings on the two statements demonstrate that learning to be polite in L2 is not done overnight, and should be given a primary focus in pragmatic instruction.

As for the teaching component of the attitude scale, subjects showed a high degree of agreement on most statements in this component over a one-semester period of time. For example, in statements 22 and 25 (‘I would teach students how to use English in socially & culturally appropriate ways’ and ‘I would help students develop pragmatic ability as one important part of teaching communication skills in English’), an average of 85% of subjects on both the first day and the last day of class agreed on the importance of instructing pragmatic aspects of English and helping their students acquire L2 pragmatic skills as a crucial part of communication ability. Also as one way of increasing L2 pragmatic knowledge, 88% of subjects on the first day of class and 82% of them on the final day of class showed their willingness to use various interactive activities in their response to statement 24 (‘I would use interactive activities to promote students'
pragmatic ability whenever possible’). Likewise, in statement 27 (‘I would teach English culture as a way to help students develop their pragmatic ability’), an average of 88% of subjects on both occasions expressed that they would be active in teaching their students L2 culture under the assumption that knowledge of L2 culture was central to pragmatic ability. A notable difference was also observed in statement 26 (‘I would teach students how to sound polite, cooperative and friendly according to different situations’). 65% of subjects on the first day of class responded positively to the statement while 76% of them did so on the last day of class. It is likely that such a difference was made possible by the one semester-long pragmatic instruction in which subjects not only heightened their pragmatic awareness, but realized also the importance of conducting pragmatic instruction in L2 classrooms since they must have learned that what people do with language is exactly what they do to others in everyday interaction.

2. Subjects’ Description and Explanation of Their Pragmatic Attitude

Besides twenty eight statements of four components in the attitude scale that subjects had to respond to in terms of a five-point scale, there were also four open questions that required subjects to write down their responses on a given space in the attitude scale. It was hoped that whatever was written by subjects would help complement the findings about subjects’ pragmatic attitude that resulted from their response to the twenty eight statements. The results of the analysis of written data were summarized in the following four Tables.

TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Responses to Question 1 Between Before and After Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the first day of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use language in socially, culturally appropriate ways (7/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to differ from grammatical knowledge &amp; be important for communication (4/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use L2 in context (3/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (2/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1: What do you think is pragmatic competence?

As seen in Table 2, there was no notable difference in subjects’ response to question 1 (What do you think is pragmatic competence?) over a one semester-long period of time. Most subjects had a good understanding of the definition of pragmatic competence on both the first day and the last day of course. This finding was very similar to subjects’
response to statements 1 (‘I think I have never heard the term ‘Pragmatic Competence’ before’) and 4 (‘I think pragmatic competence should be one part of communication abilities’) in which a majority of subjects were well aware of the notion of pragmatic competence even before the start of course. A cursory look at Table 2 indicated that subjects’ understanding of pragmatic competence consisted mainly of three categories. That is, about less than half of the subjects on both the first day and the last day of semester thought that pragmatic competence involved social and cultural aspects of language, and was the ability to use language in socio-culturally appropriate ways. Also on the first day of course four subjects expressed that pragmatic competence different from grammatical knowledge was something of primary importance to successful communication while three subjects viewed pragmatic competence as the ability to use language in context. In contrast, this response pattern was reversed on the final day of course.

**TABLE 3**

Comparison of Responses to Question 2 Between Before and After Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On the first day of course</th>
<th>On the last day of course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of language in context (6/16)</td>
<td>Use of language in socio-culturally appropriate ways (6/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of language in socio-culturally appropriate ways (3/16)</td>
<td>Use of language in context (5/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of language in real life (3/16)</td>
<td>Link to culture (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical part of communication skills (2/16)</td>
<td>Others (3/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to culture (2/16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2: Is it important to learn and teach pragmatic competence? Why or Why not?

In question 2, all the subjects on both the first day and the last day of semester fully acknowledged the importance of learning and teaching pragmatic competence in EFL settings. According to Table 3, more than half the subjects on both occasions considered as two main reasons for the learning and teaching of pragmatic competence ‘use of language in context’ and ‘use of language in socio-culturally appropriate ways.’ Some subjects offered other reasons such as ‘use of language in real life’ and ‘link to culture.’ As pointed out by two subjects, “We live in a cultural society. Language is closely connected to culture, which is why we have to develop pragmatic competence,” and “our everyday language use is related to real life, and this requires the leaning of pragmatic ability.” There were still other subjects who emphasized that the importance of learning pragmatic competence lied in ‘appropriate expression of politeness among social members,’ and ‘successful cross-cultural interaction in the current globalized
world.’ The findings here seemed to be in line with subjects’ response to statements 3 (‘I think pragmatic ability involves knowledge of social & cultural functions of language’) and 7 (‘I think knowing how to express politeness is closely related to pragmatic ability’) in the attitude scale.

TABLE 4

Comparison of Responses to Question 3 Between Before and After Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On the first day of course</th>
<th>On the last day of course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning culture (5/16)</td>
<td>Learning culture (7/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to English-speaking countries (4/16)</td>
<td>Watching movies &amp; dramas (4/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching movies &amp; dramas (4/16)</td>
<td>Going to English-speaking countries (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with English native speakers (3/16)</td>
<td>Interacting with English native speakers (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (1/16)</td>
<td>Other (1/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3: What do you think is the most effective, successful way to learn and teach pragmatic competence?

According to Table 4, subjects on the first day of semester were similar to those on the last day of semester in that ‘learning culture’ was seen as the most effective and successful way to develop pragmatic competence in L2 classes. This finding was in line with subjects’ response to statement 27 in the attitude scale (‘I would teach English culture as a way to help students develop their pragmatic ability’) where an average of 88% of subjects on both occasions were shown to have a strong willingness to expose their students to L2 culture as a main means to promote pragmatic knowledge. As the second and the third most frequently chosen ways to learn and teach L2 pragmatic competence, eight subjects on the first day of course and six subjects on the last day of course mentioned ‘going to English-speaking countries’ and ‘watching movies & dramas.’ Many subjects here added that though they saw ‘going to English-speaking countries’ as an effective strategy to learn L2 pragmatic competence, most students were unable to use this strategy for various reasons, and instead, viewed multimedia as another appropriate means to effectively deal with socio-cultural factors having much to do with pragmatic aspects of language use. There were still some subjects on both the first day and the last day of semester who said that interacting with English native speakers was a good opportunity to learn and teach appropriate use of L2. A few subjects claimed that since native English-speaking teachers were available in almost every middle and high school nationwide, it would be a good idea to invite them into the classroom as often as possible, and to have them talk about socio-cultural rules or customs of English-speaking countries which would heighten awareness about culturally
patterned language use. Such an opportunity would lead students to gain insights into the workings of socio-culturally intertwined relationships between language and culture in society.

**TABLE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Responses to Question 4 Between Before and After Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the first day of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy focus on grammar &amp; reading (9/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-quality textbooks (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large class size (2/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little use of English (1/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: Do you think our current English classrooms have any problems with the learning and teaching of pragmatic competence?

As shown in Table 5, nine out of sixteen subjects on the first day of course considered ‘a heavy focus on grammar & reading’ the most serious barrier to the development of pragmatic competence in our EFL classrooms. This response pattern was repeated by eight subjects on the final day of course. One main reason for such an over-emphasis on grammar and reading lies in the Korean SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), more than half of which aims to assess applicants’ grammatical knowledge and reading abilities, as one subject said that “As the Korean SAT is focused on reading and grammar, pragmatic competence is hard to evaluate.” Next, the second and the third problems with L2 pragmatic instruction addressed by several subjects on both occasions were ‘teachers’ lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge’ and ‘low-quality textbooks.’ One subject mentioned the problem with teachers by remarking that “for most of our Korean teachers of English, they haven’t learned about pragmatic competence before. So their students could have few chances to get pragmatic input of L2 from their teacher.” Another subject lamented about a poor quality of English textbooks devoid of socio-cultural aspects of language by saying that “Still we don’t have comprehensive ‘learning & teaching materials’ devoted to the promotion of pragmatic competence... So first of all, we need someone or organizations that can make the materials contain pragmatics in a systematic way.” In particular, since there was a sharp increase in the number of subjects mentioning the second problem (2 -> 6) between before and after course, such a difference may be understood as the positive effect of course on raising subjects’ awareness about the need for teacher training on L2 pragmatics. A higher awareness of teachers’ lack of pragmatic competence is likely to lead subjects (i.e., pre- and in-service teachers in the study) to
become active in enhancing their pragmatic knowledge of English, which in turn would result in more time allotted for pragmatic instruction in their EFL classrooms.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the paper was to examine the effect of pragmatic instruction on teachers' attitude toward the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatic competence. To this end, a study was conducted in which sixteen pre- and in-service teachers of English took a course in sociolinguistics for a semester-long period, and responded to the attitude scale for data collection. The results of the study revealed that there existed a statistically significant difference only in the cognitive component of pragmatic attitude which was viewed as consisting of four different components (i.e., cognitive, affective, behavioral, and teaching). This was understood as the influence of the semester-long course on changing teachers' beliefs and thoughts about the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatic competence in a more positive way. The overall findings of the study suggested that the semester-long pragmatic course could make meaningful contributions to changing teachers' pragmatic attitude, and heightening awareness about the need for pragmatic instruction in EFL classes, which gave support to the findings of previous studies (e.g., Billmyer, 1990; Kasper, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2009; Yang, 2006; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005).

As the results of the study indicated, one of the major problems with the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatic competence in our EFL classrooms is that both pre- and in-service teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of L2 pragmatic competence, which is likely to prevent them from implementing pragmatic instruction on their own right. This showed a strong, definite need for teacher training in pragmatics for English teachers nationwide in a systematic, structured way. As another problem interfering with L2 pragmatic instruction, it was found that our English textbooks did not handle pragmatic aspects of language in any systematic, satisfactory manner. Since textbooks as major input source play an important role in EFL learning, it is highly likely that a poor treatment of pragmatics in textbooks would fail to address various social, cultural factors influencing appropriate use of L2 in context, and make students become pragmatically deficient users of English in cross-cultural communication.

Regarding the weaknesses of the study, the whole number of subjects who participated in the study was sixteen teachers. This number may be small, and insufficient to employ inferential statistics through statistical techniques like paired-samples t-test that usually require the sample size of more than thirty informants. In addition, since only three out of sixteen subjects in the sample were male, there existed a
clear gender discrepancy which must have had a negative effect on the overall findings of the study. Nonetheless, as the findings of the study suggested, since pragmatic competence plays a critical role not only in everyday communication, but also in harmonious relationships among people, time should be allotted to pragmatic instruction in which our students see how socio-cultural norms and rules of English-speaking societies work for appropriateness of form and meaning in context, and practice what is learned for communication (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

REFERENCES


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**APPENDIX**

**Attitude scale**

Male ( ) Female ( )

The following is the questionnaire as part of my research. Your contribution is very important for it. I’d really appreciate it if you could answer the questionnaire as truthfully and seriously as possible. Thank you very much!

1. Please read each statement, and respond to it in terms of one of the following:
   - ‘Strongly disagree’ (1)
   - ‘Disagree’ (2)
   - ‘Undecided’ (3)
   - ‘Agree’ (4)
   - ‘Strongly agree’ (5)

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1. I think I have never heard the term 'Pragmatic Competence' before.
2. I think correct use of English is more important than appropriate use of it.
3. I think pragmatic ability involves knowledge of social & cultural functions of language.
4. I think pragmatic competence should be one part of communication abilities.
5. I think pragmatic errors have more negative effects on language use than grammatical errors.
6. I think misunderstanding or communication breakdown tends to be caused by pragmatic errors more often than grammatical errors.
7. I think knowing how to express politeness is closely related to pragmatic ability.
8. I feel uneasy when I have difficulties understanding speaker's intended message in interaction in English.
9. I feel worried when my intended message is not communicated successfully in English.
10. I feel uncomfortable, and get upset when being spoken to impolitely in English.
11. I'm usually worried about whether I sound polite or not during interaction in English.
12. I get nervous when I have no idea of how to say what I want to say in a specific
context.
13. I feel bad if I have difficulties using English due to lack of knowledge of English culture.
14. I mind and even feel offended when I am corrected in pragmatic errors.
15. I make efforts to promote my pragmatic knowledge by interacting with English native speakers as often as I can.
16. I usually have more difficulties using English socially & culturally appropriately than using English grammatically correctly.
17. I often experience difficulties both producing & comprehending speaker's intended message appropriately according to situations in English.
18. I often experience difficulties becoming polite when conversing in English.
19. I usually pay attention to which language form or speech style to choose among various language forms or speech styles according to situations when conversing in English.
20. I'm willing to take a teacher training program if it is thought to promote pragmatic ability.
21. I often have more difficulties correcting pragmatic errors than grammar-related errors.
22. I would teach students how to use English in socially & culturally appropriate ways.
23. I would guide students in achieving grammatical ability before pragmatic ability in their English learning.
24. I would use interactive activities to promote students' pragmatic ability whenever possible.
25. I would help students develop pragmatic ability as one important part of teaching communication skills in English.
26. I would teach students how to sound polite, cooperative and friendly according to different situations.
27. I would teach English culture as a way to help students develop their pragmatic ability.
28. I would give more corrective feedback at a pragmatic level than at a grammatical level.

II. Please briefly write down your answers to each question.
1. What do you think is pragmatic competence to you?
2. Is it important to learn and teach pragmatic competence? Why or Why not?
3. What do you think is the most effective and successful way to learn and teach pragmatic competence?
4. Do you think our current English classrooms have any problems with learning and
teaching pragmatic competence? Please write down your opinions, comments or suggestions.

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

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