The Study of Korean ESL Learners’ Verbal Acts
and Its Pedagogical Implications* **

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The present study aims to identify the areas for pedagogical instruction based on the analysis of how Korean nonnative speakers of English apologize with respect to different social statuses. The study involved open role plays as a data collection method and examined three types of apologies (i.e., English apologies by the native speakers of English and English as well as Korean apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English). The findings indicate that despite the nonnative speakers’ high linguistic proficiency in a second language, there were still gaps between the L2 apology speech acts by the Korean nonnative speakers of English and those by the native speakers of English. The differences were found in both pragmatic and linguistic adequacy. These gaps seem to be due to various factors including the nonnative speakers’ verbosity, transfer of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge from the first language, improper understanding of the target language social norms, and lack of second language linguistic forms to communicate successfully. Based on the present findings, areas were pointed out to instruct these particular nonnative speakers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing attention has been paid to developing and assessing the second language (L2) learners’ pragmatic abilities in the language teaching field for more than twenty years. Studies examining L2 learners’ interlanguage pragmatics have employed a variety of research methods, such as role plays, observational techniques, and discourse completion tasks. Interlanguage

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pragmatics is defined here narrowly as the learners' acquisition of speech act knowledge and production of speech acts in L2.

Research methods employed to examine L2 learners' interlanguage pragmatics can be characterized in terms of constraints these methods impose on the data from the least constrained to the most constrained (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). The most controlled method to collect data is a discourse completion task (DCT). In the DCT, informants are provided with a written questionnaire listing a number of brief situational descriptions. Then, the informants are asked to write down a response that they think they would say in the given context. The second most controlled method is a closed role play. In closed role plays, several situations are described, and subjects are asked to perform the speech act orally in response to the initial verbal cue issued by the interlocutor. The interlocutor's verbal cue is intended to set the tone for the situation (e.g., an angry taxi driver, a whining child, etc.), and there are no ongoing interactions involved between the participants. In contrast, in open role plays, a description of the situation is given to a subject. Then, the subject is asked to say what the person he/she is role-playing would say in a given situation through interacting with the interlocutor. The least constrained research method is an observational technique, which is to collect samples of spontaneous speech in natural discourse.

Observing natural discourse is the most authentic way to collect data. It reflects what speakers say in a real context rather than what they think they would say in a given situation. However, difficulties with this method have been noted by several researchers. Cohen (1996), for example, pointed out that: (a) the data may not yield enough or any target speech act performances, (b) it is very time-consuming to collect and analyze naturally occurring data, (c) it is very difficult to control contextual variables such as gender, age, first language background, and (d) it may be intrusive to use an recording equipment. Along the same line, Beebe and Takahashi (1989) suggested that “natural data give us lots of examples that are not at all comparable in terms of speakers, hearers, and social situations, unless one or two situations are selected, and this poses other limitations” (p. 120). Kasper and Dahl (1991) expressed a similar concern that cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparable data are difficult to collect via observational techniques.

Following observational methods, role plays are the second closest to authentic language use. The advantage of role plays over the observational technique is that they are replicable and that they easily allow for the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research. In addition, the situations are set up for a particular speech act to take place, making it possible to closely analyze ongoing interaction sequences of comparable data (Cohen, 1995). Role plays, however, are not without problems. One of the biggest weaknesses of a role play as a data collection method lies in its validity; it is not certain to what extent the informants' responses are representative of what they would actually say in real life. Role plays can force unnatural behaviors from the subjects. If
subjects are not good actors, the results could be problematic in that it is difficult to tell subjects' linguistic proficiency from their "situational adeptness" (Cohen & Olshtain, 1994, p. 152). There might also be a "response set" (i.e., tendency to have the response to one situation influenced by the response to another, in particular, in situations where subjects are limited to a series of the same type of speech act) (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981, p. 129). Moreover, subjects are not given the choice to opt out of the speech act. In the real world, people sometimes choose not to apologize, complain, refuse, and so on.

DCTs allow one to collect a large amount of data over a short period of time. Along with role plays, however, one of their major problems is the extent to which the data collected in this way truly reflect real language use. Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones (1989) further argued that decontextualized written responses in the DCT may not be comparable to what takes place in the actual interactions. Studies (Bodman & Eiscentin, 1988; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989) have shown that in comparison with open role plays, subjects tend to provide far shorter responses in the DCT, where no real negotiations take place. In addition, due to the nature of the written mode, informants have more time to plan and weigh their answers carefully and even to make corrections, a situation that is far from speech act realizations in an authentic context (Beebe & Cummings, 1995).

Using the data collection methods discussed so far, various speech act studies have been conducted, in which apologies are the second most widely researched speech act following requests. Most apology speech act research has used DCTs or role plays to elicit data. L2 research shows that a number of factors affect apology behaviors, including speakers' different perceptions of the apology as being universal or language-specific, transfer of first language (L1) pragmatic as well as linguistic knowledge, lack of L2 linguistic proficiency, and value assessments of contextual factors (Barlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; House, 1988, cited in Kasper, 1992; Garcia, 1989; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Wolfson, 1989).

Olshtain (1983) examined the apology behaviors by native Hebrew speakers as well as English and Russian L1 learners of Hebrew as an L2. The English speakers apologized significantly less in Hebrew than they did in their L1 (English), while the Russians apologized in Hebrew to the same extent as in their L1 (Russian). The English speakers perceived a less need to apologize in Hebrew than in English, reflecting their language-specific perceptions of apology norms. In contrast, the Russian speakers regarded an apology as a universal behavior, maintaining that "people need to apologize according to their feelings of responsibility, regardless of the language which they happen to be speaking" (Olshtain, 1983, p. 246).

Olshtain and Cohen (1989) showed that a transfer of L1 linguistic knowledge can lead to miscommunication in L2. For example, in the role-playing situation where a nonnative speaker
forgot a meeting, the nonnative said ‘I really, very sorry. I forgot. I fell asleep. Understand?’ The nonnative’s use of the expression ‘Understand?’ is a direct translation from Hebrew. When it is used with rising intonation in Hebrew, the expression would call for cooperation, to the effect of creating a feeling of solidarity between speaker and hearer. In English, such use of ‘Understand?’ may cause exactly the opposite effect and sound impudent to native English speakers.

The L2 learners’ L1 pragmatic knowledge can also affect L2 speech act behaviors (House, 1988, cited in Kasper, 1992; García, 1989). House, for example, observed that German learners of British English transferred their L1-based preference for self-oriented strategies into L2 apology speech acts, whereas native British English speakers showed a concern for the hearer and expressed self-deficiency.

Learners’ lack of L2 proficiency is another factor that may influence the apology speech act behaviors. In a study by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), Hebrew-speaking learners of English did not seem to know the suitable L2 linguistic forms to convey their intentions and used general formulas instead, thus often saying too little in L2. Unlike native English speakers, the learners also avoided intensification and the use of softeners in L2.

Furthermore, speakers from different cultures have their own perspectives on contextual factors (e.g., severity of the infraction and participants’ social status and social distance) which can affect their apology behaviors (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Wolfson, 1989). In regard to value judgments on social status, for instance, Japanese offenders varied the apology forms with respect to a listener’s social status with a greater extent than the native English speakers (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990).

The present study aims to investigate the interlanguage pragmatics of Korean learners of English as a second language (ESL) via open role plays. More specifically, it aims to (a) obtain a description of apologies realized by Korean nonnative speakers of English with respect to different social statuses, (b) point out the nature and extent of gaps between native and nonnative apologies, and (c) suggest areas for classroom instruction to rectify the problem of gaps for this specific group of learners.

II. METHOD

1. Subjects

The present study involved twenty subjects and two interlocutors. Ten native speakers of English (five females and five males) and ten Korean nonnative speakers of English (five
females and five males) participated in the study, who were in their mid 20's to mid 30's. They were all graduate students at a university in North America. All the Korean nonnative speakers of English scored 600 or above in the TOEFL. They had a formal English schooling for eleven years in Korea and had stayed in the States for a year and half at least. The two interlocutors were a native speaker of English and a native speaker of Korean. They were all female graduate students at the same university.

2. Procedures

Subjects in both native and nonnative English speaker groups individually engaged in open role plays with a native English-speaking interlocutor in English. After a week, only the Korean nonnative speakers of English were asked to perform the same role plays in Korean with a native Korean-speaking interlocutor to establish baseline data on Korean apology speech acts.

All the role plays took place in a linguistics laboratory located at the university. In all cases, prior to engaging in role plays, each subject received a card which described the role-playing situations. The first role play (role play 1) involves not showing up at a close friend’s party for the second time (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of an equal social status). The second role play (role play 2) concerns a student’s forgetting a meeting with a professor for the second time. The professor has made a special appointment to discuss a paper with the student who calls her by her first name (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of a higher social status). The third role play (role play 3) involves forgetting to take one’s sibling to a shopping mall for the second time (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of a lower social status). The apology situations were provided in English and Korean in the English and Korean role plays, respectively. Subjects’ role plays were audio-taped and later transcribed.

3. Data Analysis

The data collected from the subjects were analyzed in terms of the following five apology strategies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1987):

1) Expressing apology: expressing an apology with a relevant performative verb such as ‘I’m sorry’
2) Explaining: explaining a situation that has led to the infraction
3) Acknowledging responsibility: acknowledging the fault in triggering the infraction
4) Offering repair: offering to compensate for the damage caused by the offense
5) Promising non-recurrence: promising not to repeat the same infraction in the future
III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results of the present study are discussed with respect to different social statuses of the speaker receiving the apology.

1. Equal Social Status

Table 1 presents the subjects' use of apology strategies in role play 1 (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of an equal social status).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expressing apology</th>
<th>Explaining</th>
<th>Acknowledging responsibility</th>
<th>Offering Repair</th>
<th>Promising non-recurrence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs (E)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs (K)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: NSs = English apologies by the native speakers of English  
NNSs (E) = English apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English  
NNSs (K) = Korean apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English

First, as to the use of the expressing apology strategy, the Korean nonnative speakers of English (NNSs), as in their L1 (100%), used this strategy in much the same way as the native speakers of English (NSs) (NSs 100% vs. NNSs 100%). However, differences were noted between these groups in terms of the linguistic choices for expressing apologies. Although both NSs and NNSs used English expressions, such as 'I am very sorry,' 'I'm really sorry,' 'I'm so sorry,' and 'I'm terribly sorry,' some of the NNSs used expressions, such as 'Can you forgive me?' and 'Please, forgive me, please.' None of the NSs used such expressions, and these utterances were not found in L1 apologies by the NNSs, either. This extra intensity on the part of the NNSs was not necessary, considering the equal status of the person receiving the apology. Another variation of the NNSs from the target language norms was the use of an adverb 'first' before saying 'I'm sorry,' as shown in example (1).

(1) 1-NS Role play

I (interlocutor): Hey, what happened to you last night?

NNS (nonnative speaker of English): Oh, well, first, I'm sorry that I committed.

But, I had an urgent business to take care of last night.
Second, with respect to the explaining strategy, similar to their L1 production (100%), the NNSs used this strategy as frequently as the NSs (NSs 100% vs. NNSs 100%).

Third, the NNSs and NSs used the acknowledging responsibility strategy differently, in which the NNSs were less likely to acknowledge the responsibility (NSs 80% vs. NNSs 30%), as opposed to their frequent use of this strategy in L1 (60%). Such a difference from the target language norms might be due to the fact that while the NNSs might be aware of the linguistic choices to express acknowledgement of responsibility, they might have been uncertain about the L2 sociolinguistic rules of speaking in apologies (i.e., acknowledging responsibility to a speaker of an equal social status); and thus, they failed to use the strategy as much as the NSs.

Fourth, as with the trend observed in the use of the acknowledging responsibility strategy, the NS and NNS groups demonstrated a different use of the offering repair strategy. Unlike their frequent use of this strategy in L1 (80%), the NNSs significantly underused the offering repair strategy in comparison with the NSs (NSs 80% vs. NNSs 30%). This may be due to the fact that the NNSs lacked L2 linguistic knowledge to use this specific strategy or that despite being aware of the L2 forms for this strategy, they might have been unsure about the L2 sociolinguistic rules in the act of apologizing.

Finally, regarding the use of the promising non-recurrence strategy, the NNSs and NSs showed a similar tendency (NSs 10% vs. NNSs 0%), in which the NNSs used this strategy 20% of the time in L1.

2. Higher Social Status

Table 2 presents the subjects’ use of apology strategies in role play 2 (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of a higher social status).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects' Use of Apology Strategies in Role Play 2</th>
<th>Expressing apology</th>
<th>Explaining</th>
<th>Acknowledging responsibility</th>
<th>Offering repair</th>
<th>Promising non-recurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs(E)</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs(K)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: NSs = English apologies by the native speakers of English
NNSs (E) = English apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English
NNSs (K) = Korean apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English

First, with respect to the expressing apology strategy, the NNSs, consistent with their L1 use (100%), used this strategy in much the same way as the NSs (NSs 100% vs. NNSs 100%).
Second, concerning the explaining strategy, similar to their L1 production (100%), the NNSs used this strategy as frequently as the NSs (NSs 100% vs. NNSs 100%). However, the NNSs provided explanations with significantly more words than the NSs. Such a propensity is manifested only in their L2, not in L1. The NNSs elaborated the preconditions, the background, and the justifications for their interactions in a very wordy manner. This NNSs’ tendency might be perceived by the listener as irrelevant as well as superfluous and might consequently lessen the force of the speech act. Example (2) illustrates the verbosity of the NNSs. In example (2), the NNS intended to simply say ‘I think I need to be more careful about maintaining my calendar.’ Instead, the following was observed:

(2) I-NNS Role play

I: I know that happens sometimes. I wish you had called or something cause I came specifically to see you this morning, and I know you wanted to work on your paper.

NNS: Yeah, you know, I don’t know, if I, you know, if I couldn’t make it, I’m sure I called you. But, you know, I forgot. That’s why I couldn’t, you know, even make a phone call to you. Sorry, I’m terribly sorry. I’m sure, you know, I think, I’d better, you know, care about, how can I say, I think I’d better, um (pause), watch out. So, take care of my schedule more carefully.

The NNSs’ verbosity appears to show their lack of confidence and eagerness to ensure that their intention has been communicated to the listener, which was also found in the study by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain further suggested that learners’ L2 proficiency may affect the manner in which they attempt to approximate to the L2 norms. That is, lower L2 proficiency learners have a tendency to avoid verbosity because of their limited linguistic knowledge. In contrast, higher L2 proficiency learners feel confident about their L2 linguistic knowledge, but are not confident about the effectiveness of their speech acts, becoming verbose than the target language speakers.

Third, the NNSs and NSs showed a similar use of the acknowledging responsibility strategy (NSs 90% vs. NNSs 90%). The frequent use of this strategy by the NNSs was consistent with their L1 use (80%). Note that in role play 1 (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of an equal social status), the NNSs did not acknowledge the responsibility as much as the NSs (NSs 80% vs. NNSs 30%).

What is interesting here is that irrespective of a social status, both the NSs and the NNSs used the acknowledging responsibility strategy in their L1 apologies (role play 1: NSs 80% vs. NNSs 60%; role play 2: NSs 90% vs. NNSs 80%). However, when apologizing in L2, the NNSs showed a different tendency. Value assessments of social status seem to have affected their use
of the acknowledging responsibility strategy. The NNSs appeared to have different cultural views than the NSs on apologizing to a speaker of the same social status, as opposed to apologizing to a speaker of a higher social status in English. In other words, in role play 2, in which the NNSs interacted with an interlocutor of a higher social status, they appeared to follow L2 English norms for using the acknowledging responsibility strategy (i.e., frequent use of the strategy, 90%), paralleling their propensity to use it in their L1 (80%). On the other hand, in role play 1, despite their frequent use of the acknowledging responsibility strategy in L1 (60%), the NNSs did not transfer their L1 strategy use (60%) to L2 apology performances (30%) when interacting with an interlocutor of the same social status in L2. It appears that the NNSs failed to feel the need to acknowledge responsibility to an equal as much as when apologizing to a speaker of a higher social status, thus acknowledging responsibility significantly less than their native English-speaking counterparts.

Fourth, as to the offering repair strategy, the NNSs did not offer repair as much as the NSs (NSs 90% vs. NNSs 20%), which seems to be due to L1 transfer (20%). Several differences were noted between the NSs and NNSs. Most NSs acknowledged that this was the second time that they had failed to keep the appointment with the professor in an explicit manner. They also tried to assure that they would keep the next one. Less than one third of the NNSs gave such assurances in L2. The NSs showed their concern for the hearer by suggesting first that they were going to come during her office hours so that she would not have to make a special trip. The NNS rarely made such an offer in L2. Moreover, the NSs tended to reinforce their positive responses with upgraders such as ‘sure,’ ‘really,’ and ‘indeed’ when the professor suggested another possible meeting, while the NNSs responded to the professor’s suggestion with a simple affirmation such as ‘yes’ or ‘yeah.’ The following examples illustrate the contrasting behaviors between these two groups (examples (3) and (4) for an interaction between interlocutor and native speaker of English; examples (5) and (6) for an interaction between interlocutor and Korean nonnative speaker of English):

(3) I-NS Role play

I: Yeah. Um, you know, are you still interested in getting together to talk about your paper or...?

NS: Yeah, I am indeed. Very interested. Um, but, I know that I’m going to have to fit my schedule into yours cause you said you waited, but I didn’t show up.

(4) I-NS Role play

I: Okay, well, um, I don’t know. Do you still want to talk about the paper or I mean...?

NS: Yeah, sure. Um, I’d really like to. I’m still really interested in talking about
the paper. um, and, I promise that I won’t forget next time. I’ll try to make it to your office hours this time because I realized, I, I mean, I asked you to come in once. It was a special trip for you and I missed it. So, that’s my situation, you know. So, whatever I’ll have to do, I’ll make it during your office hours. Um, which are, whenever your office hours would be.

(5) I-NNS Role play

I: Ok. Um, so, do you think you can make it to my office hours next time?
NNS: Yeah. I want to make an appointment with you next time.
I: Ok. Do you think you can come during my office hours? Cause I came this time for you.
NNS: Yeah, I’ll come here next time.

(6) I-NNS Role play

I: Do you still want to go over the paper with me?
NNS: Yes, please. Do you mind?
I: Well, would you, how do you want to do that? Would you be able to make it to my office hours later?
NNS: Um, yes.

Furthermore, despite the role-playing instruction which stated that the student call the professor by her first name, the tendency to frequently use the social status title was manifested in the NNSs’ L2 apologies. Such a tendency was also observed by Hijirada and Sohn (1986) in that Japanese and Korean are very status-conscious and that they freely use power-laden titles in everyday interactions. This point is illustrated in examples (7)-(9). The frequent use of a social status title by the NNSs (i.e., ‘professor,’ not necessarily ‘Professor plus last name’) seems to be due to transfer of linguistic as well as pragmatic knowledge from their L1. The second person pronoun ‘you’ in English can address a speaker regardless of a social status, whereas the same equivalent ‘you’ in Korean cannot be used to refer to a speaker of a higher social status. When referring to others, person pronouns are rarely used in Korean; social status titles or kinship terms are conventionally used instead, which reflects Korean cultural values on hierarchy and respect for age (Hijirada & Sohn, 1986).

(7) NNS A: Oh, oh. I’m sorry, professor. I just forgot. How could this happen to me? I’m sorry. Oh.
(8) **NNS B**: Yes, I just, I just realized that, but, you know what happened, professor? Actually, I had a doctor’s appointment.

(9) **NNS C**: Oh, I’m sorry. Um, sorry, Miss, um, professor, you know. I’m terribly sorry. But, I don’t have any, um, intention, you know, to, not to appear, you know, to appear in your office.

Finally, the NNSs used the promising non-recurrence strategy in much the same way as the NSs (NSs 30% vs. NNSs 30%), in which the NNSs successfully avoided negative transfer from L1 (80%). However, there were differences as to the linguistic choices for this strategy. The NSs used the promising non-recurrence strategy within the immediate future (e.g., ‘I’ll make sure that I don’t miss next time,’ ‘I promise that I won’t forget next time,’ and ‘I’ll write down on the palm of my hand so that I can make sure I remember this time’). In contrast, the NNSs employed this strategy in a more absolute sense (e.g., ‘I’ll never do this again,’ and ‘I’ll never do that kind of things, again’).

3. Lower Social Status

Table 3 presents the subjects’ use of apology strategies in role play 3 (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of a lower social status).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expressing apology</th>
<th>Explaining</th>
<th>Acknowledging responsibility</th>
<th>Offering repair</th>
<th>Promising non-recurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSs</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs (E)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNSs (K)</td>
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<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Notes: NSs = English apologies by the native speakers of English  
NNSs (E) = English apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English  
NNSs (K) = Korean apologies by the Korean nonnative speakers of English*

First, the NNSs and NSs used the expressing apology strategy differently. Similar to their L1 production (100%), the NNSs were more likely to use this strategy than their English-speaking counterparts (NSs 60% vs. NNSs 100%). Differences were also noted between these two groups in terms of their use of linguistic forms for expressing apologies. The NSs used expressions such as ‘I’m sorry, darling,’ ‘I’m really sorry,’ and ‘I’m so sorry, sweetie,’ while the NNSs used expressions such as ‘Can you forgive me?’ and ‘Please forgive me, please.’ This extra intensity
on the part of the NNSs was not necessary, given the lower status of the person receiving the apology. The NNSs did not seem to be able to use apology expressions appropriate to the L2 interactional context. This point is illustrated in example (10). Another variation of the NNSs from the target language norms was the use of an adverb 'first' before saying 'I'm sorry,' as shown in example (11):

(10) I-NNS Role play
   I: Oh, you forgot again, you promised!
   NNS: Yeah, you know, you know me, you know, oh. I'm terribly busy right now.
   Maybe you can know that if you grow up. Can you forgive me? I know
   you're a pretty nice and sweet girl. Please forgive me, please.

(11) I-NNS Role play
   I: Oh, you forgot again, you promised!
   NNS: Yeah. First, I'm sorry, but I was so busy to finish my paper, you know. I
   have a lot of things to do, so I'm sorry.

Second, regarding the explaining strategy, similar to their L1 use (90%), the NNSs used this strategy as frequently as the NSs (NSs 90% vs. NNSs 90%). However, the NNSs tended to provide explanations, using significantly more words than the NSs to accomplish a similar pragmatic goal. Such a propensity is manifested in L2 alone, not in L1.

Third, the NNSs and NSs used the acknowledging responsibility strategy differently in apologizing to a person of a lower social status. While the NNSs frequently used this strategy in L1 (80%), they were less likely to acknowledge the responsibility when apologizing in L2 (NSs 90% vs. NNSs 40%). The NNSs’ difference from the native norms in this case would be that the NNSs might be aware of the linguistic choices for expressing acknowledgment of responsibility, but they might have been unsure about the sociolinguistic rules of speaking in the act of apologizing (i.e., acknowledging responsibility to a speaker of a lower social status), thus, failing to use this particular strategy as frequently as the NSs.

Fourth, similar to their use of the offering repair strategy in L1 (100%), the NNSs used this strategy in much the same way as the NSs (NSs 100% vs. NNSs 100%). Finally, as to the use of promising non-recurrence strategy, the NNSs and NSs showed a similar tendency (NSs 0% vs. NNSs 0%), in which the NNSs used this strategy 10% of the time in their L1.
IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The present study analyzed how the NNSs apologize with respect to different social statuses (i.e., apologizing to a speaker of (a) an equal social status, (b) a higher social status and (c) a lower social status) to identify the areas for pedagogical instruction for this particular group of NNSs. The findings indicate that despite the NNSs’ high L2 linguistic proficiency, there were still gaps between the L2 apology speech acts by the NNSs and those by the NSs. The differences were found in pragmatic as well as linguistic adequacy. These gaps seem to be due to various factors, such as the NNSs’ verbosity, transfer of both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge from L1, improper understanding of L2 social norms, and lack of L2 linguistic forms to communicate successfully.

The pedagogical implications of this study lie in the fact that studies of speech acts can provide valuable information on the range of communication strategies available to native speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. More specifically, the research findings can inform language teaching practitioners of how to address cultural differences manifested in the production of speech act between L1 and L2. Speech act research is also useful to L2 materials developers since they can incorporate the typical patterns used by the target language speakers into L2 syllabus design and textbook development. Moreover, such line of research enables the learners to better acquire the target language use by making them aware of the general patterns of speech act behaviors in L2.

Based on the present findings on apology speech acts by the NSs and NNSs, the following areas can be identified for instructing these particular NNSs: First, the NNSs would need to know appropriate linguistic choices to express apologies. That is, it would not be suitable to use English expressions such as ‘Can you forgive me?’ or ‘Please forgive me, please’ in apologizing to a speaker of the same or lower social status. It would also not be appropriate to use an adverb ‘first’ before saying ‘I am sorry.’ Second, the NNSs need to avoid being verbose and learn how to succinctly explain a situation that has led to the infraction when apologizing in English. Teachers can further discuss how Americans value being brief and to the point and introduce other related cultural aspects. Third, when apologizing in English, the NNSs should be aware that they need to acknowledge responsibility regardless of a social status of the speaker receiving the apology. Fourth, the NNSs need to express a concern for the bearer when offering to compensate for the undesirable consequences caused by the infraction. Fifth, the NNSs can be exposed to cultural differences between American and Korean, including cultural tips about the power-laden titles in the native versus target cultures. Finally, the NNSs can be presented with general patterns of target language speakers’ use of the promising non-recurrence strategy within the immediate future rather than in a more absolute sense.
In order to address the areas for instruction outlined earlier, the following teaching techniques can be suggested: (a) a teacher's explicit explanation of apology strategies in English (i.e., expressing apology, explaining, acknowledging responsibility, offering repair, and promising non-recurrence), (b) observation tasks (i.e., open and structured observation tasks), (c) model dialogues (i.e., listening to native speakers' apology speech acts), (d) role-playing activities with specifications pertaining to contextual and sociocultural factors in apology speech acts, such as relative power of the interlocutor, social distance of participants, severity of infraction, and formality, (e) pair work activities and classroom discussion in which students are expected to discuss suitable apology realizations in given situations, and (f) collection of apology speech act data by learners outside class as a follow-up to classroom activities and discussion of these findings in the next class (see Appendix for a sample of teaching segment).

This study involved a small number of subjects and role plays as a data elicitation task. Clearly, there is a great need for more authentic data collection methods in assessing L2 learners' pragmatic abilities, which can best examine the acquisition and development of learners' interlanguage pragmatics. Combined methods should also be used to gain a fuller picture of L2 learners' speech act realizations. As Kasper and Dahl (1991) suggested, one main method can be used to collect the primary source of data, with the help of another method for a more thorough interpretation of the primary data. Alternatively, two or more data collection methods can have an equivalent status in the study, complementing the findings on the research question at hand.

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APPENDIX
Strategic Awareness

Explaining Strategy

Compare the following explaining strategies. Which one might sound better to Americans and why? What quality do Americans value when explaining?

Situation: forgetting an appointment with a professor

a) I guess I must not have put the appointment with you on my calendar.

b) Because I easily forget things, I always try to write appointments down in my planner. I guess I didn’t write your appointment in my planner, so I forgot about it. Maybe if I had written it down, I would have remembered it and would have been in your office today.

________ is a better explanation because Americans value __________.

Applicable levels: tertiary education, adult education
Key words: interlanguage, pragmatics, apology speech acts

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