Comparison of Questions in Conversational English, Foreigner Talk Discourse and Korean EFL Textbook Dialogues[*]

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The purpose of this study is to compare Korean EFL textbook dialogues with native-speaker's English conversation and foreigner talk discourse regarding the use of questions. According to previous research, both ESL/EFL textbook dialogues and foreigner talk discourse are different from English conversation in many aspects. In particular, both types of discourse use a lot of questions in conversation. This study focuses on question types of EFL textbook dialogues and compares the results with previous findings of native speakers' conversational English and foreigner talk discourse. The results shows that EFL textbook dialogues are different not only from conversational English but foreigner talk discourse even though there are some similarities among the three types of discourse. In other words, EFL textbooks have distinctive features that are different from both conversational English and foreigner talk discourse. Implications for English education and materials development are also discussed.

I. INTRODUCTION

In second or foreign language learning, textbooks have been a major means to expose students to a target language. It is often assumed that the dialogues of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) or English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) materials imitate English native speakers' conversation so that language learners can apply what they have learned to the real-life conversation. Previous studies, however, show that ESL and EFL materials are very different from the actual talk of English native speakers (NSs) in many aspects. For example, there is a difference in conversational structures (i.e., pre-closing, fillers, pauses, unfinished sentences of actual talk) between actual talk and ESL materials dialogues (Scotton & Bernsten, 1988). Secondly, there are significant differences in opening and

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closing sequences in interaction (i.e., prolonged openings and exaggerated polite markers of textbook dialogues) between real-life and ESL materials dialogue (Price, 1988). Thirdly, there is a significant difference in the usage of grammatical structures between conversational English and EFL textbook dialogues (Richards, 1976; Turano-Perkins, 1979; Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999). Finally, there is a difference in the use of lexis between natural conversation and ESL/EFL material dialogues (Holmes, 1988; Nesbitt, 1980). In other words, the English language of learning materials does not reflect actual conversational English.

Similarly, there are also several differences between English native speakers' conversation and foreign talk discourse (FTD). First of all, FTD is significantly more oriented to the "here and now" than the NS-NS conversation (Gaies, 1979; Krashen, 1982; Long, 1980). Secondly, NSs use significantly more 'or-choice' questions in FTD than with other NSs (Long, 1981). Thirdly, there is a tendency for NSs to accept unintentional topic switches by nonnative speakers (NNSs) when a communication breakdown occurs (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Finally, there is a well-documented preference for questions over statements (Freed, 1980; Long, 1980; Scarcella & Higa, 1982), with questions being especially favored for topic-initiating moves (Gaies, 1979; Long, 1981).

Questions have been a useful means to conversation in native speakers' interaction as well as FTD because they are often used as comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks in conversation. In particular, the use of questions is favored in FTD rather than NS's conversational English. For example, yes/no questions are more often used in FTD because the questions are more likely to draw NNSs into the conversation. Yes/no questions make the NNS's linguistic task easier by making his or her conversational role easier. Both comprehension checks and confirmation checks are also more frequently used in FTD. The former help NSs assess whether they are communicating successfully with NNSs while the latter tell NSs whether they understand what the NNSs are trying to communicate to them. In addition, previous studies also show that questions, especially wh-questions, are far more frequently used in Korean EFL textbook dialogues than NS conversation (Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999), which is one of the features of FTD. Furthermore, it is reported that there is a difference in the development of wh-questions by Korean learners of English and English native speakers (Jung-Tae Kim, 2002). But it is not clear how different the questions in EFL textbook dialogues are from those in FTD and NS conversation. It is of necessity and use, therefore, to examine whether questions are used in Korean EFL textbook dialogues in the same way as they are in NS conversation or FTD.

The purpose of this study is to compare EFL textbook dialogues with foreigner talk discourse (FTD) and with NS English conversation (NEC) regarding the use of questions. To examine questions in Korean EFL textbook dialogues (ETD), the study has the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the present and non-present temporal marking of verbs in NEC, FTD, and ETD?

2. Is there a difference in the average number of topic-continuing moves per topic-initiating move among NEC, FTD, and ETD?

3. Is there a difference in the proportions of topic-initiating moves which were questions, statements, and imperatives among NEC, FTD, and ETD?

4. Is there a difference in the proportions of intonation (uninverted), wh-, yes/no, and tag questions in topic-initiating moves among NEC, FTD, and ETD?

5. Is there a difference in the proportions of question types in NEC, FTD, and ETD?

6. Is there a difference in the proportions of yes/no and choice questions in NEC, FTD, and ETD?

7. Is there a relationship in the rank order correlation coefficients between a production order for ESL learners and the morpheme frequency orders in NEC, FTD, and ETD?

II. METHOD

1. Data Collection

Since this study was closely related with Long's study (1981), FTD and NEC data of his study were used to be compared with ETD data. The FTD data, which were originally obtained from Long (1980), were based on 36 five-minute conversations between American college students and Japanese young adults. NS subjects were 12 ESL teachers, 12 teachers of subjects other than languages, and 12 NSs who were not teachers of any kind. Within each group of NSs, 6 were female, and 6 male. The Japanese were 18 male and 18 female ESL students of elementary proficiency in English as determined by their placement test scores. Since FTD was defined as NSs talk which is directed to NNS, this study analyzed only the utterances of NSs for the FTD.

The NEC data were part of a larger corpus which Carterette and Jones (1974) obtained for quite different purposes. The data consisted of transcripts of eight informal spontaneous conversations among members of NS triads, amounting to 15,694 lexical words. The 24 subjects were young American adults from elementary psychology classes, most of whom did not know each other. The subjects were told that the situation was to be completely non-directive and that they were at the party. Of course, the subjects knew they were being recorded as in the FTD study.

Finally, five high-school EFL textbooks used in Korea were randomly selected because the random selection is a statistical way of confirming the representativeness of the sample. The dialogue section of the 10th grade textbook was analyzed for the ETD data because the 10th grade textbook is the highest level of a textbook which all the Korean students are required to take at secondary schools. Both average and overall data were used.

2. Data Analysis

The relative frequencies of present and non-present temporal marking of verbs were conducted to verify the nature of the "here and now" of both FTD and ETD. It was expected that both FTD and ETD would use more present tense markings than NEC because both types of discourse tended to be restricted to issues within the current time reference of the speakers. This analysis was conducted on the entire FTD corpus and on a randomly selected segment of both ETD and NEC.

The average number of topic-continuing moves per topic-initiating move was calculated on a random sample of 50 sequential topic-initiating moves and the topic-continuing moves elicited by them. The analysis was intended to ascertain the amount of information exchanged about topics, i.e., the relative brevity of their treatment in the NEC, FTD and ETD. When any topic-initiating moves were ambiguous, those cases were discounted and the following sets of initiating and continuing moves were coded until 50 such sets were obtained. In order to examine whether questions were more frequently used in both FTD and ETD than NEC, the proportions of questions in topic-initiating moves were compared with those of statements and imperatives. In particular, the proportions of intonation, wh-, yes/no and tag questions in both topic-initiating moves and the entire corpora were compared among NEC, FTD and ETD.

Chi-square tests were conducted on the NEC, FTD, and ETD data to determine the difference in the proportion of questions and the ratio of topic-initiating and topic-continuing moves among the three types of discourse. In addition, Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients were calculated to compare grammatical morphemes in NEC, FTD and ETD with an aggregated morpheme production order for ESL learners, i.e., the average order established by Krashen (1977) after reviewing the previous studies. The eight morphemes were progressive –*ing*, plural, copula, auxiliary, (definite and indefinite) article, (regular and irregular) past tense, third person singular –*s*, and possessive '*s*. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (v. 12.0) was employed for data analysis.

III.   RESULT

Although this study was to compare NEC, FTD and ETD regarding the use of questions, the first research question was to compare ETD with both NEC and FTD regarding the relative frequencies of present and non-present temporal marking of verbs. Because the "here and now" nature was one of the FTD features, it was necessary to examine the current time reference of topics concerned among NEC, FTD, and ETD. As Table 1 shows, both FTD and ETD including NEC contained more verbs marked for present than for

non-present time. While FTD (59.84%) tended to be located slightly more in the "now" than NEC (55.71%), this difference was not statistically significant ($X^2 = 3.33$, p > .05). But ETD (68.58%) was significantly limited to the current time reference rather than both NEC ($X^2 = 16.01$, p < .001) and FTD ($X^2 = 4.15$, p < .05).

TABLE 1
Proportions of Present and Non-present Temporal Marking of Verbs in NEC, FTD and ETD

	Present		Non-present	
	n	%	n	%
NEC	317	55.71	252	44.29
FTD	1,268	59.84	851	40.16
ETD	3,016	68.58	1,469	32.75
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 3.33, p > .05, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 16.01, p < .001, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 4.15, p < .05				

The second research question was related to topic development, which was to compare ETD with both FTD and NEC regarding the ratio of topic-continuing to topic-initiating moves. The ratio was calculated to see how many topic-continuing moves were made when a topic is initiated by a speaker in NEC, FTD and ETD. In terms of the ratio of topic-continuing to topic-initiating moves ETD seemed to be similar to FTD rather than NEC. According to Table 2, 211 topic-continuing moves per 50 topic-initiating ones occurred in FTD and 111 topic-continuing ones in ETD, and there were 606 topic-continuing moves per 50 topic-initiating moves in NEC. There were 12.12 topic-continuing moves per topic-initiating move in NEC on the average, but only 4.22 moves in FTD and 2.22 ones in ETD. NEC had about three times more topic-continuing moves than FTD and six times more topic-continuing moves than ETD. In other words, native speakers tended to talk about a certain topic much longer in NEC whereas topics more frequently changed in FTD and ETD within given time. In fact, there was a significant difference in the ratio of topic-continuing to topic-initiating moves among NEC, FTD and ETD because differences were shown between NEC and FTD ($X^2 = 5.77$, p < .001), between NEC and ETD ($X^2 = 60.06$, p < .001) and between FTD and ETD ($X^2 = 3.80$, p < .05). In short, ETD seemed to have its own conceptual framework because it resembled neither FTD nor NEC in the ratio of topic-continuing to topic-initiating moves.

TABLE 2
Ratio of Topic-continuing to Topic-initiating Moves in NEC, FTD and ETD

Move	NEC	FTD	ETD
Topic-initiating	50	50	50
Topic-continuing	606	211	111
Mean	12.12	4.22	2.22
Standard Deviation	10.33	3.59	9.94
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 5.77, p < .001, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 60.06, p < .001, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 3.80, p < .05			

Table 3 shows that out of 50 topic-initiating moves, 48 moves (96%) and 42 ones (84%) were formed by questions in FTD and ETD, respectively whereas 31 moves (62%) in NEC. As Long (1981) claimed, native speakers initiated a topic with questions when they conversed with nonnative speakers rather than with other native speakers. In addition, a third of the conversation was initiated with statements in NEC (34%), but it was only four and twelve percent of conversation initiated with a statement in FTD and ETD, respectively. Regarding the proportions of topic-initiating moves which were questions, statements and imperatives, there were significant differences between NEC and FTD (X^2 = 17.54, p < .001) and between NEC and ETD (X^2 = 14.84, p < .001), but there was no difference between FTD and ETD (X^2 = 1.26, p > .05). In other words, both FTD and ETD were different from NEC because both FTD and ETD used much more questions than NEC, which was similar to previous studies (Long, 1981; Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999). In fact, the overuse of questions was one of the features in FTD and ETD. In short, although NEC was different from the others, there was a similarity between ETD and FTD in terms of the proportions of topic-initiating moves formed by questions, statements and imperatives.

TABLE 3
Proportions of Topic-initiating Moves in NEC, FTD, and ETD
Formed by Questions, Statements, and Imperatives

	Questions		Statements		Imperatives	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
NEC	31	62.0	17	34.0	2	4.0
FTD	48	96.0	2	4.0	0	0.0
ETD	42	84.0	6	12.0	2	4.0
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 17.54, p < .001, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 14.84, p < .001, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 1.26, p > .05						

Although both ETD and FTD were similar in terms of the overuse of questions for topic-initiating moves, it did not mean ETD used the same question types as FTD because the two types of discourse did not use questions in the same way in the proportions of topic-initiating moves. Table 4 shows the proportions of 50 topic- initiating moves formed by intonation, wh-, yes/no, and tag questions, and wh-questions were most favored in topic-initiations of ETD, FTD and NEC, constituting 52 percent in ETD, 50 percent in FTD and 30 percent in NEC. The second frequently used ones were yes/no questions in the three types of discourse, but FTD (40%) used them much more than either ETD (26%) or NEC (20%). Although the previous study pointed out that ETD favored wh- and yes/no questions and NEC intonation questions (Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999), this study did not conform the same results. In fact, this study did not show the significant difference regarding the proportions of intonation, wh-, yes/no and tag questions in topic-initiating between NEC and FTD (X^2 = 0.01, p >.05), between NEC and ETD (X^2 = 1.53, p > .05), and between FTD and ETD (X^2 = 0.12, p > .05). Also, there was no difference in the use of

tag and intonation questions. In short, the proportions of topic- initiating moves did not show the difference in question types used in NEC, FTD and ETD.

TABLE 4
Proportions of Topic-initiating Moves in NEC, FTD and ETD
Formed by Intonation, Wh-, Yes/no, and Tag Questions

	Intonation		Wh-		Yes/no		Tag	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NEC	5	10.0	15	30.0	10	20.0	1	2.0
FTD	2	4.0	25	50.0	20	40.0	1	2.0
ETD	1	2.0	26	52.0	13	26.0	2	4.0
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 0.01, p >.05, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 1.53, p > .05, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 0.12, p > .05								

[*]Percentage indicates the proportion of question types to 50 topic-initiating moves.

Whereas Tables 2, 3 and 4 show only the proportions of topic-initiating moves, Table 5 shows the proportions of question types to all the questions used in NEC, FTD and ETD. A total of 322 questions occurred in NEC whereas 1,567 questions were used in FTD and 2,956 ones in ETD. In NEC, 58 intonation (18.0%), 159 wh- (49.4%), 95 yes/no (29.5%), and 10 tag (3.1%) questions occurred. In FTD, 579 intonation (36.9%), 521 wh- (33.2%), 451 yes/no (28.8%) and 16 tag (1.0%) questions were used; on the other hand, 89 intonation (3.0%), 1581 wh- (53.5%), 1122 yes/no (38.0%), and 164 tag (5.5%) questions in ETD appeared. In other word, the three types of discourse did not show similar patterns in terms of the occurrences of questions. In fact, there were significant differences in the proportions of the types of questions between NEC and FTD (X^2 = 48.32, p < .001), between NEC and ETD (X^2 = 323.20, p < .001), and between FTD and ETD (X^2 = 331.96, p < .001).

TABLE 5
Proportions of Questions in NEC, FTD and ETD

	Intonation		Wh-		Yes/no		Tag		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
NEC	58	18.0	159	49.4	95	29.5	10	3.1	322	100.0
FTD	579	36.9	521	33.2	451	28.8	16	1.0	1,567	100.0
ETD	89	3.0	1,581	53.5	1,122	38.0	164	5.5	2,956	100.0
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 48.32, p <.001, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 323.20, p < .001, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 331.96, p < .001										

Research question six was to examine the proportions of yes/no question and choice question in NEC, FTD and ETD, in particular, to see how different ETD was from FTD and/or NEC. According to Table 6, there were significant differences regarding the proportions of yes/no and choice questions between NEC and FTD (X^2 = 6.16, p < .05) and between NEC and ETD (X^2 = 9.73, p < .05), but there was no difference between FTD and

ETD ($X^2 = 5.73$, p > .05). In other words, ETD was different from NEC but similar to FTD in terms of use of yes/no and choice questions.

TABLE 6
Proportions of Yes/no and Choice Questions in NEC, FTD and ETD

	Choice questions		Yes/no questions	
	n	%	n	%
NEC	10	10.5	85	89.5
FTD	95	21.1	356	78.9
ETD	93	8.3	1,029	91.7
X^2 (NEC*FTD) = 6.16, p < .05, X^2 (NEC*ETD) = 9.73, p < .05, X^2 (FTD*ETD) = 5.73, p > .05				

The last research question was to investigate whether ETD was developed on the basis of Krashen's ESL acquisition "average order" (Krashen, 1977), NEC and/or FTD. Table 7 shows the relative frequency of the eight grammatical morphemes in Krashen's "average order," NEC, FTD, and ETD. As mentioned earlier, data for both NEC and FTD were drawn from college students' speaking utterances and data for ETD were based from EFL textbooks used in Korean high schools. Krashen's average rank order was drawn from several different studies that were based on high-school students and colldge students in various countries. According to Table 7, there seemed to be a similarity among NEC, FTD, and ETD regarding the use of most frequent three grammatical morphemes such as article, copular, and plural ~s; the three types, however, were different from Krashen's average production of the morphemes. There seemed to be a similarity among the average order, NEC order, and FTD order because the third person singular ~s and possessive 's were least frequently used. The least frequently used morphemes in ETD, however, were progressive ~ing and possessive 's. Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients were computed to see whether these differences were statistically significant.

TABLE 7
Relative Frequencies of Grammatical Morphemes in NEC, FTD and ETD

Krashen's rank order	NEC		FTD		ETD	
	rank order	freq	rank order	freq	rank order	freq
1 prog. ~ing***	1 article	778	1 article	511	1 article	5,522
2 plural	2 copula	699	2 copula	476	2 copula	3,397
3 copula	3 plural	442	3 plural	319	3 plural	2,530
4 auxiliary	4 past	345	4.5 auxiliary	146	4 past	2,373
5 article	5 prog. ~ing	157	4.5 pro. ~ing	146	5 auxiliary	2,362
6 past**	6 auxiliary	140	6 past	98	6 3rd singular	602
7 3rd singular*	7 3rd singular	129	7 3rd singular	23	7 prog. ~ing	563
8 possessive	8 possessive	13	8 possessive	12	8 possessive	274
Total		2,703		1,721		17,623

*** prog. ~ing = progressive ~ing   ** past = regular + irregular   * 3rd singular=3rd person singular

Table 8 shows Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients and significance levels among NEC, FTD, ETD in comparison with Krashen's rank order. According to Table 8, ETD was statistically significantly correlated with NEC (r_s = .93, p < .001) and with FTD (r_s = .86, p < .01), but had no significant relationship with Krashen's average order (r_s = .29, p > .05). FTD was also correlated with NEC (r_s = .93, p < .001) and with Krashen's average order (r_s = .86, p < .01). In other words, ETD was similar to both NEC and FTD, but different from Krashen's average order in terms of the rank order of grammatical morphemes.

TABLE 8
Spearman Rank-order Correlation Coefficients among
Krashen's Average Order, NEC, FTD, and EFD

	Krashen	NEC	FTD
Krashen's average order	-		
The order of NEC	.63[*]	-	-
The order of FTD	.86[**]	.93[***]	-
The order of ETD	.29	.93[***]	.86[**]

[*] p < .05   [**] p < .01   [***] p <.001

IV. DISCUSSION

The research findings showed Korean EFL textbook dialogues were different from native speakers' English conversation and foreigner talk discourse in many respects. For example, EFL textbook dialogues differed from native speakers' interaction and foreigner talk discourse in temporal markings of verbs, topic development, and types of questions. EFL dialogues, however, were more similar to native speakers' discourse talking to nonnative speakers than native speakers-native speakers' interaction even though there were some differences between ETD and FTD. One of the similarities between ETD and FTD was the use of questions in topic-initiating moves, especially wh-questions. When topics were initiated, questions were heavily used in both ETD (84%) and FTD (96%) because they were likely to draw nonnative speakers into the conversation (Freed, 1980; Gaies, 1979; Long, 1980; Scarcella & Higa, 1982). In fact, there was no difference in the use of the types of questions between ETD and FTD because wh-questions were used for over half of the topic-initiation in both types of discourse. This finding was in agreement with that of the previous study that EFL textbook dialogues were developed on the basis of the use of questions, especially wh-questions (Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999). Another similar phenomenon was topic development: both ETD and FTD tended to shift topics unlike NEC even though it did not reach the significance level.

As the earlier study pointed out, native speakers used more choice questions in FTD to

make non-native speakers' conversational role easier (Long, 1981). It was expected that ETD would make English learners' linguistic task easier by using more choice questions because of learners' lack of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. Unlike the researcher's anticipation, however, ETD (8.3%) used choice questions much less than NEC (10.53%) and even FTD (21.1%). But wh-questions in ETD (53.5%) were much more used than in FTD (33.2%). Furthermore, ETD seemed to be developed without considering the morpheme frequency order for the acquisition of ESL because it did not have a significant relationship with Krashen's average order. In other words, ETD was not the same as NEC, FTD or even the average acquisition order for ESL learners.

Previous studies indicated that Korean learners of English showed different speech acts from native English speakers (Euen-Hyuk Jung, 2004; Jung-Tae Kim, 2002). According to Euen-Hyuk Jung (2004), for example, there were gaps between the L2 speech acts by the Korean nonnative speakers of English and those by the native speakers of English in spite of the nonnative speakers' high proficiency in English. Jung-Tae Kim (2002) also showed that there was a difference in the development of wh-questions by Korean learners of English and English native speakers. In addition, the previous study (Jay-Myoung Yu, 1999) and this research showed that there is a difference between Korean EFL textbooks and native speakers' conversation. Thus, further research is needed to see whether Korean learners' different speech acts resulted from EFL instruction, which Corder (1967) pointed out as one of the error sources.

V.   CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Although there are similarities and differences between ETD and NEC or FTD, EFL textbook dialogues are more similar to the latter than the former. EFL textbooks are similar to FTD in terms of the use of questions in topic-initiating moves and choice questions even though EFL textbooks differ from FTD and NEC in present temporal marking. EFL textbooks do not follow the language acquisition order in terms of the relationship with the frequency order of morphemes even though they resemble NEC and FTD.

It is clear that EFL textbooks need to be developed on the basis of native speakers' interaction, but they are unique because they differ from either NEC or FTD in terms of the use of questions and speech acts. We do not know what kind of model EFL textbooks take after. EFL textbooks, however, need to be much closer to native speakers' actual talk if we want our students to apply to real English-speaking situations what they have learned from the textbooks.

Our study has a couple of limitations to generalize its findings. First of all, more extensive data for NS-NS interactions and FTD need to be collected from a variety of situations. Secondly, more EFL textbook dialogues need to be compared with native

speakers' English conversation.

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