

Pragma-Linguistic Differences in Korean EFL Student Productions of Conventional Expressions*

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Park, Yujong. (2016). Pragma-linguistic differences in Korean EFL student productions of conventional expressions. *English Teaching*, 71(4), 3-26.

Conventional expressions are considered an important area of study informing L2 pragmatics and inter-language pragmatics. This study investigates the differences between native English speakers' and Korean EFL speakers' productions of conventional expressions by employing an audio-visual production task (adapted from Bardovi-Harlig, 2009). Results show that EFL students statistically differ from their native speaker counterparts in about half of the scenarios involving the production of conventional expressions. While EFL learner productions were often grammatical and appropriate, they also displayed pragma-linguistically infelicitous utterances (e.g., I'm just looking out.) and more verbosity compared to their NS counterparts. Certain scenes including giving and deflecting thanks delivered less target-like expressions, which may lead to communicative failure in real time interaction. Pedagogical implications of this type of study are also discussed.

Key words: conventional expressions, contrastive pragmatics, production task, Korean EFL learners

1. INTRODUCTION

Conventional expressions are considered an important area of study informing L2 pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Tateyama, 2001). Prior studies have shown that L2 learners often struggle with appropriate usage of these expressions, even when they have a high level of language proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1999). Conventional expressions also play an

* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2016018109). The author would like to thank the three reviewers and editors for their help in improving the paper.

important role for L2 acquisition as they allow learners to participate in communicative interaction early on, leading to more fluent and efficient utterance production (Tateyama, 2001). Although different terms have been employed to describe the same phenomena – verbal routines (Scarcella, 1979), lexical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), situation bound utterances (Kecskes, 2000) and pragmatic routines (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) to name a few – definitions of these concepts overlap in their references to ‘tacit agreements’ which members of a community presume to share (Coulmas, 1981, p. 4). Examples of conventional expressions include phrases such as “*Nice to meet you*” and “*No problem*” that are essential in handling everyday situations.

Among the variety of terms, “conventional expression” is used in this study to describe a set of expressions that native speakers use predictably in certain contexts. This term emphasizes the “social aspect of use” – namely, a speech community’s preference for a particular string – and “avoids the psycholinguistic claim regarding storage and retrieval” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009, p. 757). Conventional expressions are those sequences that are used frequently by speakers in certain prescribed social situations, a definition that has no presuppositions about the eventual mental representation of these sequences for either native speakers or learners, which is not the case for the terms ‘formula’ or ‘routine.’ Past research showed that learners differ in their use of conventional expressions when compared to the production of native speakers (NSs) and that learners tend to underuse such expressions (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Schmitt & Carter, 2004) even after instruction in these expressions have been given (Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga, 2012). For students in an EFL context, information about conventional expressions tends to be limited to textbooks and classroom materials.

The goal of this investigation is to identify features of Korean EFL learners in the oral production of English conventional expressions as compared to NSs. The discovery of a general pattern of pragmatic difference as produced by a group of subjects with a particular first language – Korean – could be helpful to EFL educators in Korea who must address the needs of classrooms comprised mostly of L1 Korean students. Past studies have focused on ESL learners who have been exposed to the target culture (even for a short amount of time) and less on EFL learners who may have little to no chance of interacting with native speakers of English in the community even though possessing sufficient pragmatic competence is crucial for these learners whose first language (L1) pragmatic norms are radically different from that of English (Leech, 1983). Contrastive pragmatics studies are concerned with language learners’ performance and acquisition of pragmatic competence in their L2. Any contrastive pragmatics research that identifies cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influences on the use of production strategies in English can be extensively beneficial, considering its pertinent pedagogical implications for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Studies have revealed that compared to other linguistic resources, conventional expressions are learned late and their mastery may characterize highly advanced learners (de Cock, 2000; Scarcella, 1979; Schmitt & Underwood, 2004). Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1993) report that nearly every interlanguage pragmatics study supports the claim that 'routine formulas' are a serious stumbling block for NNSs, yet little systemic investigation of this phenomenon has been done. There is evidence of learners using a translation equivalent for an L1 conventional expression where none is used in L2, such as prefacing a high-imposition request with "I'm sorry" from the Japanese "*sumimasen*" (Fukushima, 1990).

Recently, there appears to be a renewed interest in the investigation of conventional expressions. This is due to the realization that when learners make errors of appropriacy (i.e., pragmatic errors), the consequences are potentially more serious than if they make grammatical errors (Tateyama, 2001). Kecskes (2000) investigated whether non-native speakers (NNSs) know what conventional expressions mean by asking 88 learners from 10 countries to complete three tasks: a dialogue interpretation task, a problem solving task and two discourse completion tasks. He reported that learners recognized literal meaning better than idiomatic ones and that production was often grammatical and appropriate but not native-like. Several studies investigated how pragmatic routines are taught to L2 students by investigating ESL textbooks. Crandell and Basturkmen (2004) reported that textbooks generally underrepresent the type of expressions that are used by NSs. Bardovi-Harlig (2009) attempted to determine the source of second language learners' low use of conventional expressions. To address this question, 122 learners of ESL and 49 NSs of American English completed an audio recognition task, an audio-visual production task, and a background questionnaire. She found that learners produced conventional expressions at a lower rate due to multiple factors including lack of familiarity, overuse of familiar expressions, level of development, and sociopragmatic knowledge. These studies reported general differences that tend to exist between American speakers and a group of subjects from varying first language backgrounds (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga, 2012; Kecskes, 2000) rather than investigating students with the same L1.

Among the major approaches to the study of pragmatic failure is contrastive pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993), involving the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparison of speech act realization patterns through identifying similarities and differences between the pairs or groups of languages studied. Contrastive pragmatics serves an important hypothesis-generating and explanatory role in studies of interlanguage pragmatic performance and knowledge. In the Korean context, however, conventional

expressions in L2 and the study of contrastive pragmatics itself have remained an understudied area. Rather, researchers have focused on the study of individual speech acts such as refusals (Jung & Kim, 2008), compliments (Jung & Lee, 2007; Lim, 2000), complaints (Moon, 1996) and gratitude responses (Kim, 2011) by employing different discourse production tasks such as role plays, questionnaires, and discourse completion tasks. The speech act of requests in Korean as a foreign language speakers has been investigated by Byon (2004) who reported Koreans as being more hierarchical, collectivistic, roundabout, and formalistic in comparison to Americans. None of these studies studied conventional expressions as its target of investigation despite their importance in English L2 interaction.

To compensate for this gap, the current study employed an audio-visual production task, which elicited conventional expressions from 56 first language Korean-speaking L2 learners of English. Their performances were compared to those of 12 English NSs in order to identify deviations and problems, which the Korean EFL learners were confronted with when trying to interact in these scenes. This investigation provides a methodological tool to identify and explore pragma-linguistic performance differences for EFL learners. The following two research questions were asked:

1. Are the production patterns of the 16 conventional expressions related to one's native speaker status (NS vs. NNS)?
2. What are the pragma-linguistic features of Korean EFL learners' productions of conventional expressions that differ from their NS counterparts?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Fifty-six NNSs and 12 NSs participants completed the production tasks and a demographic survey. In the written demographic survey, subjects were asked to provide basic information (age, gender, major) as well as more specific information such as length of formal English study, frequency and context of English use, self-determination of English fluency, and total time spent in an English speaking country (e.g., America, Canada, and the UK). All NNSs attended a large university in Seoul and their age ranged from 20 to 25 years, with a mean of 21.5. Most of the NNSs ($n = 45$) majored in English language and literature with a small number majoring in Design ($n = 6$), Economics ($n = 3$), and Education ($n = 2$). All NNSs spoke Korean as their native language and had resided in an English speaking country for less than six months. Participants who reported having

lived in an English speaking country for more than half a year were excluded from analysis as studies have shown that even short-term exposure can lead L2 learners to score higher than learners without such exposure, in terms of knowledge of conventional expressions (Roever, 2005, cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011 for a study, which showed no such effect). The NSs were either undergraduate students who attended the same university or instructors who taught EFL classes at different institutions in Korea. The age ranged from 21 to 38, with a mean of 27.2.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics with Self-Reported Proficiency Level

Proficiency Levels	NNS	
	<i>n</i>	%
High	5	9
High intermediate	12	21
Intermediate	30	54
Low-intermediate	5	9
Low	4	7
Total	56	100

The following table provides the descriptive statistics for the NNS group. Although more than half the students (54%) reported themselves to be at an intermediate level, all students could be considered to be at the high-intermediate end when compared to other Korean students at a similar age-range, as these students had to pass an English test at a high threshold level in order to enter the university.

3.2. Procedure

An audio-visual production task was completed by two groups of speakers – Korean native speakers learning English as their L2 and English native speakers (See Appendix A for the scenarios provided in the task). The production task was adapted from Bardovi-Harlig (2009), who developed the task in the following steps: (a) observation of conversations, (b) scenario construction, (c) piloting, (d) further revision and culling of expressions, (e) re-piloting, and (f) selection of final contexts and expressions. In (f), the author and an assistant identified the scenarios that elicited a single expression in 50% or more of the responses (as in response to the introduction of a friend, “*Nice to meet you*”) or a set of two or three expressions that exhaustively defined the response set (as in response to ‘talking-during the-movie’ scenario, which elicited “*Be quiet*” and “*Keep it down*”). Among the contexts provided in Bardovi-Harlig (2009), sixteen scenarios were selected for the current study, which the researcher thought would be important for these set of EFL students. For example, two ‘interacting with academic staff’ tasks were included as

interacting with university staff has been proven to be an important communicative task for L2 students (Crandell & Basturkmen, 2004). For the current study, images describing the situation were added to the sixteen audio-visual production tasks to simulate real-time conversations. The productions provided the database for analysis. The average length of time for participants to complete the task was approximately 15 minutes for the NNS group and 8 minutes for the NS group. Details of the production task are provided below.

3.3. Production Task

The production task consisted of 16 scenarios which can elicit a variety of conventional expressions, including expressions of gratitude (#6, #7), apologies (#9, #10), warnings (#1, #5), leave-takings (#2 – face to face, #4 – over the phone), requests (#3, #13), condolences (#15), declining offers (#12, #16), acceptances of offers (#8), deflecting thanks (#11), and introduction (#14). Expressions from Bardovi-Harlig (2009) provided the baseline data (in terms of target conventional expressions used) for comparative purposes. Following is an example of one of the task scenarios (#6) as shown to the participants. When the talk bubble including a blank space with the prompt “*you say: _____*” appeared, the student responded. The task included both ‘initiating’ and ‘responding’ scenarios. The initiating scenarios ($n = 5$) required respondents to initiate an interaction (#1-#5), and the responding scenarios ($n = 11$) required them to respond to an interlocutor’s turn (#6-#16).

FIGURE 1

Sample Task Scenario: ‘Responding to an Offer of Help’

You need to pick up a book at the bookstore, but you don’t have any free time today. Your friend offers to help and says “I can pick it up for you.” What would you say?



The example above would be a responding scenario as the subject was required to respond to an offer of help. Participants were provided with one example of each type (one initiating scenario and one responding scenario) prior to engaging in the task. The scenarios were delivered via a laptop computer. Participants first heard and read the scenario on the screen and a second screen with a picture of the interactants (and talk

bubbles for responding scenarios) appeared with the prompt “*You say: _____.*” Responses were recorded and transcribed. The contexts and target expression for each scenario is listed in Appendix B.

3.4. Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The oral production yielded 1088 responses (68 respondents by 16 scenarios). All responses were transcribed and coded into categories of expressions. Expressions were coded into three to five categories based on the variability of answers. In scenario 1 (warning situation), for example, NSs overwhelmingly produced “*Be careful,*” “*Watch out,*” and “*Let me help you*”: these three expressions became codes #1 to #3. The target conventional expression (from Bardovi-Harlig, 2009) was coded as #1. NNS responses exhibited more variability, and two more codes (#4 and #5) were added to accommodate their responses (“*Get down*” and “*The chair is broken*”). Following this step, a list of codes including conventional expressions was developed for the 16 scenarios. Based on the identified expressions, the subjects’ responses were coded by the researcher and one native speaker of English. When there were disagreements between the coders, the differences were resolved through further discussion. This led to expansions or substitution of coded expressions and several recounts of the data.

Coding the utterances itself posed a challenge because NNS and NS responses took many forms. For example, category 5 in scenario 1 included productions such as “*The chair has a broken leg,*” “*The chair’s leg is broken,*” “*The chair is unstable/spoilt.*” This led to a somewhat generous interpretation of what it means to say, “*The chair has a broken leg,*” as lexical, morphological or syntactic differences were not taken into consideration in the quantitative analysis. Another challenge was deciding on utterance boundaries. L2 learners would frequently use the same expression as NSs but continue to talk, while NSs may use only the conventional expression. For example, instead of a simple “*No thanks,*” some NNSs would say, “*It’s okay, I’m just looking around. (.) I’ll call you later if I need your help.*” If there were many cases in which participants produced lengthy utterances, a separate code (i.e., other) for multiple turns was postulated for that scenario.

In addition to lexis, morphemes, and utterance boundaries, another area of concern in evaluating the production of conventional expressions by learners was pronunciation, prosody, rate of speech and hesitations. As noted in Bardovi-Harlig (2009), these are features of speech that have been obscured in inter-language pragmatics by written tasks and thus, have not been widely considered in past experimental L2 pragmatics research. In the current analysis, prosodic variance was not considered in the coding process and learners were not penalized for pauses. While NSs produced compound expressions such

as “*I’m sorry I’m late*” or “*No thanks I’m just looking*” as one prosodic phrase, NNSs often paused as in “*I’m sorry (1.5) I was late.*” “*No (.) I’m full.*” The frequent occurrence of pauses or hesitations in the production data supported the adoption of the term ‘conventional expressions’ rather than ‘formulas’ for this study. Fluent production is an essential characteristic of formulaic language use, as reported in Myles, Hooper, and Mitchell (1998).

Other problems included coding ungrammatical utterances produced by NNSs (e.g., “*It was a nice time*” for “*I had a nice time*”). When these expressions occurred they were first marked for further qualitative analysis and were coded using the closest equivalent form in meaning. For purposes of the quantitative analysis, all strings of words in learner productions that were identical to the NS expressions were coded as exemplars of conventional expressions, although their use in discourse may be subtly different. Chi-square analyses were run to see whether there were any statistically significant differences between the groups’ production types.

For the qualitative analysis, transcribed utterances were examined particularly in regard to pragma-linguistic variations and possible L1 (Korean) influence. Even when there were no quantitative differences, all scenarios were examined in order to find any noteworthy productions in terms of pragma-linguistic failure for pertinent pedagogical implications.

4. RESULTS

The results are reported in two sections. First, quantitative results show whether there were differences in the use of conventional expressions and whether this difference displayed a pattern across situation types, interlocutors or speech acts. Second, qualitative results report pragma-linguistic differences which could not be captured in the quantitative analysis.

4.1. Quantitative Results

In this section, statistical results focusing on those conventional expressions that differed between NS and NNSs are reported. Production rates in percentages for each level and group were calculated for each expression ($[\text{number of uses of targeted expression} / \text{number of respondents}] \times 100$) followed by chi-square statistics. Seven out of the sixteen task situations led to significant differences between the conventional expressions produced by groups (#4: leave taking by cell phone, #6: expressing gratitude, #7: response to gratitude, #8: accepting offer of assistance at clothing store, #10: apologizing, #11: deflecting thanks, #12: declining offer of assistance at clothing store). In general, situations

involving gratitude expressions and those involving interaction with the sales personnel led to different response strategies. The remaining task situations or scenarios (e.g., warning, request, apology, offering condolences, introduce, and declining food) did not lead to a significant difference in responses. For example, the responses in the broken chair scenario ('warning situation') did not differ by native speaker status, $\chi^2(4, n = 68) = 3.75, p = .44$. In these task situations, however, qualitative differences could be noted, which are reported in the next section (4.2). In the following, scenarios that exhibited statistical differences are analyzed in detail.

There were two leave taking scenarios – one involving a cell-phone and the other involving face-to-face interaction. Only the scenario involving the cell-phone (#4) led to quantitatively different responses as shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Leave-Taking over Cell-Phone

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>I'll call you later</i>	35	62.5	3	25.0	38	55.9	11.051*
<i>There's the bus</i>	8	14.3	1	8.3	9	13.2	
<i>I gotta go</i>	11	19.6	5	41.7	16	23.5	
<i>I'll call you back</i>	2	3.6	3	25.0	2	7.4	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(* $p < .05$)

Similar to Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) who reported that NSs tended to use "*I'll call you back*" while NNSs would use "*I'll call you later*," here also NNSs seldom used the expression "*I'll call you back*" (3.6%) but relied on the expression "*I'll call you later*" (62.5%). NSs preferred to use the term "*I gotta go*" (41%) and produced "*I'll call you back*" and "*I'll call you later*" with the same amount of frequency (25%). Describing the situation (i.e. "*There's the bus*," "*The bus is coming*") occurred much more often in the NNS group productions. Leave-taking over the phone is not a situation frequently taught to EFL students, and this may explain the EFL students' lack of knowledge concerning the expression "*I'll call you back*" or "*I gotta go*." The Korean equivalent "*ittaka cenhwa halkkey*" which directly translates as "*I'll call you later*" might also explain the preference for this expression over "*I'll call you back*," although further data from L1 Korean is needed to support this claim.

There were two task situations involving gratitude and response to gratitude (task #6 and task #7). Both led to different production types by group. First, in task #6, subjects were asked to express gratitude when a friend offered help. Table 3 shows the frequency and chi-square statistics.

NNSs were more likely than NSs to upgrade thank you expressions by employing an intensifier “so” or “very” (e.g., “*Thank you so/very much*”), and employed multiple turns to express their gratitude (e.g., “*Thanks for your kindness. It’s really a big help(.) for me*”). NSs never employed multiple turns to express gratitude but a simple “Thanks” or “That’d be great” would usually suffice. NSs did, however, sometimes employ an upgrade. Another noteworthy difference was the notion of paying back for the favor (#2). NSs tended not to express gratitude with a reciprocating favor, whereas NNSs would mention returning the favor 17.9% of the time (e.g., “*I will treat you later,*” “*Thanks, I’ll buy you coffee tomorrow*”). Bardovi-Harlig (2009) found that the conventional expression “*That’d be great*” in response to an offer of help was produced by only three learners in her study. A similar result was found here as well. Only two NNSs used the expression “*That’d be great*” in this context. NNSs also tended to favor intensified or elaborated expressions of “*Thank you very/so much*” to a simple “*Thanks/Thank you.*”

TABLE 3
Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Expression of Gratitude

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>Thanks</i>	16	28.6	4	33.0	20	29.4	11.208*
<i>I’ll treat you</i>	10	17.9	1	8.3	11	16.2	
<i>Thank you very/so much</i>	20	35.7	3	25.0	23	33.8	
<i>That’d be great</i>	2	3.6	4	33.0	6	8.8	
Other	8	14.3	0	0.0	8	11.8	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(* $p < .05$)

Table 4 describes the different responses to the gratitude scenario. Here, participants had to respond to the organizer of the reception who had thanked them for coming.

TABLE 4
Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Response to Gratitude

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>Thanks for having me</i>	10	17.9	10	83.3	20	29.4	21.452***
<i>Thank you</i>	9	16.1	0	0.0	9	13.2	
<i>I’m sorry I should leave now</i>	8	14.3	0	0.0	8	11.7	
<i>You’re welcome</i>	14	25.0	0	0.0	14	20.6	
Other	15	26.8	2	16.7	17	25.0	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(*** $p < .001$)

As shown in Table 4, the difference mainly lies in the variety of response types. NSs would overwhelmingly produce strings of words saying, “*Thanks for inviting me*” in response to “*Thanks for coming*” while NNSs would use expressions such as “*You’re welcome*” most frequently. NSs never replied to the host’s “*Thanks for coming*” with a “*You’re welcome*”. The learners appeared to be overgeneralizing the production of “*You’re welcome*” in all responses to “*Thank you*” initiations. Although “*Thanks for having me*” and “*Thanks for inviting me*” were both coded as #1, “*Thanks for having me*” only occurred once in the NNS response while more than half the NS productions included this expression. Bardovi-Harlig (2009) reported that NNSs use unelaborated forms of conventional expressions (e.g., Thank you) in the same contexts in which NSs use expanded versions (e.g., Thanks for inviting me). In this study, NNSs used the conventional expression “*You’re welcome*” much more often than both expanded and unexpanded versions of “*Thank you*” and “*Thanks for inviting me*.”

A similar pattern was found in scenario #11 in response to “*Thanks for the ride*,” which was a situation that required deflecting an expression of thanks. In this situation, the relationship between native speaker status and preference for the conventional expression “*You’re welcome*” as a response to gratitude was significant, $p < .001$.

TABLE 5
Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Deflecting Thanks Expressions

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>No problem</i>	12	21.4	10	83.3	22	32.4	30.468***
<i>I'm fine</i>	0	0.0	2	16.7	2	2.9	
<i>You're welcome</i>	34	60.7	0	0.0	34	50.0	
Other	10	17.9	0	0.0	10	14.7	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(*** $p < .001$)

There was less variability in the type of responses produced by NSs who would rely on a set of conventional expressions (e.g., “*No problem*”) compared to NNSs who would use “*You’re welcome*” (60.7%) and “*No problem*.” Results from Table 4 and 5 suggest that NNSs tend to use the conventional expression “*You’re welcome*” whenever responding to varied “*Thank you*” type initiations regardless of the different contexts in which “*Thank you*” is used (e.g., reciprocal thanks, deflecting thanks).

As Tables 6 and 7 display, both tasks involving sales personnel at a clothing store produced differences in responses between the two groups (#8, #12). In addition to employing the conventional expression “*I’m looking for...*”, NNSs appeared to employ more direct strategies when they encountered the question “*May I help you?*” which was

not the case for NSs. As shown in the table above, NNS responses showed more variety. Here, 32% of the NNSs employed the expression “*I’m looking for...*” but more than half of them used more direct statements (“*Yes, I need a...*”) or questions such as “*Where’s t-shirts?*” and “*Are there any shirt that’ll fit me?*” which were categorized as “other”. These types of direct questions were not found in the NS productions at all.

TABLE 6

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>I’m looking for...</i>	18	32.1	5	41.7	23	33.8	9.929*
<i>Can you help me...?</i>	4	7.1	4	33.3	8	11.8	
<i>Yes, I need a ...</i>	16	28.6	3	25.0	19	27.9	
Other	18	32.1	0	0.0	18	26.5	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(* $p < .05$)

Takahashi (2005) reported that NNSs rely on a single string that successfully conveys the speech act, whereas NS responses show more variety because learner productions will show a period of overgeneralization. In this study, NNS productions showed overgeneralization in terms of response tokens to a particular expression (e.g., “*Thank you*”) but for a single situation, the productions seemed to vary more. Interestingly, in a service-encounter situation such as this one, NNSs appeared less polite and used more direct strategies when responding affirmatively to the offer of help, which was not the case in scenarios involving gratitude expressions as noted above. Therefore, teaching conventional expressions in service-encounter contexts would be helpful for these Korean EFL students who appear to experience a cultural gap.

Table 7 describes the second situation concerning rejections of offers of help at a clothing store, which showed somewhat similar results. Although NNSs used a variety of expressions when rejecting the salesperson’s assistance (“*Can I help you?*”), the main difference appeared in the ‘other’ category, which included ‘multiple turns,’ NNSs were more likely to reject assistance by employing multiple turns expressing the reason for not needing assistance. Examples included, “*No, when I need your help, I will call you.*” “*It’s okay. I’ll look around first.*” “*Let me see alone. Thank you.*” and “*No thank you. (0.2) I can handle it myself.*” On the other hand, NSs would employ multiple turns only in combination with “*No thanks.*” such as “*No thank you. I’m just browsing.*” A large number of NSs employed this expression (“*No thanks.*”) on its own (50%).

TABLE 7

Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Rejecting Offer of Help – Clothing Store

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>No thanks</i>	7	10.3	6	50.0	13	19.1	10.337*
<i>I'm just looking (around).</i>	22	32.4	4	33.3	26	38.2	
<i>It's okay.</i>	12	17.7	0	0.0	12	17.7	
Other	15	22.1	2	16.7	17	25.0	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(**p* < .05)

Similar to the scenario above, in the apology situation, NNSs most frequently produced “*I'm sorry*” in combination with an excuse and promise for resolving the situation, which led to multiple turns categorized as ‘other’ (49%).

TABLE 8

Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Apology

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>No thanks</i>	4	7.1	4	33.3	8	11.8	12.869*
<i>I'm just looking (around).</i>	2	3.6	0	0.0	2	2.9	
<i>It's okay.</i>	1	1.8	2	16.7	3	4.4	
Other	49	87.5	6	50.0	55	80.9	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(**p* < .05)

As shown in Table 8 above, NNSs would employ multiple turns (categorized as ‘other’) most frequently in respond to the friend’s “*Did you bring my book? I really need it for my presentation tomorrow.*” While NSs used a simple “*I'm (so) sorry*” in their productions (33%), NNSs tended to explain the situation, such as where the book is located, and frequently provide a remedy for this problem (49%). Examples of these NNSs productions include “*I'm really sorry. (.) In fact I left the book at home, I'll bring it to you today,*” and “*So sorry I left it at home. So::: stupid. (1.0) I'll go and get it after the class. Is it oka:y?*” In general, apologies tended to be lengthier for NNSs than NSs. According to Olshtain (1983), learners may struggle with finding an appropriate response to their faulty behavior (e.g., forgetting to bring a friend’s library book), which may call for different types of apologies and different intensities of such apologies in different cultures. The tendency to gush, that is, employing more expressions of responsibility and intensification devices than L1 speakers represent types of reactions that could indicate learners’ lack of pragmatic competence (Byon, 2004).

In the office hour scenario, participants had to respond to the professor's "Come in" after they knocked on his door during office hours. NNSs employed an introduction strategy ("Hello, I'm xx") or expressions categorized as 'other' in answer to this turn, which may have led to the statistical difference. Category 1, "Do you have a minute?" was the target conventional expression produced most frequently by NSs in this situation (also see Bardovi-Harlig, 2009). Many of the productions (35.7%) by the NNSs were categorized as 'other' (category 4) because there were many productions that did not belong in categories 1 to 3. For example, a student said, "Sorry to disturb your work" and a number of students employed "thank you" in their responses to (e.g. "Thank you. (.) Do you have time?," "Thank you for your time for me," "Thank you for letting me in."). NSs only used conventional strings such as "Do you have a minute?" or "Can I talk to you?" and never introduced themselves or used other types of expressions including "Thank you" in these data.

TABLE 9
Cross Tabulation of Native Speaker Status by Office Hour Situation

Expressions	NNS		NS		Total		Chi-Square
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<i>No thanks</i>	5	8.9	8	66.7	13	19.1	23.891***
<i>I'm just looking (around).</i>	20	35.7	0	0.0	20	31.3	
<i>It's okay.</i>	11	19.6	4	33.3	15	20.2	
<i>Other</i>	20	35.7	0	0.0	20	29.4	
Total	56	100.0	12	100.0	68	100.0	

Note. Numbers are frequency of support in each category
(*** $p < .001$)

In sum, situations that imposed on the hearer (face-threatening contexts such as #10 – apology for not bringing a book, #12 – refusal to an offer for help, #13 – office hour) tended to produce lengthier turns by Korean EFL learners. They would rely less on conventional expressions but instead explain the situation ("I left it at home") and in some cases would try to resolve the situation by offering a remedy ("I'll buy you lunch," "When I need your help, I'll call you."). Face-threatening acts require a high level of socio-pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996) and learners may have to practice conventional expressions in the target language to produce more native-like expressions.

Aside from face-threatening contexts, NNSs and NSs also showed a significant difference in production concerning responses to gratitude, $\chi^2(4, n = 68) = 21.452, p < .001$ (scenario # 7) and $\chi^2(4, n = 68) = 30.468, p < .001$ (scenario # 11) which was mainly due to their preference for the expression "You're welcome" in response to "Thank you" expressions despite the difference in situations. In other words, a tendency to overgeneralize across contexts was noted. The Korean EFL speakers produced expressions

to accept thanks (“*You are welcome*”) in place of expressions to reciprocate thanks or in scenes that required an expression that deflected thanks such as “*No problem.*” The opposite was true for NSs who used different expressions (i.e., “*Thanks for having me*”) in response to “*Thank you for coming*” as compared to “*Thanks for the ride.*”

4.2. Qualitative Results

The findings reported above revealed that certain conventional expressions are not employed by NNSs as frequently as NSs and that some contexts show more variety in productions for the NNS group. Even for scenarios that did not show a statistical difference qualitative differences were noted. In general, many non-native speakers’ responses lacked the appropriate pragma-linguistic resources that allow these actions to be well received by the interlocutor. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) explain pragmatic failure as being linked to cultural variability in the implementation of Grice’s (1975) conversational model: certain types of pragmatic deviations from target norms, such as the learner’s tendency toward verbosity, are seen as violations of a cultural norm for the balance required between the maxims of clarity and quantity. When investigating the productions by these NNSs two features stood out in particular: pragma-linguistic deviations and verbosity.

Many sentences deviated from the norm pragma-linguistically. Speakers who may be considered ‘fluent’ in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. This was most pronounced in the sales encounter (clothing store) and office hour scenes. In the clothing store scenes, some of the utterances produced by Korean L2 learners could be considered rude by NSs. Three students produced “*I need a t-shirt*” and two students asked “*Where’s t-shirts?*” They were more direct than NSs who would employ indirect questions such as “*I was wondering if...*” or “*Can you help me find...?*” There were also many pragmatically infelicitous utterances including “*No I’m just looking out.*” and “*No (.) thank you. (0.2) I can handle it*” in response to the sales person’s “*May I help you?*” The use of these expressions may be due to lack of knowledge regarding the English conventional expressions. In the office hour scene (task #13), there were also many expressions that could be considered rude. Examples included, “*Can I have a word with you?*,” “*Can I go in there?*,” “*Can I talk with you about 5 minutes?*” and “*I have something to talk.*” Although the English language does not possess politeness markers such as those that can be found in Korean, there are acceptable expressions targeting differing interlocutors. “*Can I have a word with you?*” is considered rude when produced by a student to a professor, but this may not be apparent to the learners. In task 9 (apology for arriving late) the conventional expression used by most NSs was “*Sorry I’m late.*” NNSs employed a similar production

but there were many ungrammatical strings. For example, they would say “*I’m sorry I was late,*” “*I’m sorry being late,*” and “*I’m really sorry for late.*” The target compound expression (“*I’m sorry I’m late*” or “*I’m sorry for being late*”) may have been a challenging form for NNSs to produce on line. In the giving a ride situation, deflecting thanks posed a problem in certain cases. In Korean, *aniya* “no” is a commonly used expression to deflect thanks (Park, 2013). Several learners appeared to directly translate the Korean expression into the English “no”. For example, in response to “*Thanks for the ride,*” some L2 learners would say, “*No you don’t have to,*” “*No it doesn’t matter*” and even “*No thanks.*” which are all awkward expressions in this setting. Sometimes NNSs would deflect thanks by using a leave-taking expression such as “*Good night, see you tomorrow,*” “*See you later!*” and close down the interaction rather than responding directly. These utterances may be perceived as improper by NSs.

The introduction task did not appear to differ quantitatively, but two of the Korean students would introduce themselves by explaining their relationship to the friend (e.g., “*Nice to meet you. I’m xx, John’s old friend.*”). Also, when greeting someone, Koreans would more often identify themselves (task #13, #14). For example, “*Hello professor. I’m your student xxx from your xxx class.*” Therefore, the office hour scenario was interpreted differently for the NNSs – many of them understood it to be a greeting situation, while NSs overwhelmingly understood it to be a request for availability or time. NNSs also tended to personalize their speech act and emphasize social relationships, which led to lengthier turns. For example, “*Hello, I’m xx. I am a friend of Tom,*” “*I will pay you back for this favor,*” and “*I am a student in your class*” express the social relationship between the speaker and hearer. This might not be highly valued in Western culture, where one’s relationship does not grant them responsibility or excuses for tardiness or favors. Such personalization may be considered unrelated and uncomfortable in some cases for English native speakers. In a related vein, the notion of being in touch seemed to be more pronounced in NNS productions. For example, in both leave taking situations (task 2 and task 4), NNSs produced more expressions that hinted at a next-time encounter (e.g., “*Let’s have lunch sometime*”) and an apology for having to go was added by a few (e.g., “*I’m sorry but I have to go now (.) I will call you back?*”).

As noted above, in many of the situations (e.g., apologizing for forgetting to bring a book, receiving help from a friend, requesting a group of teens to quiet down), EFL learners would be more verbose. Past research has noted verbosity in L2 students as the “waffle phenomenon” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain., 1986; Edmondson & House, 1991), where NNSs engage in more speech acts than native speakers. Examples of this phenomenon are shown in the following examples:

- Your friend: I can pick it (the book) up for you. You say:

Thank you very much. You are the genuine friend.

Thank you so:: much. (0.2) I'll buy you a meal.

- (In the movies you say to the noisy teenagers behind you)

Excuse me. Can you guys talk a bit later? It's kind of noisy here.

Excuse me. I can't hear what they are saying in the movie. I'm sorry but I cannot concentrate on the movie."

In the gratitude expression situation learners would upgrade the gratitude by employing multiple intensifiers (“*Thank you very very much*”), character description (“*You are the genuine friend!*”), and reciprocating (“*Thank you (0.2) I'll buy you a meal!*”). While both groups preferred to provide a short warning in the warning scenarios, there were cases even in warning situations where lengthier turns were produced by NNSs (e.g., “*You should be careful because chair leg is broken. Can I give you a new chair?*”). The production of conventional expressions themselves such as “*Be careful!*” or “*Watch out!*” did not seem to pose a challenge for these set of Korean EFL learners. Rather, deciding on the appropriate length of the utterance seemed more problematic. Verbosity is seldom found in NSs productions: NSs would use intensifiers in the apology and condolence scenarios (e.g., “*I'm so sorry*” and “*Thank you so much*”) but not multiple turns. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) reported that waffling is strongest at an intermediate stage when learners possess the linguistic means to say as much as they want but at the same time want to be explicit about their communicative goals. Even though past studies have noted that this phenomenon is mostly found in responses to production questionnaires, in this study, the same phenomenon was observed in oral productions as well. Here, learners may use the same expression as NSs but continue to talk, while for NSs the conventional expression may suffice.

Qualitative analysis of the productions showed differences in terms of pragma-linguistic infelicity and verbosity. Cultural differences in task interpretation were also noted, as certain scenarios were interpreted differently (e.g., greeting vs. request for time) and this showed in their respective productions. An emphasis on social relationships also influenced the type of conventional expressions used.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Pragmatics studies on conventional expressions can be generally divided into two types: the first group of studies focuses on learners' intuition about what constitutes an appropriate expression (or speech act), and the second group is concerned with the production of these expressions. This study, which belongs to the second group, has

investigated and analyzed features of Korean EFL learners in the production of conventional expressions. The results of this study support the view that even advanced learners do not acquire fully native-like means of using conventional expressions (Ellis, 1994) and suggests that pragmatics should be taught to these Korean EFL students even if they are beyond a beginning level of proficiency. These students did not use conventional expressions such as “*That’d be great,*” “*I’ll call you back,*” or “*Do you have a minute?*” as frequently as their NS counterparts and overgeneralized the use of “*You’re welcome*” in response to all “*Thank you*” type initiations. Conventional expressions in gratitude expressions and responses, rejecting or accepting offer for help, and leave-taking (over the phone) seemed to be most problematic.

The one-to-one principle, which was identified in L2 linguistic development research (Andersen, 1984), may have encouraged some NNSs to use expressions they know rather than to expand their range of expressions. The one-to-one principle (Andersen, 1984) “is a principle of one form to one meaning” (p. 79). In this study, some NNSs adopt one form of “*You’re welcome*” in response to “*Thanks.*” NNSs use “*You’re welcome*” in place of more specialized expressions such as “*No problem*” or “*Thanks for having me.*” As they expand their productive repertoire from a simple response to thank you expression to the more specialized expressions such as “*Thanks for having me,*” NNSs can move into a later stage of development known as multi-functionality, in which multiple forms express a single meaning or function.

This study has pedagogical implications by revealing conventional expressions that Korean EFL students appear to be less familiar with and thus use less frequently (or never) in their productions when compared to their NS counterparts. The reason for the lack of expressions could be many, one being L1 transfer. For example, in Korean there is an equivalent expression for “*I’ll call you later*” (*cokum ittaka cenhwa halkkeyii*) while “*I’ll call you back*” has no such equivalent expression. A further implication concerns conventional expressions employed in certain situations (e.g., visiting a clothing store or a professor’s office), which showed significant differences in productions between the two groups. Korean learners tended to be less polite in the clothing store (by using direct questions such as “*Where’s the T-shirt?*”) and at the professor’s office (e.g., “*I need to speak to you*”) due to their lack of knowledge of conventional expressions and pragma-linguistic knowledge in general. In interactions involving the clothing store or professor’s office, conventional expressions such as “*I’m looking for a ...,*” “*Sorry I’m late,*” “*Sorry for arriving late,*” “*Do you have a minute?*” could be taught to these learners. In a foreign language setting, learners have very few opportunities to interact with speakers of the target language outside of class. Therefore, it could be helpful to teach pragma-linguistic knowledge using videos or communicative activities that address scenes such as the clothing store.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of native speakers in the data set may be considered too small to make strong quantitative claims. Second, the current study employed a dialogue completion task, a type of discourse completion task (DCT), to elicit the use of 16 conventional expressions. Comparing the productions of conventional expressions may serve to ascertain their knowledge of usage but may not serve as valid data to indicate what they can actually do with their knowledge. In other words, the data collected are helpful to assess the participant's meta-pragmatic knowledge, but they do not reveal whether the student actually has the command of the expressions in face-to-face interaction. This study tried to overcome this limitation by using oral production data and a visual task that models face-to-face interactions but real-time interaction may reveal different patterns of productions. In future studies, part of the data may be supported by including real-time conversational data, which include the phenomenon at hand, when this becomes available. Conversation analysis (CA) could have much to offer in this regard. The current study was unable to ask the participants why they made particular choices to understand the reason lying behind learner's choice. Understanding why the students perform as they do can be answered by retrospective interviews or verbal reports. Data from Korean native speakers completed in Korean can provide baseline intra-cultural data as a possible source of the learners' infelicitous realization behaviors from target norms. Finally, the current study was unable to show instructional effects of these conventional expressions in order to offer pedagogical suggestions. Future studies may investigate semantic formulae, or speech act sets, as potential materials for curriculum development, as well as classroom applications of the findings.

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APPENDIX A

Oral Production Task (adapted from Bardovi-Harlig, 1999)

Instructions: Initiating and Responding Utterances

In this part of the task (#1-#5), you will see a description on the screen. Read along with

the speaker. Imagine that you are speaking to a friend. When you see “you say” on the second screen, speak to your friend. Say the first thing you think of. Speak clearly.

Here is an example.

Example. The phone rings. You pick it up. (oral and written)

You say: (screen only) – NNS respondent: “Hello” (aural only)

Now let’s begin.

1. You see your friend standing on a chair trying to reach a book at the top of a bookshelf. You know that the chair she is standing on has a broken leg.

You say: _____

2. You are in the library and you see an old friend who you have not seen for a long time. You talk for a little while and as you are leaving

You say: _____

3. You are in the theater. There is a group of young teenagers sitting behind you. They are talking so loudly that you cannot hear a word.

You say: _____

4. You are at the bus stop. While waiting, you are talking with your friend on your cell phone. The bus arrives and you need to hang up.

You say: _____

5. You and a friend are about to cross the street when you see the campus bus coming. Your friend does not see the bus and is about to step in front of it.

You say: _____

In this part of the task, you are talking to your friend, and your friend speaks first. When your friend finishes, you answer. Remember to speak clearly.

Here is an example.

Example A. You see your old friend at a party. (oral and written)

Friend: How are you? (aural only)

You say: (screen only) – NNS response: *Good, how are you?* (aural only)

Now let’s begin.

6. You need to pick up a book at the bookstore, but you don’t have any free time today. Your friend offers to help and says “I can pick it up for you.”

You say: _____

7. There is a reception on campus. The organizer invited you and a few other students as well. It is getting late, and you decide to leave. You go over to the organizer.

The organizer says “Thanks for coming”

You say: _____

8. You go to a clothing store and you need to find a new shirt. A salesperson approaches you. You want the salesperson’s assistance. The salesperson asks “Can I help you?”

You say: _____

9. You made an appointment with your teacher. Unfortunately you arrive five minutes late for the meeting. Your teacher says, “Hello. Come on in.”

You say: _____

10. You borrowed a book from your friend, Kate. You promised to return it today. She needs it for her presentation in class tomorrow. However, you left the book at home. You meet her in class. Kate says “By the way, did you bring my book? I really need it for my presentation tomorrow.”

You say: _____

11. You give your classmate a ride home. He lives in the building next to yours. He gets out of the car and says, “Thanks for the ride.”

You say: _____

12. You go to a clothing store and you need to find a new shirt. A salesperson approaches you. You don’t want the salesperson’s assistance. The sales person asks “Can I help you?”

You say: _____

13. You need to talk to your teacher. You go to his office during office hours to see if he has time to talk. His office door is open, you knock. The teacher says “Come in.”

You say: _____

14. Your friend introduces you to his new roommate. He says “This is my new roommate, Bill.”

You say: _____

15. You go to ask your teacher if he will be having office hours tomorrow, and he tells you about his father. “I won’t be having office hours tomorrow. My father died, and I have to go to the funeral.”

You say: _____

16. You are having dinner at a friend’s house. Your friend offers you more food, but you couldn’t possibly eat another bite. Your friend asks “Would you like some more?”

You say: _____

APPENDIX B

Production task scenes and target expression

Context	Target Speech Act	Target Expression
#1 Broken chair	warning	Be careful!
#2 Closing	leave-taking	Nice to see you.
#3 Movies	request	Be quiet./Keep it down.
#4 Cell-phone	leave-taking	I gotta go.
#5 Bus	warning	Watch out!
#6 Book pick up	reciprocal thanking	That's be great.
#7 Party closing	reciprocal thanking	Thanks for having me.
#8 Shopping	acceptance of offer	I'm looking for...
#9 Late	apology	I'm sorry (I'm late).
#10 Forgot book	apology	I'm sorry.
#11 Gave ride	deflection of thanks	No problem.
#12 Shopping (no help)	declining offer	I'm just looking.
#13 Teacher's office	request	Do you have a minute?
#14 Introduction	introduce	Nice to meet you.
#15 Father died	condolence	I'm sorry.
#16 More food	rejection	No, thanks.

Applicable levels: Secondary, tertiary

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Received on September 1, 2016

Reviewed on October 15, 2016

Revised version received on November 15, 2016