

## Korean EFL Learners' Refusals to Requests and Their Perceptions

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The act of refusal takes place in everyday lives, but it has been discussed to be a difficult speech act for nonnative speakers. This study seeks to investigate Korean EFL learners' refusals in extended discourse along with their pragmatic perceptions. Sixteen college students were engaged in oral role-plays with two native English speakers and instructed to refuse the interlocutor's request. The refusal performances were analyzed using conversation analysis framework with respect to the interlocutors' different powers and the learners' proficiency levels. Learners also participated in retrospective verbal reports. Findings depict different verbal and nonverbal features illustrating learners' sensitivity towards higher status and their different linguistic abilities. Furthermore, their verbal reports revealed that despite their pragmatic awareness, learners were not fully equipped with appropriate L2 pragmatic knowledge.

**Key words:** refusal, speech act, pragmatic competence, pragmatic awareness, interlanguage pragmatics, conversation analysis, role-play

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a language does not end with the acquisition of linguistic knowledge but extends to the actual usage of the language. As a component of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1966), pragmatic competence has received considerable attention

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(Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Kasper & Rose, 1999, Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic competence is defined as “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context” (Thomas, 1983, p. 92). The field of interlanguage pragmatics, “the study of non-native speaker’s use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge” (Kasper & Rose, 1999, p. 81), aims to investigate non-native speakers’ target language performances. Interlanguage pragmatics research often takes the form of speech act research. Speech acts such as requests and refusals have been widely investigated in various settings – with Japanese English learners (Beebe et al., 1990; Tanaka & Swade, 1982), with Korean English learners (Kim, 2004; Won, 2012), and with learners from multiple L1 backgrounds (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Implementing methodologies such as discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and natural conversations, researchers explored the shared perceptions/preferences of the natives and nonnatives on appropriate speech acts and the salient features of the nonnative speakers’ performances, attributing the causes to the differences in the pragmatics and L1 transfer.

Refusal is considered to be a “sticking point” in cross-cultural communications, especially for nonnative speakers (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56). It is considered to be a face-threatening act due to the potential risk of offending the counterpart; by refusing the hearer, the speaker refuses to comply with him or her (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, some degree of indirectness is required, and often there is a longer negotiated sequence (Gass & Houck, 1999). Some seminal studies have investigated learners’ refusals: Beebe et al. (1990) investigated Japanese English learners’ refusals; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) examined rejections in academic settings of nonnative and native English students. In examining Korean EFL learners’ refusal performances, researchers have consistently found power as a significant variable that influences learners’ performances; learners were discovered to behave more differently to persons of different statuses compared to native English speakers (Kim, 2004; Lee, 2013). Researchers have also sought to investigate L1 pragmatic transfer in learners’ performances (Jung & Kim, 2008a; Kim, 2004), and Kim and Kwon (2010) related this phenomenon to learners’ proficiencies.

As the data elicitations were done via DCTs in many refusal studies, issues of authenticity and the inaccessibility of interactional features have been raised (Kasper, 2000). The written responses do not necessarily match the oral productions, nor do they make viable the analysis on longer negotiated sequences. In other L1 backgrounds, Gass and Houck (1999) and Al-Gahtani and Roever (2018) made attempts to overcome these drawbacks by eliciting oral performances via open role-plays, which allow learners to engage in extended discourses freely. Since this attempt has not been made yet in exploring Korean EFL learners’ refusals, the current study intends to analyze learners’ performances via open role-plays.

Additionally, retrospective verbal report (RVR) helps researchers access learners' mental processes that cannot otherwise be observed (Culpeper, Mackey, & Taguchi, 2018; Gass & Mackey, 2016). Studying the processes beneath their productions would provide the instructors, researchers, and learners with detailed information such as possible causes of errors or difficulties of learning. Although RVR has been implemented in some studies to delve into learners' perceptions (Ren, 2014; Robinson, 1992; Widjaja, 1997), there has been little research on Korean EFL learners' perceptions (Kang, 2013). Hence, this paper focuses on both learners' performances in extended interactions as well as their perceptions behind their performances.

The present study is designed to analyze Korean EFL learners' refusals in extended discourses focusing on the power relations and learners' proficiency levels. It uses conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) as the methodological framework. Conversation analysis is a field of study which seeks to disclose and describe the organizational features underlying social interaction, particularly the "competencies which ordinary speakers use and rely on when they engage in intelligible, conversational interaction" (Heritage, 1984, p. 241). As such, conversation analysis provides an exceptional analytical tool and perspective with which to examine learners' turns and sequences in particular details. The data is elicited via open role-plays with two native English speakers to capture the details in the interactions such as turn-takings, hesitations, and hedges. Furthermore, it explores learners' pragmatic perceptions and intentions via RVR. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding of Korean EFL learners' performance and perceptions of refusals as well as some possible causes for problematic interactions and useful pedagogical implications regarding L2 pragmatics.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics

The pragmatic competence explored in L2 pragmatics includes linguistic knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, and the ability to use such knowledge in an interaction (Culpeper et al., 2018). Pragmatic competence has been considered as an essential yet challenging ability for language learners; it "reflects badly on him/her as a *person*" (Thomas, 1983, p. 97). Unlike how grammatical or linguistic errors can be attributed to one's lack of proficiency, pragmatic errors may act as an obstacle in conveying what one means because the speaker's intention may be mistakenly interpreted as impolite. Hence, pragmatic errors may be taken as more serious errors (Won, 2012). Two types of pragmatic failures are

pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983): the former refers to failures that are due to misinterpretation of pragmatic forces, and the latter relates to the beliefs of the target culture.

Refusals take place in every language in various contexts, and it is known that the ways of refusal performances vary across cultures (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Hence, being aware of how refusals are performed in the target language is crucial for language learners. Despite the universal politeness strategies and features of face-threatening acts, refusals still vary across cultures (Fouser, 1995).

## 2.2. Empirical Studies

Pioneering research on comparing refusals of the native and nonnative speakers was conducted by Beebe et al. (1990) comparing the refusals of Japanese and American speakers and by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) focusing on the status congruency between the student and the professor in an academic setting. In the Korean context, cross-cultural refusal studies (Kwon, 2004; Lyuh, 1994) compared refusal performances of native Korean speakers and native English speakers. When compared with native English speakers, native Korean speakers were less direct and more unclear in their refusals. As possible explanations behind the differences between the refusals of Koreans and Americans, a high- and low-context communication as well as a collectivistic and individualistic culture are suggested (Hall, 1976; Lyuh, 1994; Park, 1990; Ting-Toomey, 1988). As Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that social distance, power relations, and ranking of imposition may affect how to perform face-threatening acts, researchers have sought to investigate the influences of numerous variables. These studies, eliciting data via DCT, discuss the occurrence of negative L1 pragmatic transfer (Chung & Min, 2013; Jung & Kim, 2008a; Kim, 2004), the influence of social power (Jung & Kim, 2008b; Kim, 2004), and the relation between language proficiency and pragmatic transfer (Kim & Kwon, 2010).

Despite the feasibility of employing a DCT, this methodology does not allow the researcher to investigate oral performances. To overcome the limitations of this methodology, Min (2013) elicited both written and oral data, whereas Lee (2013) employed oral role-play. Min (2013) notes on learners' preference of using the modal form "I can't" and limited use of indirect strategies such as hedges or offering alternatives. Lee (2013) focuses on the fluency difficulty and regards power and learner's proficiency as potent variables of learners' processing speed and appropriateness: refusing a person of lower status was perceived to be more difficult due to the unfamiliarity of the situation, and the lower proficiency group found the tasks more difficult. Nevertheless, these oral role-plays are closed role-plays where learners' interactional features cannot be examined. In

order to overcome such limitations, open role-plays can be implemented by examining learners' interactions in extended discourse. Gass and Houck (1999) and Al-Gahtani and Roever (2018) use open role-plays to observe English learners' refusals via conversation analysis.

On the other hand, there has been an increasing number of research on learners' pragmatic perceptions. Ericsson and Simon (1984) suggest the strength of conducting verbal reports to delve into the L2 learners' cognitive processes. Previous studies have thus conducted RVRs to complement speech act elicitation tasks (Kang, 2013; Ren, 2014; Robinson, 1992; Widjaja, 1997; Woodfield, 2012). These studies analyze learners' thought processes and behaviors (Widjaja, 1997), the evidence of social transfer and their perceptions and difficulties (Woodfield, 2012), and changes in the cognitive processes (Ren, 2014). Kang (2013) implemented RVRs to only some of the participants to collect background on their DCT responses with the focus on indirectness and familiarity; many Korean EFL learners were not able to realize the intended indirectness, and familiarity was an influential variable in deciding on the indirectness.

Data collected in the previous literature analyzing Korean EFL learners' refusals, albeit rich and abundant, consist of single responses without any follow-up interactions. The influences of power and correlation between learners' pragmatic competence and their proficiency have not been thoroughly investigated or discussed. Since refusals occur within a discourse, it may be better observed through analyzing the extended discourse, examining what comes before and after refusals. Moreover, studying learners' nonverbal as well as verbal features may provide in-depth information about how the learners engage in an interaction. It is also necessary to examine Korean EFL learners' pragmatic perceptions, which have not yet been the focus of the refusal studies.

The present study intends to investigate the following three research questions.

1. How do the Korean EFL learners perform refusals to requests of different power relations?
2. How do the learners of different proficiency levels differ in their performances?
3. To what extent are the Korean EFL learners able to perform refusals as they intended?  
Are they aware of the pragmatic differences between Korean and English?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Participants**

This study involved sixteen Korean EFL learners, eleven female, and five male students,

who are attending a university in Seoul, Korea, their age ranging from 21 to 28. Students with any experience of living in an English-speaking country were excluded from the study. The participants were divided into two proficiency levels based on their scores of an English certification test (i.e., Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University (TEPS)).<sup>1</sup> Nine students whose scores ranged from 701 to 990 were classified as more advanced learners and seven who scored between 401 and 700, as less advanced.

All participants conversed with two native speakers of English from the United States who were their counterparts in the role-plays. Each native speaker played a different role: a middle-aged female American, currently an instructor at a language education institute, played the professor, and the other female American, a student in her early twenties, played the friend.

## 3.2. Data Collection

### 3.2.1. Open oral role-plays of refusals to requests

Participants engaged in role-plays of refusals to requests of two different power relations – refusing a person of higher status and a person of equal status. Refusing a person of lower status was excluded in the present study because this situation requires the participant to put oneself into the position such as a professor or a boss, which they are not familiar with (Lee, 2013).

In selecting the role-play situations, a survey was conducted to control the degree of the imposition of the requests. The survey included a total of 12 request contexts, equally divided in number in terms of power relations, which had been employed in previous studies (Beebe et al., 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Tanaka & Swade, 1982). Eighty-two Koreans in their 20s and 30s rated the degree of imposition of these requests on a five-point Likert scale, and the average was calculated. The requests with the most similar degree, ranging from 3.3 to 3.6, were then selected for the study.

Figures 1 and 2 are the role-play situations presented to the participants before the role-plays. To prevent any gender influences, the first context in Figure 2 was adjusted to the participant's gender – to a female participant, the interlocutor mentioned her sister, and to a male participant, the interlocutor mentioned her brother. The instruction was written in both languages to avoid any possible difficulties in comprehension.

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<sup>1</sup> Scores of other English certification tests were converted into the TEPS score according to the criterion that the TEPS council provides.

**FIGURE 1****Learners' Instructions on Refusals to a Person of a Higher Status**

1. You are a student, and you go into your course on the first day of class. The professor asks you to register for the same class by another professor. (The course and the course schedule are the same with your original course). You are to refuse this.

당신은 학생입니다. 새로운 학기에 첫 수업에 참석한 날, 교수님께서 오셔서 동일한 수업(다른 교수님께서 강의하시는 수업)으로 수강신청을 바꿔달라고 말씀하십니다. 이에 대해서 거절하십시오.

2. You are a student. Your professor comes and asks you to take responsibility for an important event in your department. You are to refuse this.

당신은 학생입니다. 교수님께서 오셔서 당신의 학과에서 개최될 중요한 행사의 책임 진행자가 될 수 있는지 말씀하십니다. 이에 대해서 거절하십시오.

**FIGURE 2****Learners' Instructions on Refusals to a Person of an Equal Status**

1. The two of you are friends. Your friend says that her sister (brother) is visiting her soon, and s/he does not have a place to stay. This friend asks you if you will let her sister/brother stay at your home. You are to refuse this.

두 사람은 친구입니다. 친구의 형제(자매)가 곧 그 친구를 보러 오게 되는데, 그 형제(자매)가 머물 곳이 없으며 당신 집에 머물 수 있는지 요청합니다. 이에 대해서 거절하십시오.

2. You two are friends. She needs money urgently. She asks you if you can borrow her that money (300,000 Won). You are to refuse this.

두 사람은 친구 사이입니다. 친구가 급한 사정이 생겨서 급하게 돈이 필요한 상황입니다. 친구가 당신에게 30 만원을 빌려달라고 요청합니다. 이에 대해서 거절하십시오.

Participants interacted with the professor first and then with the friend. They were given a short amount of time to prepare before engaging in the role-plays. The role-plays were conducted individually with each interlocutor in different classrooms, and the data was video- and audio-recorded.

After the role-plays, the native English speakers provided their assessments on the participants' refusal performances. They marked the degree of appropriateness as presented in Table 1 and provided additional comments on noticeable features in the interactions.<sup>2</sup> They were informed about the purpose of this study and background information of the request-refusal sequences before the day of the role-play tasks. The assessments and the additional comments were scanned afterward to cross-check the consistency in their assessments across the learners' refusals.

<sup>2</sup> In the previous literature, researchers sought to evaluate learners' expressions in regards to their grammatical and discourse errors (Lee, 2013; Taguchi, 2007). The appropriateness rating scale made by Taguchi (2007) has been adapted in the present study by adding specific questions.

**TABLE 1**  
**The Native English Speakers' Assessment Scales**

	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How did the student's refusals sound?					
Did the responses sound clear as refusals?					
Did the student sound/act polite while refusing the request?					
How appropriate was the student's interaction in refusing?					

### 3.2.2. Retrospective verbal report (RVR)

RVR was conducted once in Korean after completing all role-plays because conducting RVR between the role-plays may influence learners' subsequent performances. All RVRs were audio-recorded. Questions employed in the RVR refer to the participants' intentions as well as perceptions. Fixed questions were adapted from previous literature on RVR (Ren, 2014; Robinson, 1992) – i.e., *What did you intend to say?*, *What made you reply in this manner?*, *Do you think there are cultural differences between Korean and English?* and *How much do you think you are aware of the differences?* Because of the possibility of the participants' unfamiliarity with the term *pragmatic difference*, the term *cultural difference* was used instead in examining learners' pragmatic awareness. Data-driven questions were also used when necessary.

## 3.3. Data Analysis

### 3.3.1. Analyzing role-plays

The audio- and video-recorded role-play data were transcribed and analyzed according to the conversation analysis framework (See Appendix A). First, the results of the refusal tasks were analyzed to examine how well the learners succeeded in refusing the interlocutor. Next, the whole interaction data was analyzed in detail, taking refusals as dispreferred second pair parts (Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). In an adjacency pair, – a pair composed of two turns by different speakers in relative order – the production of a first pair part by the current speaker makes it relevant for a next speaker to produce a second pair part (Sacks et al., 1974, Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Commonly there are alternative second pair parts that constitute relevant responses to a first pair part, with some being *preferred* and others *dispreferred* (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987 [1973]). The notion of dis/preference refers to “sequence- and turn-organizational features of the conversation” rather than the participants' desires or psychological inclinations (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977, p. 362). Preferred responses such as agreements or acceptances of requests

are ordinarily direct, done without delay, thereby being placed continuously with their first pair parts. In contrast, dispreferred responses such as disagreements or refusals often accompany mitigations and elaborations (on accounts, excuses, disclaimers, and hedges), and/or delayed whether by silence, intervening turns,<sup>3</sup> or preceding items within the dispreferred turns, including pause fillers such as “uhh” and “umm.” Nonverbal gestures such as gaze behavior and affiliative attitude were also included in the analysis.

### 3.3.2. Analyzing RVRs

After the audio-recorded data on learners' perceptions were transcribed, it was categorized into intentions and pragmatic awareness. As one of the categories suggested by Ericsson and Simon (1984), an analysis of learners' intentions was done, taking into account the native English speakers' feedback on their performances. While analyzing learners' RVRs, the division of pragmatics into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983) served as a significant classification. Pragmalinguistics refers to resources such as linguistic forms and strategies that can perform specific pragmatic functions. In contrast, sociopragmatics refers to “the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action” (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). Based on this category, features that relate to particular linguistic forms and/or strategies were analyzed as pragmalinguistic aspects, and learners' thoughts and beliefs of the language, culture, and the social system, sociopragmatic aspects.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Refusals to Persons of Different Statuses

Despite some similar tendencies shown in learners' refusals (e.g., elaborating reasons and suggesting alternatives), this section focuses on the different features according to the interlocutor's status. After dealing with whether learners succeeded in performing the refusal in 4.1.1, the paper discusses in the rest of the subsections how their verbal and nonverbal features signal their sensitivity towards status.

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<sup>3</sup> This can take the form of an insert expansion. Insert expansion refers to a sequence of its own adjacency pair that is located between the base first and second pair parts (Schegloff, 2007). Insert expansions can be initiated for the purpose of delaying a dispreferred response as well as initiating a repair.

## 4.1.1. The success rates of refusals

Participants' attempts at refusals resulted in different outcomes. Refusals to the professor showed three types (i.e., successful refusals, delayed answers, and failure at refusing) while those to the friend yielded four types of outcomes, adding to the three an additional category, i.e., partial acceptance (See Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2**  
**The Outcomes of Refusing the Professor**

	Role-play #1	Role-play #2	Total
Succeeded in refusing	9 <sup>a</sup> (56.3%)	6 (37.5%)	15 (46.9%)
Delayed answering	2 (12.5%)	6 (37.5%)	8 (25%)
Failed in refusing	5 (31.2%)	4 (25%)	9 (28.1%)
Total	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	32 (100%)

Note. <sup>a</sup>The number of participants

**Table 3**  
**The Outcomes of Refusing the Friend**

	Role-play #1	Role-play #2	Total
Succeeded in refusing	11 (68.8%)	9 (56.3%)	20 (62.5%)
Delayed answering	5 (31.2%)	1 (6.3%)	6 (18.8%)
Failed in refusing	0 (0%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (3.1%)
Partially accepted	0 (0%)	5 (31.1%)	5 (15.6%)
Total	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	32 (100%)

The partial acceptance in Table 3 occurred only in the second role-play with the friend, where the participants offered to lend the friend a partial amount of money. This partial compliance with the friend's request ( $n = 5$ ) may account for the decreased occurrence of refusals in the second situation ( $n = 9$ ). Even so, students were more successful at refusing the friend ( $n = 20$ , 62.5%) than the professor ( $n = 15$ , 46.9%), implying that they perceived the task of refusing the professor more difficult. Fisher's exact test confirmed the statistical significance of the difference in the rate of learners' successful refusals to the two interlocutors ( $p < .01$ ). The difference in success rates thus appears to display learners' status sensitivity: learners found it harder to refuse a person of a higher status.

## 4.1.2. Initiation of an insert expansion

Learners showed a different way of organizing their sequences in the interactions with the two interlocutors: unlike in the role-plays with the friend, they frequently initiated insert expansions when talking to the professor. They frequently formed questions inquiring about additional information. The two excerpts are illustrations of how a less advanced learner, Grace, projects her turns with the two interlocutors. Excerpt 1 displays

the interaction where the professor requests Grace to take responsibility in preparing for an event, and Excerpt 2 is an illustration of the friend asking Grace if her sister can stay over at Grace's place for a few days.

Excerpt 1. (Extracted from Grace-prof#2)<sup>4</sup>

- 26 Pam: and I really (.) need a STU:d[ent ((gestures with RH)) to=  
 27 Grace: [((nods)) °yes°  
 28 Pam: =take charge of [the preparations.  
 29 Grace: [((nods))  
 30 (0.4)  
 31→ Grace: °oh (0.4) uh° ((avoids eye contact)) (0.4) when the (2.0) this  
 32 Pam: the [event ((brings RH forward))  
 33 Grace: [event yes ((nods))  
 34 Pam: ahh ((points fingers in the air)) the event is in Janu:ary.  
 35 Grace: °January°  
 36 Pam: yeah (0.2) ((nods)) LA:TE January.  
 37→ Grace: ((nods)) °mmm° (0.2) uh (2.0) uh ((avoids eye contact)) (1.8)  
 38 [do you talk about this=  
 39 Pam: [((dilates her eyes))  
 40 Grace: =another (0.8) our (1.0) college students

Excerpt 2. (Extracted from Grace-fr#1)

- 29→ Grace: ((avoids eye contact)) ohhh:: (0.8) oh (0.6) oh (0.6) oh I::: .hh live (.)  
 30 with my (.) family so ((avoids eye contact)) (1.0) uh I (0.4) I think  
 31 it's °hard to° (2.2) ((nods))  
 32 Abby: could you may be (.) ask them though? plea- plea[se s=  
 33 Grace: [ahh ((smiles))  
 34 Abby: =((puts her hands together)) she'coming in really soon and I just  
 35 don't know what (.) to do I really need this? ((smiles))  
 36→ Grace: (0.5) ((smiles, avoids eye contact)) oh yu- um (1.0) uh first I will tak-  
 37 talk about (0.4) ((nods)) this (0.4) ((rests her hands on her chin)) with  
 38 my family uh (.) but uh they (1.0) don't like (0.4) this (1.0) bring  
 39 friends so (.)

In Excerpt 1, Pam's request is first followed by a 0.4 second silence (line 30), and then by Grace's inquiry about the date of the event (line 31). This question constitutes the first pair part of an insert expansion, which makes it relevant for Pam to provide an appropriate

<sup>4</sup> In all transcriptions, pseudonyms were used for the participants.

second pair part (i.e., an answer to the question) next. Pam indeed provides the answer (line 34) and closes the insert sequence by confirming on the date in line 36. Interestingly, Grace initiates another insert expansion with an additional question (lines 37~40). By doing so, Grace gains time before responding to the base first pair part (i.e., request), and she eventually succeeds in refusing Pam. While Grace employs insert expansions in her interactions with the professor, she does not use this strategy in refusing the friend, as seen in Excerpt 2. The strategies that Grace uses in interacting with Abby are mostly providing excuses and reasons (lines 29~31 and 36~39). Her recurrent elaborations on her family's dispreference hint at a refusal.

An insert expansion may be associated with the notion of dis/preference (Schegloff, 2007). Due to its location within the larger sequence, an insert expansion delays the base second pair part. In this study, learners projected insert expansions to delay the projection of a refusal to the professor in particular; this tendency was rarely detected in their interactions with the friend. It is possible that this tendency may be attributable, at least in part, to the nature of this particular request in that students are more likely to ask for more details about the event before responding to it. Nevertheless, in several learners' RVRs, they confirmed that they asked more questions to delay a refusal. This seems to imply that learners found refusing the professor more difficult than refusing the friend.

#### 4.1.3. Verbal features of learners' refusals

Several different verbal features were observed in refusals according to the interlocutor's different statuses. One of the features is the directness of the refusals. Learners frequently refused the friend explicitly using direct refusal strategies. Excerpts 3 and 4 display how Son, a less advanced learner, refuses to the friend and the professor, respectively. Excerpt 3 is extracted from the interaction where the friend asks Son if he could lend her money, and Excerpt 4 is part of the conversation where the professor requests Son to register for another course.

Excerpt 3. (Extracted from Son-fr#2)

34→ Son: tst (.) ((glances upward)) ohhh:: but I (.) I sorry but I have n- n- enough  
35 money so: (0.6) I can't lend °you° the money °to you°

Excerpt 4 (Extracted from Son-prof#1)

91→ Son: °oh° then would you mind (0.8) uh increasing your class (1.2)  
92 ((averts his eyes)) e- (0.8) how do I ((tilts his head to the left))  
93 [say  
94 Pam: [outs:ze? ((narrows her eyes))

95 (0.4)  
 96 Son: no class (0.2) people? hh °class° ((smiles))

In Excerpt 3, Son uses the expression “I can’t” to refuse the request directly. Brown and Levinson (1987) posit that a compromise between the desires to either convey one’s message clear or avoid projecting a face-threatening act results in indirect speech acts; it is suggested that one be conventionally indirect, hedge, and minimize the imposition of the act. In subcategorizing the refusal formulas, Beebe et al. (1990) sorted “no” and negative willingness ability (e.g., “I can’t”) as direct refusal strategies. Son’s expression “I can’t” is a direct refusal; yet, he does not utter it without any mitigating devices. An apology (“I’m sorry”) with an account (“I don’t have enough money”) before the bald refusal may mitigate the effect of saying “I can’t.” When Son interacted with the professor, there was no sign of a direct refusal. In Excerpt 4, he mentions an alternative, asking for the possibility of increasing the quota. Without any attempts to produce a direct refusal to the professor, Son tries using various other strategies.

Although not a dominant feature, a direct refusal was nevertheless a strategy that learners used more frequently to the friend. The number of role-plays that contain learners’ direct refusal was six when they interacted with the professor, but it increased up to 16 in the interaction with the friend. The different uses of direct refusals can serve as evidence of learners’ status sensitivity. They may have been more hesitant to refuse directly to the professor because they perceived their relationship with the professor more hierarchical and demanding than that with the friend.<sup>5</sup>

Besides, data also illustrates learners’ different tendencies for using apologetic expressions. While learners rarely apologized to the professor, they frequently employed this strategy to the friend. The following excerpts are a case in point. In Excerpt 5, Yujin apologizes for not being able to lend her friend the money while in Excerpt 6, she gives the professor her reasons and mentions an alternative.

Excerpt 5. (Extracted from Yujin-fr#2)

44 Yujin: ahh I REA:lly want to le:nd you but (0.8) hhh ((fidgets with fingers))  
 45→ I don’t have money too hh[hhhh I’m sorry.  
 46 Abby: [hhh  
 47 (0.8)  
 48 Abby: hhh[hh

<sup>5</sup> Although direct refusals were accompanied by numerous mitigating devices, hedges, accounts, or elaborations in the data, these expressions are still bald, on-record utterances. Thus, learners may have disregarded these expressions while they were refusing the professor to minimize the risk of face-threatening.

- 49 Yujin: [hhh  
 50 Abby: is there like (.) ANY that you could let me borrow or something  
 51 please ((clasps her hands together)) I >really really< need this.  
 52→ Yujin: but uh ((avoids eye contact)) I'm sorry but (0.5) yesterday I bought  
 53 (0.3) a flight tick- um a plane [ticket (0.8) um (0.4) .hh so my=  
 54 Abby: [((nods))  
 55→ Yujin: =budget is ((gestures with hands)) hhhhh awful hhhhh I'm sorry.  
 hhhh

Excerpt 6. (Extracted from Yujin-prof#1)

- 69→ Yujin: but um ((avoids eye contact)) (0.2) I should take the class because  
 70 this class is necessary (0.8) um for my graduation.  
 71 Pam: oh yuh ((nods))  
 ... (36 lines omitted)  
 107→ Yujin: uh can you ask (0.6) another ((fidgets with her fingers)) (0.2) another  
 108 person to::: (1.0) ((averts her eyes)) register >to another class?<

Note that in Excerpt 5, Yujin apologizes as many as three times in her interaction with Abby (see “I’m sorry” in lines 45, 52, and 55). These apologies appear with several other features serving as a harbinger of a dispreferred response: expression of a wish (line 44), excuses and reasons (lines 45 and 52~55), and nonverbal features including pauses (lines 44 and 52~53), hand gestures (lines 44 and 55), and avoidance of eye contact (line 52). In contrast to her interaction with the friend, Yujin does not use an apologizing strategy to the professor. In the first part of Excerpt 6, Yujin provides a reason for not complying with the professor’s request. Later in lines 107~108 Yujin suggests an alternative instead of apologizing to the professor.

Learners showed a similar tendency in that out of 32 interactions in total, apologetic expressions were found in 25 interactions with the friend, but only 10 with the professor. This difference according to the different power is a bit out of line with findings from the previous literature (Jung & Kim, 2008a, 2008b; Kim, 2004), where expressing apologies was found to be a prevailing strategy for Korean English learners. It was suggested that learners chose to apologize when they failed to maintain a harmonious relationship (Jung & Kim, 2008a, 2008b). The present finding adds that the Korean EFL learners perceive apologizing to be a more suitable strategy in refusing a person of equal status. While it is unclear why an apology is not a popular strategy when refusing the professor, learners’ focus on making the professor accept their refusals may have precluded them from

employing other strategies.

#### 4.1.4. Gaze orientation in learners' refusals

Learners' gaze orientation was found to be different when they refused the two interlocutors. They rarely shifted their gaze from the friend to somewhere else, whereas most learners displayed gaze shifts multiple times during the interaction with the professor. Excerpt 7 is extracted from the second role-play between John, a more proficient learner, and the professor.

Excerpt 7. (Extracted from John1-prof#2)

70→ John: ((avoids eye contact)) umm:: may be I can (1.4) uh ((leans back))  
 71 (0.2) ask (0.2) uh (2.0) uh (1.0) Kevin? ((smiles)) (0.6) [who is (0.2)=  
 72 Pam: ((smiles))  
 73 John: =who might also be: available ((smiles)) (.) that day

Gaze aversion frequently occurs in a dispreference structure (Haddington, 2006; Kendrick & Holler, 2017). Instead of maintaining one's gaze towards the interlocutor, the person projecting a dispreferred response tends to project one's turn with gaze aversion. The above excerpt displays one of John's repeated gaze aversion. He avoids eye contact when he starts his turn with a filled pause "umm." John continues to speak, and a relatively long 1.4s silence follows his gaze shift along with the pause filler. A gaze shift, in this case a shift from Pam during Pam's previous turn to elsewhere at the beginning of John's turn, may signal a gaze aversion. Avoiding eye contact with Pam hints a forthcoming dispreferred response or an elaborated excuse that delays the dispreferred response. Frequent gaze shifts and gaze avoidance in the interactions with the professor may be interpreted as devices used to minimize the threats to the professor's face.

## 4.2. Refusals by Learners of Different Proficiencies

This section focuses on the difference in learners' linguistic abilities as illustrated by intra-turn pauses (4.2.1) and their abilities to show affiliations to the interlocutor (4.2.2).

### 4.2.1. Learners' linguistic ability indexed by intra-turn pauses

Learners' different linguistic abilities were noticeable in overall turn lengths, which evidenced different capabilities to elaborate their utterances. Relatedly, there existed different features of pauses in their interactions, with more frequent intra-turn pauses found

throughout the less proficient learners' performances. Excerpts 8 and 9 respectively show a more and less advanced learner's interactions from the same role-play situation. In Excerpt 8, the professor requests Haley to take charge of the event preparation, and prior to Excerpt 9, John mentioned his unavailability during the time of the event.

Excerpt 8. (Extracted from Haley-prof#2)

- 23 Pam: I thought of you ((point out with a finger)) Haley  
 24 (0.4)  
 25→ Haley: .hh ((avoids eye contact)) o:kay: firstly:: I: (0.2) I  
 26 persona:lly:: really appreciate your o:ffer:: [>you know< =  
 27 Pam: [((nods))  
 28 Haley: = to:: think of ((gestures with hands)) me: as fi:rst person  
 29→ [to be part of the eve:nt] but (0.4) >you know< (0.2) I::=  
 30 Pam: [((nods)) ]  
 31 Haley: =this is my last yea:r and I'm really busy right now?

Excerpt 9. (Extracted from John2-prof#2)

- 65 Pam: oh where are you go:ing  
 66 (0.4)  
 67 John: .hhh uh ((touches his chin)) I'm going to:: ((glances upwards)) (3.2)  
 68→ trave:l. (2.0) yeah ((nods)) (0.2) travel with my: (0.8) ((puts RH in  
 69 the air)) VERY best friends and this is (1.0) the (0.8) first chance  
 70 with my friends so

The two excerpts above display differences in the length and frequency of pauses. Haley in Excerpt 8 pauses shorter and less than John in Excerpt 9. While Haley's pauses are 0.2s or 0.4s long, several of John's pauses continue for longer than 1.0s. Not only are John's pauses lengthier than Haley's, but they also occur more frequently. That is, Haley is more capable of projecting her turns without many pauses.

Furthermore, there is a difference in the position of pauses as well. According to Riggensbach (1991), pauses that occur in predictable positions – such as at clausal boundaries (Hawkins, 1971) – sound fluent, but pauses that occur elsewhere signal disfluency in that they interrupt the smooth flow of the speech. Kormos and Denes (2004) also discuss how the less proficient students were found to be hesitant due to their problems of retrieving grammatical or lexical information. For Haley, the short duration and the position of the pauses enable her to continue without any disruptions because they do not occur in between non-clausal boundaries. In John's case, however, several lengthy pauses occurred not only at clausal boundaries but also frequently between words,

disrupting the flow of his turn. These recurrent pauses appear to index John's proficiency level, indicating that he is having a hard time retrieving the next words in producing L2 utterances. Alternatively, or additionally, the circumstance of a role-play, which requires a learner to position oneself in a hypothetical situation, may have made him struggle to find an appropriate response to an unexpected inquiry. In any case, these pauses signal that he needed more time to think about his utterance.

Intra-turn pauses positioned at other than clausal boundaries have been discovered mostly in the less advanced learners' interactions, and the duration was also longer therein. The characteristics of intra-turn pauses thus display learners' different capability of planning in advance and of performing their linguistic abilities.

#### 4.2.2. Learners' ability to express affiliation

Relevant both to the interlocutor's status and the learners' proficiency levels, a different responding pattern was noted in the request sequence preceding refusals. A request, a dispreferred type of first pair part (Schegloff, 2007), is frequently preceded by announcements, which typically provide information on the upcoming request (and may elicit an offer from the recipient, which would obviate the need for a request). When an announcement is produced as a first pair part, two types of actions become relevant for next turn: registering of the announcement as news and/or an assessment of the news (Schegloff, 2007). Interestingly, the current study found a difference in the degree of how learners of different proficiencies registered the announcement as news as well as whether they provided an assessment of the news. While most learners to some extent expressed that the announcement was indeed news to them, the more proficient learners were more responsive, illustrating the newsworthiness of the previous utterances. In contrast, only a few learners of lower proficiency were as responsive. Moreover, the more proficient learners provided their assessments on the content of the news, being emphatic and affiliative to the interlocutor. Compare the following two excerpts where the friend Abby asks the learners for money; Excerpt 10 and 11 illustrate the utterances of Grace, a less proficient learner, and June, a more proficient learner, respectively.

Excerpt 10. (Extracted from Grace-fr#2)

- 14 Abby: we need (0.8) this like hu::ge ((frowns)) bra::nd new textbook  
 15 [that came out and it's like REA:lly big [and it's SO expensive=  
 16→ Grace: [((nods)) yes [yeah ((nods))  
 17 Abby: =its like three hundred THOU:sand won and (0.2) I don't ((HSs))  
 18 have the money  
 19→ Grace: ye[ah

20 Abby: [I dunno where I'm gonna GET ((HSs)) the money.  
 21→ Grace: oh↓

Excerpt 11. (Extracted from June-fr#2)

19 Abby: he said that we need this BRAnd new textbook for the  
 20 [end (.) of the [class.  
 21→ June: (((dilates pupils)) [oh my god  
 22 Abby: like this big final project.  
 23 June: is HE the author?  
 ... ((20 lines omitted))  
 43 Abby: and I don't have the money for it I dunno what I'm gonna do. I  
 44 guess I'll just like  
 45→ June: [it's like the (1.0) the ((avoids eye contact)) (0.2) worst (0.2)  
 46 professor and hahaha (((gestures with hands)) =  
 47 Abby: (((moves up and down)) he's the worst  
 48→ June: =in the history hahahahaha oh my god hahahahaha

In both excerpts, Abby makes an announcement that she needs much money to buy an extremely expensive textbook for her class, which at the same time acts as a complaint. In response, both Grace and June accept Abby's turns as news, as shown by Grace's turns in lines 16, 19, and 21 in Excerpt 10 and June's turn in line 21 in Excerpt 11. Their responsiveness, however, varies: Grace's response remains relatively passive and reserved in that she only utters "yeah" or "oh," whereas June is far more expressive in responding to Abby's news. In line 21, June dilates her pupils with an exclamation "oh my god," thereby indexing her surprise at hearing Abby's announcement. Furthermore, later interaction illustrates June's ability to respond to Abby's announcement/complaint with her stance toward it. Such a response was only found in the more proficient learners' interactions with the friend. Hearing Abby say "I don't know what I'm going to do" in line 43, June provides a negative assessment on the professor as "the worst professor" (lines 45~46), to which Abby agrees by repeating it (in line 47). June even upgrades the assessment with the increment "in the history" in line 48. Her provision of assessment can be considered as her attempt at being affiliative (Lindstrom & Sorjonen, 2013; Pomerantz, 1984). Similar to June, the more advanced learners showed their appreciation of the newsworthiness of the interlocutor's announcements to a higher degree than the less advanced, and only those with the higher proficiency marked their stance on the announcements to show their affiliation with the interlocutor.

### 4.3. Retrospective Verbal Reports

This section first compares the learners' self-assessments on the delivery of their intentions with the assessments made by the native English speakers. The second subsection (4.3.2) examines the learners' thoughts on their L2 pragmatic awareness.

#### 4.3.1. The learners' intentions

Learners' self-judgments on the delivery of their intentions and the native English speakers' assessments were analyzed and compared, and the results were categorized as a match or a mismatch.<sup>6</sup> Calculating role-plays with each interlocutor as one set, Table 4 illustrates the number of matches and mismatches.

**Table 4**  
**The Mis/matches of the Learners' and the Native English Speakers' Judgments**

	Interaction with the professor	Interaction with the friend	Total
Match	11 <sup>a</sup> (68.75%)	11 (68.75%)	22 (68.75%)
Mismatch	5 (31.25%)	5 (31.25%)	10 (31.25%)

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>The number of participants

For the interactions with both the professor (unequal status) and the friend (equal status), there were eleven matches and five mismatches. Thus the majority of the interactions were regarded as successful by the learners and the native English speakers alike. Most of the learners were judged to provide valid excuses that are persuasive in polite manners. On the other hand, the first type of mismatches ( $n = 5$ ) belonged to instances where, despite learners' uncertainty of conveying their intentions, the native English speakers took the speaker's intentions well. The other type of mismatch ( $n = 5$ ) occurred when the students were sure of successfully conveying their intentions, whereas the interlocutors did not interpret their refusals the same way. Excerpt 12 presents a verbal report from a more advanced learner James and Excerpt 13, the interaction between James and the professor.

Excerpt 12.

James: I think I said what I intended to say fairly well. I felt that they (the interlocutors) got what I was saying, and since they were trying to insist something they looked like going around my point of saying. But other than

<sup>6</sup> The matches refer to instances where the student's self-judgment on the appropriateness of his/her refusals correspond to the native speaker interlocutors' assessments; the mismatches indicate the opposite case where the student's self-assessment runs counter to the interlocutors' evaluations.

that, I wanted them to catch that because of the reasons that I explain I am refusing their request.

Excerpt 13. (Extracted from James-prof#1)

- 52 Pam: aw ((smiles)) thank [you.  
 53→ James: [so I cannot change it  
 54 Pam: well we have um ((touches her chin)) (0.5) a textbook ((puts LH in  
 55 the air)) (0.5) that we sha:re we use the SAme textbook so >the  
 56 curriculum is< is GEnera:lly ((nods)) it's mostly the same  
 57→ James: bu::t ((smiles)) I don't want the ((puts RH in the air)) othe:r (0.2)  
 58 teacher's (0.2) class.

Despite James' confidence shown in Excerpt 12, the native English speaker judged his performances otherwise. Excerpt 13 displays some of his turns that were evaluated as inappropriate. To Pam, James's utterance in line 53 sounded too strong and rude. She insisted that nothing prohibits James from changing the course except his own desire, thus finding the expression "I cannot" inappropriate. Then, as Pam assures that the other course has an identical curriculum, James says that he does not want the other teacher's class (lines 57~58). The expression "I don't want to" was interpreted as a protest, thus seen as an immature and ineffective argument. Pam regarded this utterance as too juvenile for a college student speaking to his professor. Further, it indicated that he has given up hope of getting his way.

Other instances of this type of mismatch share similar features. Learners' use of linguistic forms that are not appropriate in the context made their performances sound awkward, rude, or sometimes too aggressive. These instances occurred due to their failure of considering the pragmatic functions of the linguistic forms that they used. Kang (2013) has also noted mismatches between learners' intentions and their actual production. The analysis, however, was based on learners' verbal reports and refusal strategies without considering how the recipient would perceive of the utterance. The study still displayed how lack of L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge and limited exposure to L2 led learners to struggles. Learners' failure to use linguistically appropriate forms in rejections was also discussed by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993). In exploring academic talks of native as well as non-native students longitudinally, they found that acquiring polite, appropriate utterances (i.e., pragmalinguistics) took longer than learning the structures of the talks (i.e., sociopragmatics) due to the absence of explicit teaching of politeness markers and negative feedback from the advisor. Likewise, Excerpt 13 presents the absence of negative feedback on James' inappropriate linguistic forms.

#### 4.3.2. Learners' pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic awareness

In their RVRs, the students had a chance to reflect on their pragmatic knowledge. Ten out of 16 learners responded to have at least partial knowledge of pragmatics. Further, 12 students appeared to be aware of the different pragmatics in their native language, Korean, and English. Since these reports reflect their beliefs about a particular language/culture, they are more closely related to the sociopragmatics than pragmalinguistics.

More than half of the learners answered to at least know some differences between the two languages, but their responses differed in the extent to which they reportedly know about L2 pragmatics. Regardless of the different degrees of their reported L2 pragmatic knowledge, their knowledge can be categorized into two aspects: first, most learners referred to the "appropriateness" of a refusal; additionally, a few mentioned their different beliefs in the power relations. Excerpt 14 displays a less advanced learner's verbal report on her L2 pragmatic knowledge on performing a refusal.

Excerpt 14.

Grace: I don't know about the cultural differences. ... I also don't apply my (lack) of knowledge when I speak. ... But I think that sometimes if I speak indirectly, 'no' may not be apparent in the American culture. I remember that in American movies they always said 'no' clearly. But in Korean, we mean 'no' by giving excuses or reasons but in English that's not the case.

According to her response, Grace turns out to have more pragmatic knowledge than she acknowledges. On the contrary to her perceptions, she has the notion that unlike Koreans, Americans tend to be clearer in refusing, showing that she is aware of some different features. Other students' reports resemble Grace's: they explain how they have noticed the degree of directness differs between the two languages. Excerpt 15, for example, illustrates that Cindy, a less advanced learner, acknowledged a subtle difference in the power relations while she was engaged in the role-play with the professor.

Excerpt 15.

Cindy: Honestly, I think talking to a Korean professor is trickier than talking to a foreign professor. I just feel that the distance between me and the foreign professor is not that far. I also tend to think that a foreigner is more open-minded. So I feel more comfortable talking to a foreign professor than to a Korean professor.

When asked to compare her refusals in English and Korean, Cindy contrasts the distance that she feels with the American professor and Korean professor. Her answer implies that she does not regard her relationship with the former as hierarchical as with the latter, which made her feel more comfortable in the interaction with the native English speaker. There were only two students who explicitly mentioned this different relationship with the professor.

The majority of the learners seem to be aware of the existence of different pragmatics. They report that their background knowledge affects their way of speaking and that they would perform better in English if they were equipped with accurate knowledge. Some students, however, responded that they did not feel the necessity of L2 pragmatic knowledge. This is presented in Excerpt 16, extracted from verbal reports of Kimmy, a less advanced learner.

Excerpt 16.

Kimmy: I don't know about the American cultures. ... I think the pragmatics would be important only when you are above a certain level in which you are able to speak whatever you want in English as well as in Korean. But I'm not at that level, so I think expressing what I want is more important for me. At this stage.

Kimmy is more concerned about her linguistic competence, and her reason behind this is due to her low proficiency, believing that pragmatic competence is only for the advanced students. Her perceptions were evident in her interactions as well as the native English speakers' judgments. Both interlocutors regarded Kimmy's interactions as either consisting of inappropriate behaviors or lacking sincerity and sympathy. Contradictory to her beliefs, her performances and the native speakers' comments clearly show the need for L2 pragmatic competence. Even though her somewhat awkward linguistic expressions may serve as an excuse for her impolite behavior, her lack of pragmatic competence still influences how the interlocutors think of her.

Previous literature on learners' L2 pragmatic knowledge discusses how learners have some background knowledge on the sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics (Robinson, 1992). There is also evidence for L1 transfer in the sociopragmatics (Widjaja, 1997; Woodfield, 2012). In the current study, learners showed their L2 sociopragmatic knowledge, with the most prevalent one pertaining to their (limited) understanding of the relative directness of English and the politeness/appropriateness of a refusal. Their (in)appropriate pragmalinguistic knowledge was illustrated in the previous section, where the native English speakers assessed their performances. Learners' incorrect L2 pragmatic

knowledge was not detected in the present study,<sup>7</sup> but their verbal reports still suggest the need for more instructions on L2 pragmatic features in classrooms.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate Korean EFL learners' refusal performances focusing on the different power relations and learners' proficiency levels and to explore learners' L2 pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic awareness. Previous studies have examined Korean EFL learners' refusal strategies via DCTs in comparison to those of native English speakers. They focused on learners' salient features based on tasks that elicit a single answer rather than the actual interaction. To compensate for the limitations of the previous literature, the study implemented open role-plays, which enabled the participants to engage in face to face interactions, thereby eliciting their oral performances in extended discourse. By using conversation analysis as the methodological framework, the study was able to analyze the data in greater detail, taking into account features that had previously not been attended to (e.g., silences and gaze orientation). Moreover, supplementing the analysis with RVRs provided further information on the learners' perceptions.

Learners' interactions with persons of two different statuses illustrated their sensitivity to status in line with some previous research (Kim, 2004; Lee, 2013). The different success rates of the refusals as well as their projections of insert expansions, different verbal features, and gaze orientations demonstrated this sensitivity. Learners of different proficiencies also varied in their interactions in terms of the frequencies, lengths, positions of intra-turn pauses, and their abilities to express affiliation to the interlocutor. While the majority succeeded in interacting appropriately, some performances were marked inappropriate by the interlocutors, suggesting that learners' refusals are not always taken as they intended. More than half of the participants reported that they roughly know about the pragmatic differences in the two languages, and even more learners showed some pragmatic awareness.

Based on the findings of the present study, some implications may be drawn. Regarding the features of learners' refusals, what seems to be critical is how the interlocutor perceives the learners' refusal performances. As long as the learners' interactions are regarded as acceptable by the interlocutors, their refusals are not problematic. The data of this study resembles much of the findings from previous literature in learners' use of strategies.

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<sup>7</sup> Widjaja (1997) discusses Taiwanese participants' utilization of automatized routines resulting from their L2 pragmatic knowledge being either incorrect or insufficient. Some were discovered to have wrong stereotypes of the L2 culture while others did not acquire the knowledge that may facilitate more smooth interactions.

Regardless of whether these are Korean EFL learners' salient features, it should be noted that their tendency to employ such devices helped them to sound less direct and more polite to the interlocutors.

Many students consider accuracy most important in learning a language (Kang, 2017); their grammatical competence, however, may not be the primary factor when the interlocutor judges the appropriateness of their utterances. This fact was evident in how the native English speakers focused on the pragmatic aspects while assessing the appropriateness of learners' interactions. It is thus equally important for the learners to keep in mind that interaction requires something other than the grammaticality of their language. In the role-plays, they were able to convey messages appropriately without grammatically perfect utterances; hence, students may need to be less preoccupied with producing accurate linguistic forms and more informed about other factors that may affect an interaction.

In particular, the findings of the current study highlight the importance of pragmalinguistic aspects in the instruction of L2 pragmatics. Some learners' inappropriate performances, probably due to their inadequate L2 pragmatic knowledge, suggest that learners uttered those inappropriate expressions without considering their effects on the interlocutor. It thus seems necessary for teachers when teaching target expressions to emphasize their pragmalinguistic functions and to provide examples of appropriate situational contexts. By learning not only the literary meaning and grammatical features but also when to use the words and what the words imply, learners would be less likely to trigger communication breakdown or to make a rude or offensive remark unintentionally. In other words, instruction should focus on raising the students' consciousness of pragmatic aspects when they learn English so that they can be made aware of the pragmatic functions of the linguistic forms and use them appropriately in context.

This study is not without limitations in that the implementation of oral role-plays brings up the issue of authenticity. There is an argument that the interactions in the role-plays are not consequential, authentic, or natural (Gass & Houck, 1999; Kasper & Youn, 2018). Nevertheless, role-plays have similar characteristics with authentic conversations (Ewald, 2012; Stokoe, 2013) and enable the researchers to analyze how the participants structure their turns and sequences. Besides, the current study analyzed only a limited number of students' oral performances. Additional research needs to be conducted with a greater number of participants; it would then be possible to classify the learners into a finer classification of proficiency levels or some other categories to discover the impact of variables that are not dealt with in the present study. Further research with larger amounts of learners' oral data and more in-depth RVR sessions are expected to provide more detailed information on their interactional features and L2 pragmatic knowledge and perceptions. A different yet fruitful line of future research would focus on pragmatic

instruction, exploring effective ways of enhancing learners' L2 pragmatic knowledge and performance in actual interaction.

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## APPENDIX A

### Conversation-analytic Transcript Symbols (Schegloff, 2007)

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(0.0)	Numbers in the parentheses indicate silence in tenths of a second
(.)	A dot in the parentheses indicate a micropause, usually less than 0.2 second
[ ]	Brackets indicate the beginning and the end of the overlap
=	Equals signs come in pairs – one at the end of the line and the other at the start of another line, indicating: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. if the two lines connected by the equals signs are by the same speaker, there was no break in between the two lines other than an overlap breaking the lines</li> <li>2. if the two lines connected by the equal signs are by different speakers, the second line followed the first without discernible pause</li> </ol>
.	A falling, final intonation contour
?	A rising intonation
,	A continuing intonation
::	A stretch of the sound
<u>word</u>	A stress or emphasis
<u>WOrd</u>	The upper case indicates a particularly loud talk
°	A relatively soft sound
°word°	The word in between the degree signs are markedly soft
-	A cut-off or self-interruption
:	A falling intonation contour
ˆ	A rising intonation contour or an inflection
↑	A sharp intonation rise
↓	A sharp intonation fall
><	The talk between the signs is compressed or rushed
<>	The talk between the signs is markedly slow
hhh	Hearable aspirations representing laughter, breathing, and so on
(hhh)	An aspiration within the parentheses indicate the emergence of an aspiration in between the boundary of a word
.hhh	An inhalation
(( ))	Double parentheses indicate mark transcriber's descriptions of events
(word)	An uncertain transcription, representing a possibility
LH	Left hand
RH	Right hand
HS	Head shake
HSs	More than one head shakes

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Applicable levels: Tertiary

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