

L2 Learners' Speech Act Behavior of Response to Gratitude

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The present study investigates the knowledge of the speech act behavior of response to gratitude of Korean learners of English in comparisons with Korean native and English native speakers. While doing so, this study aims to reveal the cross-cultural differences between the two language groups. The data have been obtained from 43 Americans and 91 Koreans assigned to three groups: English native speakers; Korean learners of English; and Korean native speakers. Through a discourse completion test and a subsequent interview, the participants' strategic usage of the speech act has been examined in terms of their perception of social factors and the choice of response strategies. The statistical procedure revealed little difference in the perception of the social factors between American and Korean participants. However, by different context and power relationship, they were found to use significantly different response strategies. Korean learners of English heavily depended on the earliest taught expressions in the classroom, such as "not at all" and "you're welcome," and used accepting expressions only infrequently. Korean EFL textbooks and classroom therefore need to include more diversified expressions in different contexts in which this English speech act occurs.

[EFL learning/ response to gratitude/ social factors/strategic usage of speech act
/EFL 학습/감사에 대한 응답/ 사회적 요인/ 화행의 전략적 사용]

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Hymes (1972) proposed the notion communicative competence, cross-cultural communication has gained more concern in second/foreign language learning and teaching. It is now a commonly shared understanding that language and culture usually interact with each other in such an intricate way that culture can never be treated lightly if language learners aim to use the target language well. This shift of interest from linguistic components to more pragmatic uses of the language has duly led to second language

research not only on what the L2 cultural norms are but also how differently the norms are realized between the first and the second language (L1 and L2).

Studies of interlanguage pragmatics, to find the different cultural norms in language use, adopted the useful notion of ‘speech act’ as a natural unit for analyzing speech habit within a speech community. These studies have focused on identification of how some of the speech acts, such as ‘request’, ‘refusal’, ‘compliment’, and ‘apology’, are differently realized in L1 and L2 interactions (e.g., Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; House & Kasper, 1981; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Wolfson, 1981; Yu, 2004). What centered on these studies are the discussion and the test of the social variables such as social distance, social power and imposition as proposed in the politeness model of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987). The results have revealed that the way people perceive and assess the variables is not only situation-dependent but also culturally specific (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989).

The present study examines the speech act of ‘responses to gratitude’, as used by Korean learners of English. Gratitude, or thanking expression, per se universally carries a social value in any culture. Among American English speakers, it has a more critical social value than any other countries (Rubin, 1983), and is one of the speech acts that are taught to children in the society. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) compared gratitude expressions of native English speakers with those of nonnative speakers and found that even advanced nonnative English speakers had considerable difficulty with adequately expressing gratitude in the target language.

Given that there appears to be great divergence between Korean and American rules of speaking and social conventions and given that speech act behavior has been shown to relate closely to speakers’ linguistic and cultural norms (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), the response behavior to English thanking expressions of Korean learners of English is worth studying. In terms of a pedagogical perspective, the study of the contrastive aspects of the speech acts is much needed because despite the social significance of gratitude expressions and its responses in cross-cultural communication, EFL classroom in Korea still lacks guidance of when and how to appropriately respond to given thanking expressions.

II. RELATED WORKS

1. Speech Acts and Politeness

In Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) influential work regarding politeness, they assumed a ‘model person’, a competent adult member of a society who has an inclination to keep up his face: a positive face (the model person presumes that his wants are desirable

for at least some others) and a negative face (he hopes that his actions are unimpeded by others). In any verbal encounter, both faces of this model person are inevitably threatened. The weight of the face-threatening act is closely related to three social factors: the distance between speaker and hearer, the power of the hearer over the speaker, and the inherent weight of the imposition of the face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

As the studies of speech acts have heavily discussed cross-cultural differences of realization of speech acts in terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) notions of face and politeness, it has been continuously found that nonnative speakers including L2 learners apply different norms from native speakers while performing the speech acts (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Eisenchlas, 2011; House & Kasper, 1981; Huth, 2006; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Wolfson, 1981; Yu, 2004). The differences have been noted in different strategies used to realize a certain speech act, e.g., 'request' and 'apology'.

Explanation for the cross-cultural differences has been commonly found in different perspectives regarding people's face. In other words, whether certain behaviors are perceived as acceptable or face-threatening differs across cultures. As Spencer-Oatey (2000) notes, while face is a universal phenomenon (see also Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987), "culture can affect the relative sensitivity of different aspects of people's face, as well as which strategies are most appropriate for managing face" (p. 12).

Recently, in their endeavor to expand the scope of speech act studies, researchers from different fields of pragmatics have employed various analytic methods including discourse completion test and conversation analysis and examined speech acts in different contexts of communication such as business interaction and online chat (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Eisenchlas, 2011; Huth, 2006; Jansen & Janssen, 2010; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Yu, 2004). These studies have attempted to identify characteristics of a certain context as it influences talk in action. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2000) describes four contextual variables that have an impact on rapport management, i.e., participant relations, message content, rights and obligations, and communicative activity. Jansen and Janssen (2010) also note that strategic choices are made based on language, culture, and situation. According to them, while the inventory of politeness strategies might be universal in theoretical respect, the interpretation of the incorporation of one or more concrete strategies is dependent on these variables.

2. Socio-cultural Context and Strategic Usage of a Speech Act

As the performances of speech acts have significant bearing on different strategies, researchers have avidly investigated how a socio-cultural context is perceived by language users. Most frequently discussed social factors are *distance*, *social power* and *imposition*.

Distance has been defined as *familiarity*, or *how well people know each other* (e.g., Holmes, 1990), or *positive/negative affect* (e.g. Baxter, 1984). *Social power*, another frequently investigated social factor, has been defined as different notions. While Brown and Levinson (1987) defined it as *power of control*, other researchers used *social status* or *rank* (e.g. Cansler & Stiles, 1981), *authority*, or *the legitimate right to exert influence* (e.g., Leichy & Applegate, 1991), or *a general notion of equality-inequality* (e.g., Holtgraves, 1986).

These social factors have not always been found influential in different cultures and contexts of L2 interactional encounters. For example, Rose's (2000) cross-sectional study of the interlanguage development of young Cantonese showed that learners of English revealed little evidence of sensitivity to situational variation related to imposition and social status. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), in the study of requesting behaviors of Greek versus British English speakers, found that English speakers were more direct in a certain context, i.e., requesting the owed tuition fee, than Greeks and Greek learners of English. In the perception of social power, English speakers assessed the social power that the speaker has over hearer as higher in this context. Contrary to Brown and Levinson's theory (1987), according to which requests are by nature face threatening acts that "threaten the addressee's negative face want" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65), this request can be a threat to the addressee's positive face instead, "by indicating that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 66). Economidou-Kogetsidis concluded that directness levels depend on the speakers' perception of social relations, which is in turn culture-specific.

Schnurr and Chan (2011) examined the cultural differences in responding to teasing and self-denigrating humor between Hong Kong and New Zealand. Speakers from these two cultures used a wide range of different ways of managing rapport by responding to teasing and self-denigrating humor in the business meeting contexts. In the discussion of the different realizations of the speech acts in the culturally discrepant contexts, they noted that culture may indeed be one of the factors that have an impact on listeners' choice of response strategies. This impact of culture may, for example, be reflected in interlocutors' different notions of face.

The impact of culture, therefore, is significant when L2 learners perform a speech act, which researchers have continuously investigated in order to find implications to L2 instruction. Yu (2004) studied strategies that Taiwanese learners of English used to respond to the speech act of compliment. In this contrastive analysis, American participants were found to adopt more acceptance strategies but fewer enacting nonacceptance and combination strategies than Taiwanese learners of English. Interestingly, ESL participants in the United States adopted more acceptance and combination strategies but fewer amendment strategies than EFL participants in Taiwan.

Referring to Chinese culture in the discussion of the differences, Yu showcased the transfer of their L1 pragmatic knowledge to L2 practice. For the Chinese, the use of downgrade responses is one of their ways to display modesty, because this strategy can increase the speaker's chance of maintaining or even enhancing face and self-image and, thus, help him or her to appear to be very polite.

The studies on performance of L2 speech acts of Korean learners of English have focused on the effect of the norms of Korean culture and language (e.g., Ock Mo An, 2009; Moon-Young Chun, 2010; Hyeon-Sook Kang, 2011 to name a few recent studies). Unlike native American English speakers, L2 learners were found to depend on the L2 norms of power variables and group solidarity. For example, Hyeon-Sook Kang showed in her study of L2 speech act of 'request' that L2 learners heavily depended on a few formulaic expressions to express politeness, often expressed sorry, and included an address term and vocabulary while performing the speech act. Interestingly, they believed that the English language had an address term and vocabulary that had similar deferential quality as in Korean. Moon-Young Chun also indicated the similar problem related to interpretation of politeness in Korean versus Canadian culture. Koreans, while enacting the advice-giving speech act, were concerned the most about showing interest in others' well-being, whereas the native Canadian English speakers interpreted those actions as invasion of privacy.

These studies reveal what is in the core of L2 pragmatic competence. Without knowing how social factors influence a certain speech act in a specific context, L2 learners may not be able to participate in L2 interaction and to successfully perform the role that is defined moment by moment in interaction. Thus, it is critical to reveal the influences of the social factors on realization of different speech acts in the L2 culture.

3. Studies on Response to Gratitude

Despite the considerable number of studies on speech acts, there has been little systematic work done on the speech act of 'response to gratitude'. In her theoretical study on the use of politeness formula, Ferguson (1981) identified thank-you expressions and responses to them as an example of politeness formula. She maintained that thanking and responding to it were common to all human speech communities and there was a universal correlation between the form of the formula and the social status and setting of the participants. Coulmas (1981) went further to identify two strategies underlying the responses to thanks: recognizing the object of gratitude and indicating that whatever one has done to bring about its existence was gladly done ("you're welcome"); and denying the existence of gratitude ("not at all", "don't mention it"). She furthermore argued for the importance of investigation of responses to gratitude for two reasons: 1) the responses to gratitude provide an interpretation of object of gratitude along with the interpretation of the

courses of events underlying gratitude; 2) the conditions of their application reveal a structural complementarity of thanks.

Smith (1985) conducted an empirical study on the responses to gratitude in which she investigated a number of variables interacting with the choice of responses. She collected data from native speakers of American English and from non-native speakers in natural contexts by recording their conversation. In the analysis of the effect of social variables, she found that the most important variable was the nature of the thank-you prompt including the situation and the role relationships of the participant. Nonnative speakers were significantly different from native speakers in the choice of responses. On the one hand, nonnative speakers used “OK” in higher frequency than native English speakers. On the other hand, the nonnative speakers rarely used “mhm” which was common in native English speakers’ dataset. In the acceptability judgment, which was designed to find the difference between the two groups in their perception of acceptable responses, many nonnative speakers rated such response as “mhm” was not polite, while native speakers deemed it polite.

Although the previous studies shed light on systematic investigation into culturally different realization of the speech act of responses to gratitude, no studies to date have specifically addressed this topic in an EFL context such as Korea, using experimental procedure. For example, Smith (1985) presented the divergence of nonnative speakers’ norms of interaction regardless of their learning background, nationalities etc. This paucity of empirical research has left L2 educators, especially those engaged in EFL teaching practices, to be deprived of appropriate pedagogy to deal with this critical aspect of communicative competence. It is, thus, necessary to conduct experiments which will provide useful information on how this speech act interplays with such social variables as social distance, status and context in different cultures, i.e., Korean and American.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Questions

The following questions are at the heart of this paper.

1. Do Koreans and Americans perceive the same social situations differently in terms of (a) intimacy, (b) social power and (c) obligation to respond to thanking expression?
2. To what extent do Korean learners of English (KLEs) and English native speakers (ENSs) agree on the variation of responses to gratitude according to the social context?

3. What is the effect of power relationship on the responses to gratitude?

2. Participants

Given many speech act studies showing that speakers' native sociocultural norms exert influence on their behavior (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), it is particularly intriguing to examine how learners' L1, specifically their L1 pragmatic knowledge, may affect their L2 pragmatic performance. Thus, other than the two groups of English speaking participants, i.e., the English native speakers (ENSs) and Korean learners of English (KLEs), the group of Korean native speakers (KNSs) was included in the design of this study.

43 Americans and 91 Koreans participated in the experiment. Among the ENSs, composed of 22 males and 21 females, 35 were college students enrolled in a state university in California, the U.S.A. The others were teachers working in language institutes in Seoul. Special attention was paid to the selection of KLE group. Since the ability to comprehend each context provided in the English-written questionnaire and to write down an appropriate response to the given gratitude expression, the proficiency of KLEs was limited to the intermediate-high to the advanced levels in this study. The selected KLE participants were 24 males and 23 females, who were graduate students or senior level undergraduate English major students of three different universities in Seoul. For the KNS group, 22 males and 22 females, non-English majors in two different universities in Seoul, participated in this study. They were asked to answer Korean version of the questionnaire.

3. Design and Procedures

1) Manipulation of Independent Variables

Three major independent variables have been identified in the quantitative examination of the speech act of responses of gratitude. The first independent variable was the participants' perception of intimacy toward addressee, status of the addressee and obligation to respond to the thanking. The participants have been divided into two groups for the comparison: the American (ENS) and the Korean group (KLE and KNS together). The participants were simply asked to review the 12 situations in the questionnaire and to decide two highs and two lows with regard to the three areas (See Appendix).

The second independent variable has been defined as different contexts or situations. Five distinct contexts were included in the design of this study: (1) service encounters between strangers in a non-academic setting, e.g. cashier counter; (2) professional setting between people who know each other, e.g. colleagues, co-workers, teachers/students; (3) Non-professional (social) setting; (4) Family or roommates; (5) Strangers in a non-services

situation, e.g. holding a door open for someone. These 5 different contexts were examined in terms of their effect on the choice of strategies.

The third independent variable has been selected from the social factors, i.e., power relationship between speakers. Based upon the examination of the first independent variable, i.e., perception of three social factors, its effect on the participants' choice of strategies has been examined in terms of the three levels: addressee with perceived higher power; addressee with perceived equal power; and addressee with lower power.

2) The Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

This study adopted DCT to collect data on the choice of strategies for the speech act of response to gratitude. DCT is among the most frequent forms employed in interlanguage studies (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1994). Although this method has been criticized mostly because of lack of interactivity and elicited data (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005, p.11), it has been used as the most popular method to collect language samples in an authentic manner (e.g., Yu, 2004). For example, Kasper (2008) supports the use of DCT as an effective tool to collect oral production data, pointing out that "DCTs and other questionnaire formats elicit intuitional data rather than data on language use and behavior" (p. 294).

Given this effectiveness of DCT method, the present study was conducted with the questionnaire consisting of 12 situational descriptions (See the descriptions in section IV of the current study), followed by a space in which the participants had to provide the appropriate linguistic form of the speech act. Each of the 12 situations represented different settings and participant relationships of status and intimacy.

The participants were given 20-30 minutes to answer the questionnaire items. Before the DCT began, the researcher or an assistant gave only a short introduction of the questionnaires concerning the procedure and the importance of natural responses, and were not present while the participants were taking the DCT. According to participants' preferences, they were allowed to work on the questionnaire either in a classroom or outside a classroom as long as they could write down a response that they would really produce in the actual conversational encounter.

4. Data Analysis

1) Coding Scheme

To establish the coding scheme for the classification of response strategies, this study mainly referred to three previous studies that were relevant the most to the topic and

framework of the current study. Coulmas' (1981) distinction of two major function of thanking responses provided two major categories for this study: recognizing the object of gratitude ('you're welcome') and denying the object of gratitude ('not at all'). This distinction between recognizing and denying the object of gratitude were to be found in the studies of speech act of responses to compliment such that the responses were basically divided into acceptance and nonacceptance of the object of compliment (e.g., Yu, 2004). Yu showed six mutually exclusive main strategies for situations in which responding to praise could be seen as socioculturally appropriate: acceptance, amendment, nonacceptance, face relationship related response, combination, and no acknowledgment. In an earlier study of responses to gratitude, Smith (1985) showed that nonlexical and nonverbal responses, such as "mhm" or silence, as well as verbal responses were very common in native English speakers' behavior of the speech act. Based upon these studies this study has adopted 5 main categories for response strategies: (1) recognizing the object of gratitude and accepting the thanking expression; (2) downgrading the object of gratitude given to the addressee; (3) deflecting/ joking; (4) denying the existence of object of gratitude; (5) ignoring the addressee's thanking. Each category represented one or several strategies to deal with the given thanking expression. Therefore, each and every response of the participants to a given DCT situation was assigned to only one specific strategy. Based upon the collected DCT responses, the researcher identified 12 strategies. Each of strategies is presented with an example below.

- (1) Recognizing the object of gratitude and accepting the thanking expression
 - Strategy 1: Accepting the thanking expression as in "mhm", "okay."
 - Strategy 2: Expression of pleasure with "you're welcome", "my pleasure"
 - Strategy 3: Reciprocal "thank you"
 - Strategy 4: Expression favor such as "any time"
 - Strategy 5: Giving encouragement and good wish such as "good luck"
 - Strategy 6: Silence
 - Strategy 7: Leave-taking such as "good bye"
- (2) Downgrading the object of gratitude given to the addressee
 - Strategy 8: Expressing modesty as in "I'm flattered"
- (3) Deflecting/ Joking
 - Strategy 9: Deflecting/ Joking such as "you owe me one"
- (4) Denying the existence of object of gratitude
 - Strategy 10: Denying as in "not at all", "no problem", "필요"
 - Strategy 11: Apology (unique responses of Koreans when the object of gratitude is provided by the addressee's asking)
- (5) Ignoring the addressee's thanking

Strategy 12: Shifting to other topic in response to the addressee's thanking as in the situation in which the speaker (the participant) may say "just don't stain my blouse" to the roommate who is thanking for lending the blouse of the speaker.

2) Reliability of Coding

From each group, 30% of the data were randomly selected to be independently coded by a second rater. A native American English speaker coded the three sets of English data, and a native Korean speaker coded the native Korean data. A corrected-for-chance level of kappa of at least .85 was considered acceptable, following Yu's (2004) study. The interrater agreement coefficients were 91%, 89%, 89% for the native English data, the Korean learner data, and the native Korean data respectively.

3) Quantitative Analysis

After the participants' responses were identified and classified into one of the above-noted 5 main categories, frequencies of response within each strategy could be obtained for each participant group. The perception of intimacy, status, and obligation to perform this response speech act has been compared between American and Korean groups through the comparisons of the frequency and percentage of the situations selected as very high versus very low. For the other two independent variables, contexts and power relationship, the differences among the three groups (ENS, KLE, and KNS) were tested with Chi-square statistics:

4) Qualitative Analysis

In addition to the quantitative analysis, in order to ascertain whether the learners' behavior could relate to features of their L1 or whether their behavior approached that of the target language speakers, the responses of both learner groups were qualitatively compared to those of the Korean using Korean and the Americans using English. These interviews aimed to gain some qualitative insights into the participants' views, beliefs and opinions regarding requests and politeness. As interviewing was not the main research instrument of the study and was simply used as a complimentary tool, only four informants were interviewed (2 KNSs and 2 KLEs). Given that the statistical findings focused on the participants' use of strategies, specific attention in the qualitative analysis was paid to their explanation of their choices.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Perception Diagram

The perception on the given situation were compared between American and Korean participants in terms of intimacy of the addressee, status of addressee and the obligation to respond to the given thanking expression. The questionnaire included the following 12 situations.

Situation 1: Helping a friend to get ready to move out of an apartment

Situation 2: Speaker's getting a knife for a customer at a restaurant

Situation 3: Getting a copy to professor

Situation 4: Getting a receipt from a supermarket cashier

Situation 5: Lending clothes to a roommate

Situation 6: Holding a door for a lady carrying luggage

Situation 7: Getting interviewed by an upperclassman

Situation 8: Helping a brother do some statistical work on the computer

Situation 9: Telephone call from a neighbor asking not to park a car in front of his parking lot

Situation 10: Complimenting the shirt of a friend

Situation 11: Appreciation from the vice president of a company for the good performance of the speaker

Situation 12: Helping a newly employed man with some paperwork as a supervisor of a company

1) Intimacy

Both Americans and Koreans in this study perceived the intimacy of the brother (situation 8) was highest. While American participants felt more intimate to the roommate (situation 5) than to friends (situation 1), Korean participants' perception of intimacy towards the roommates was not so different from towards the friends. Rather, Koreans were more sensitive to the objects of gratitude they offered. For situations between two friends, they perceived intimacy of a friend whom they helped packing (situation 1) to be much higher than that of a friend whom they asked to call other friends about a party (situation 8).

There was no significant difference between intimacy-low situations between the two groups, i.e. American and Korean: cashier (situation 4), neighbor (situation 9), and stranger (situation 6) ranking the first, second, third respectively. Table 1 briefs the statistical result

as in the following.

Table 1
Intimacy Rank

Rank	Very High						Very Low					
	American			Korean			American			Korean		
	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%
1	8	22	34.9	8	46	27.1	4	17	26	4	39	21.9
2	5	18	28.6	1	39	22.9	9	12	18.8	9	35	19.7
3	1	9	12.7	5	34	20.0	6	11	17.2	6	32	17.6
	N= 65			N= 170			N= 66			N= 178		

(Sit: Situation number; f: frequency of the responses corresponding to the level of intimacy)

2) Status

As shown in Table 2, among the three status-high situations of situation 11 (vice president), situation 3 (professor), and situation 2 (customer at a restaurant), Americans evaluated as much higher the status of vice president than Koreans who did not make much distinction between the status of vice president and that of a professor.

The two groups judged the status of the cashier very low (situation 4). In the subsequent comparison, the result indicated the Americans' different attitude towards an academic setting vs. a formal work setting. In the judgment of low status, more Americans than Koreans perceived the status of the young employee (situation 12) as low, confirming the formal work setting is an important factor as far as status is concerned. By contrast, age factor worked more significantly and affected the judgment of status of Koreans than Americans; Koreans judged the status of a young brother to be lower (situation 8).

Table 2
Status Rank

Rank	Very High						Very Low					
	American			Korean			American			Korean		
	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%
1	11	33	51.1	11	65	33.2	4	19	33.7	4	43	31.8
2	3	19	30.5	3	58	30.1	12	12	21.0	8	18	13.1
3	2	5	8.0	2	26	13.4	8	7	9.5	12	16	11.8
	N= 62			N= 193			N= 57			N= 144		

(Sit: Situation number; f: frequency of the responses corresponding to status level of the addressee)

3) Obligation to Respond to Gratitude

Table 3 shows that the participants felt obliged to respond to the thanking from the addressees of higher status, i.e. a company vice president (situation 11) and a professor (situation 3), as these two settings ranked first and second in the category of “very high” in the obligation to respond to gratitude. Again in the workplace setting, Americans were shown to feel far more obliged to offer responses to a person of higher status than in the academic setting, as the frequency of the former is more than double the number of that of the latter. Koreans were found to make less significant distinction between these two situations than Americans. One of the interviewee's responses explains this pattern of perception as shown in the following.

I'm a college student, and I think I have to say something back to my professor's 'thanks'. They are giving us grades. They are my teachers. I am supposed to respect them and to be polite of course. (KES02)

This remark reflects non-Western society's concept of 'deference'. According to Eun-Sook Lee (2008), 'deference' denotes the attitude of courteous respect or regard for others which is a critical factor implicit in Korean politeness. As the interviewee said, Korean participants in this study, as college students, apparently felt compelled to express deference by means of honorific forms as the power relationship was rather finely defined between the professor and the student in this academic setting. Therefore, in Korean culture, deference, rather than formality, is a critical factor that distinguishes one context from the other, which is not the same case in American culture.

Both groups made judgment that the obligation to respond to gratitude from speaker's complimenting (situation 10), cashier (situation 4), telephone talk ending (situation 9) were the lowest among the 12 situations. The service situation, situation 4, drew least obligation to respond to the given thanking expressions from Koreans, which ranked the second in American group. A participant's response during the interview offers explanation of this result, as shown below.

I don't know. They usually say 'thank you', and I don't say anything back in Korean. It shouldn't be different in English. I don't think I am supposed to say "you're welcome" here. (KES01)

As this comment shows, Korean learners of English interpret a situation with their norms of interaction in L1 when it is not explicitly taught in L2 instruction. The two

interviewees said they had never seen any dialog with a cashier in a textbook before.

Table 3

Obligation to Respond to Gratitude

Rank	Very High						Very Low					
	American			Korean			American			Korean		
	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%	Sit	f	%
1	11	28	40.1	11	37	22.0	10	15	23.7	4	38	22.8
2	3	11	17.0	3	24	14.1	4	13	18.3	10	34	20.0
3	6	8	12.4	7	15	8.7	9	11	16.8	9	29	12.8
	N= 66			N= 170			N= 66			N= 177		

(Sit: Situation number; f: frequency of the responses corresponding to status level of the addressee)

Overall, Koreans and Americans interpreted the three factors implicit in the given situations in almost homogeneous pattern. However, slight differences in rankings have shown how the culturally different groups understand the social factors. Especially, in understanding status and obligation to respond in each situation, the two groups brought their norms of formality (Americans) and deference (Koreans). These norms, thus, play significant role in the participants' understanding of a social context.

2. Social Context

Five distinctive social contexts, each of which was defined by its setting and effect of social factors on speakers, were examined with respect to the different response strategies. The context variable overall was found to have significant effect on the in-group choice of response strategy: $X^2=199.737$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$ for ENS; $X^2=190.371$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$ for KLE; $X^2=276.310$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$ for KNS.

1) Service Encounters between Strangers

The situations 2 and 4 represent this first situation category. In these two contexts of interaction, the strategy choice among the three groups were found to be significant by $X^2=109.668$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$.

The situational characteristic was perceived very different from each other in the status relationship and the identity of the speaker against the addressee: waiter/waitress to the restaurant customer in situation 2; supermarket customer to the cashier in situation 4 (See Tables 4 and 5). In the situation 2, in which the speaker brings a knife to the restaurant

customer, many of ENSs and KLEs expressed pleasure, e.g. "you're welcome," to the customer's thanking. In the setting of attending on the table, KNSs used the denying expressions most (strategy 10).

Some frequent Korean expression of good wish (strategy 5), e.g. "즐거운 시간 되세요" or "맛있게 드세요," were transferred to KLEs to the extent that this strategy ranked the third for the KLE group. KLEs hardly accepted 'thank you' with "mhm" (strategy 1), which was the second most used expression for native English speakers. As far as accepting expressions are concerned, they were not familiar with various expressions Americans used, such as "mhm" or "uhuh." They reserved these responses for the higher status but used them more likely to the addresses with equal or lower status in the informal setting.

Table 4

Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situation 2)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	2	30	70.9	2	35	75.7	10	23	52.7
2	1	8	19.8	10	8	13.7	5	7	15.9
3	10	4	8.4	8/5	2/2	4.5/4.5	6	6	13.8
	N= 41			N= 45			N= 44		

$X^2(12) = 86.279, p = .000$

Table 5

Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situation 4)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	3	18	41.5	1	17	35.8	7	23	47.8
2	6	15	36.1	6	15	34.2	1	12	26.1
3	1	6	14.6	2	5	10.9	6	7	15.2
	N= 41			N= 46			N= 46		

$X^2(8) = 53.923, p = .000$

In response to the thanking expression from a cashier in situation 4, the three groups frequently chose not to respond. While reciprocal thank-you was the most common response to the addressee's thanking for ENSs (strategy 3), it showed no frequency for KLEs and KNSs. Since pragmatic norms of Korean do not require the reciprocal thank-you in this service situation, KLEs would not be expected to use this expression without

instruction.

2) Professional Setting between People Who Know Each Other

This context category in this study included formal interaction in a work setting: student to professor (“many thanks”) in situation 3; student to an upperclassman (“thank you very much”) in situation 7; employee to a vice president (“thank you very much”) situation 11; supervisor to young employee (“thank you sir/ma’am”) in situation 12.

As shown in Table 6, the frequent responses of ENSs were recognizing the object of gratitude (strategy 2), accepting (strategy 1) and denying (strategy 10). By contrast, KNSs often employed the expressions of downgrading as well as the denying expressions. This contrastive aspect is not difficult to explain as the repertoire of pragmatic norms of the Korean language has more downgrading than acknowledging expressions for this speech act of response to gratitude. .

In the four situations, again, KLEs showed high frequency of strategy 2 and 10 without any other outstanding expression in use.

Table 6
Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situations 3, 7, 11, and 12)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS			
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	
1	2	66	37.3	2	100	52.1	10	83	41.7	
2	1	8	19.8	10	41	21.4	8	41	20.6	
3	10	4	13.6	1	28	14.6	5	23	11.6	
		N= 177			N= 192			N= 199		

$X^2(22) = 244.166, p = .000$

It is to be noted that, in situation 7, ENSs responded to thank-you with a reciprocal thank you on finishing the interview for an upperclassman. According to Rubin (1983), English “thank you” functions to signal the start or the end of the conversation. The reciprocal thanking in this situation ranked the fourth in ENS group (f= 15 (8.5%)). By contrast, KLEs and KNSs showed low frequency of this strategy (f=3 (1.6%) for KLEs and f=7(3.5%) for KNSs). KNSs and KLEs tended to respond with “thank you” from the vice president in situation 11, which functioned as a response to the compliment preceding the addressee’s thanking rather than to thanking itself.

3) Social Setting

This context has the characteristics of informal interaction in non-service situation applied to friends (situation 1, 10) and neighbor (situation 9). Besides the common response strategies of accepting (strategy 1) and denying (strategy 10), silence (strategy 6) constituted a peculiar response strategy employed in these social interaction, as shown in Table 7. The explanation could be found in the characteristics this social situation includes: the addressees are of equal status and thank-you is provided by the speaker's previous compliment in situation 10.

Table 7

Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situations 1, 9, and 10)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	6	46	25.0	2	47	25.4	10	89	48.9
2	1	44	24.9	10	39	21.1	6	23	12.6
3	10	40	22.6	1	36	19.5	11	18	9.9
	N= 177			N= 185			N= 182		

$X^2(28) = 178.714, p = .000$

With regard to no response of the three groups, there appeared some difference between ENS and KLE group. According to Coulmas (1981) it is the norm of American English not to respond to the thanking drawn from the speaker's compliment, which was well applied to the ENS participants in this situation. In all three social settings together, ENSs preferred denying, e.g. 'no problem' to the expression of pleasure, e.g. "you're welcome," while KLEs showed the similar frequency in these two strategies.

4) Family Members or Roommates

This category includes two situations of high intimacy in non-service setting: roommate's "thank you" for speaker's lending the clothes in situation 5; brother's "thanks" for helping with his statistical work in situation 8.

Table 8 summarizes the most frequent response strategies used in these settings. To the intimates of roommate and brother, the most common responses were accepting expressions (strategy 1) to ENSs and KLEs. For the KNS group, denying expression (strategy 10) accounted for more than 50% of all the responses in this situation. Their use of this strategy increased steadily in the contextual categories (2) Professional Setting between People Who Know Each Other, (3) Social Setting, and (4) Family Members or

Roommates, with the highest in-group percentage in (4). They seemed not to think highly of the favor they provided for the intimates in these non-service, informal relationships.

Table 8
Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situations 5 and 8)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	35	41.2	1	45	48.4	10	44	51.2
2	10	28	32.9	10	18	19.4	6	10	11.6
3	2/9	6/6	7.1/7.1	2	17	18.3	1	7	8.1
	N= 85			N= 93			N= 86		

$X^2(20) = 98.690, p = .000$

5) Strangers in Non-service Situation.

The last situational category formed the stranger relationship between speakers in non-service situation. Situation 6 represents this category, in which the speaker was thanked for holding the building door for a woman carrying a big luggage.

To “thank you” from the addressee, both ENS and KLE group responded most frequently with “you’re welcome” (strategy 2) which accounted for 50% in KLE group (See Table 9). ENSs often accepted the thanking with “yep” or “mhm,” which was not the case for KLEs.

Table 9
Rank of Semantic Strategy by Situation (situation 6)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	1	35	41.2	1	45	48.4	10	44	51.2
2	10	28	32.9	10	18	19.4	6	10	11.6
3	2/9	6/6	7.1/7.1	2	17	18.3	1	7	8.1
	N= 42			N=46			N= 42		

$X^2(14) = 54.078, p = .000$

In sum, consideration should be given to the major few response strategies employed by the three groups. First, ENSs employed strategy 2 more commonly in service situation (situations 1 and 2) with a remarkable decrease as intimacy increased, showing a completely counter pattern for strategy 10, denying, which was more common to intimates

in non-service situation. They also marked considerable frequency in accepting strategy (strategy 1). In comparison, KLEs showed rather a different distribution of the accepting expressions. They rarely made distinction between “you’re welcome” and “not at all” by the situational factor in the ENSs’ way and showed high frequency of these over all the situations. Here, quite possibly, the cause is the past classroom learning that “not at all” or “you’re welcome” is presented in pair with “thank you” in a sequence with little contextual consideration.

KNSs employed strategy 10, denying, over all the situations. The frequency of the expression of denying was highest to family members and strangers. In these two situations of quite different intimacy, they tended not to respond to the addressee’s thanking as well. By contrast, ENSs’ silence was more likely to depend on the nature of the object of gratitude, e.g., compliment. KLEs followed the pattern of KNSs concerning this strategy.

Regarding “thank you”, an appreciation token, as response to compliment, Yu (2004) notes on the differences in this response behavior including compliment between native English speakers and Chinese including Chinese speaking Chinese and Chinese learners of English. The native English speakers used the appreciation token more often than the other groups not only to acknowledge the compliment given, but also to signal their acceptance of or agreement with it. In contrast, the Chinese using Chinese and Chinese EFL and ESL learners employed this device more often than the native English speakers only to acknowledge a given compliment.

This different behavioral pattern between the two cultures supports the result of this study as well. The difference among the three groups by the contexts eventually showed two different norms in two cultures along with a different way of perceiving different elements in different social contexts.

3. Power Relationship

The 12 questionnaire items defined three different power relationships: situation 3, 7, 11 for addressee with more power, i.e., +power; situation 1, 5, 10 for addressee with almost the same power, i.e., equal power; situation 12 for addressee with less power, i.e., -power. Those situations were limited to participant-known, non-service situational categories, in which the factor of power relationship would be more correlated to the choice of different strategy choice.

To ensure the meaningful difference in in-group choice of strategy by status, three situations representative of each of the three status relationships were examined in chi-square statistics; situation 11 for + power; situation 1 for equal power; situation 12 for – power. The results indicated that the difference was significant over the three participant groups by $X^2=119.112$, $P\text{-value}=0.000$ for KNS.

1) Addressee with More Power

Three situations served for this status level of addressee, i.e., the professor in situation 3, the older graduate student in situation 7 and vice president in situation 11. As shown in Table 10, responding to the thanking from these addressees of higher status, ENSs marked the highest in the frequency of expressing pleasure (strategy 2) followed by accepting and denying expressions. KNSs were more likely to downgrade the act or object of gratitude they were thanked for to show the unique feature of responses to thanking from the addressees of higher status in Korean, e.g., “별것도 아닌데요” in situation 3 and 7, or “제가 할 일을 한걸요”. That is, they hardly accepted the thanking unlike ENSs. KLEs showed overwhelmingly high frequency of the use of “you’re welcome” given the thanking expression from those of higher status. Overall, the pattern in KLEs’ choice of strategies corresponded to that of KNS group, which again shows the effect of the cultural and pragmatic norms working in their use of English.

Table 10

The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (+power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	2	51	37.8	2	87	59.2	10	69	46.3
2	1	28	20.7	10	28	19.2	8	37	24.8
3	10	15	11.1	1	13	8.8	1/4	8/8	5.4/5.4
	N= 135			N= 147			N= 149		

$\chi^2 (202) = 199.400, p = .000$

2) Addressee with Equal Power

Friends or roommate of the speaker construed the equal status relationship in situation 1, 6, 8, and 12. Table 11 indicates that, to these status equals, ENSs would simply deny the object of gratitude, e.g. “no problem” (strategy 10) or accepted the thanking (strategy 1), e.g. “O.K.,” or didn’t respond (strategy 6). This tendency matches well with the finding of positive relationship of these denying expressions with the intimacy in non-service setting, counter to the pleasure expressions. This denying strategy, however, showed the similar frequency with the pleasure expressions in the KLE group. The result confirmed the lack of competence of Korean English learners in the differentiated use of those two response strategies by status.

Another major expression of KLEs to the status equals was “okay” to accept the given

thanking expression (strategy 1). Given the low frequency of this expression in the +power relationship as is shown in the table 10, we can see the different perception on this strategy from the English native speakers. That is, they apparently consider accepting the thanking expression is appropriate when the thanking expressions come from the addressees with similar power. Meanwhile, the two native language groups marked higher frequency of no response (strategy 6) in the equal status than in the higher status.

Table 11
The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (equal power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	10	35	41.2	1	50	26.7	10	101	57.1
2	1	28	32.9	2	48	25.7	6	19	10.7
3	6	6/6	7.1/7.1	10	46	24.6	9	12	6.8
	N= 176			N= 187			N= 177		

$X^2(208) = 180.967, p = .000$

3) Addressee with Less Power

Situation 12 involved the speaker relationship in which the speaker in the position of a company supervisor is supposed to respond to “thank you, sir/mam” or “감사합니다” from a new employee. In Korean, there appeared quite a different pattern of responses from English. As shown in Table 12, the most common and distinctive expressions to the employee were encouraging remarks (strategy 5), e.g. “열심히 해.” It is interesting to note that the same strategy did not occur in the data of the KLE group. The accepting expression of “okay” instead (strategy 1) marked the highest frequency, which increased from + power to equal power and to this – power relationship. This result supports that KLEs distinguish this expression from their most preferred two expressions of “you’re welcome” and “not at all” as what is appropriate for the deference-free situations.

ENSs expressed pleasure most frequently to the thanking from those of lower status, e.g., “my pleasure” (strategy 2). Compared with the results of the other status relationships, their specific pattern of using this expression by status is notable. The expression of pleasure is in much use when there is a status discrepancy (+ power or – power) while the denying expression is prevalent when there is no need to be concerned about the power imbalance. This power variable was not as effective to KLE group as it was to ENS group.

In sum, the analysis found the meaningful difference in the choice of response strategies in total among the three groups ($\chi^2=653.237, P\text{-value}=0.000$). Given the fact that in

American culture thanking expressions have more critical social value, the ENSs' highest mark of accepting expressions (28.22%) indicates how closely the speech act of response to gratitude is related to gratitude. They have various ways of accepting the addressee's thanking from non-verbal "mhm" to "sure" as a natural response to thanks not dramatically affected by the variables. Regarding the strategies 2 and 10, they differentiated the use of them by intimacy and power in different settings, preferring denying expression over the other when responding to the intimates of equal power. The pleasure expression increased as the intimacy of the addressee diminished in power imbalance (+ power and - power).

Table 12

The Choice of Semantic Strategy by Status (- power)

Rank	ENS			KLE			KNS		
	Str	f	%	Str	f	%	Str	f	%
1	2	15	35.7	1	15	33.3	5	21	42.0
2	10	9	21.4	2/10	13/13	28.9/28.9	10	14	28.0
3	1	7	16.7				4	7	14.0
	N= 42			N= 45			N= 50		

$X^2(14) = 74.325, p = .000$

The KLEs were found hardly competent in the strategic usage of the two expressions, i.e. 'you're welcome' (strategy 2) and 'not at all' (strategy 10). They tended to use these two expressions without being affected by power relationship and hardly used other strategies than those a few expressions as the ways to respond to gratitude. Their differentiated use of the response expressions was significant in the accepting expression, i.e. "okay." According to their different perception of intimacy and status of the addressee, they employed accepting expressions more to thanking expressions from the intimates of equal or lower status. During an interview, a participant indicated the lack of knowledge of different English response strategies, as shown below.

(Answering this questionnaire) I realized there could be differences between "you're welcome" and "not at all." In fact, I haven't really thought about it. And I don't think I have ever been taught the differences between those. (KLE02)

This response confirms the instructional needs on this speech act in L2 instruction, which draws attention from L2 educations in Korea. In other words, KLEs need not only appropriate and extensive instruction regarding a variety of ways to respond to gratitude expressions in a classroom, but also the differentiated uses of various expressions by

contexts.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined pragmatic competence of Korean learners of English with a focus on the behavior of 'response to gratitude', a quite common, yet rarely studied act. Interestingly, there was little difference between American and Korean participants' perception on the intimacy, status, and the obligation to respond to gratitude. However, by different context and power relationship, three groups showed the significant in-group difference in their choice of different response strategies and the difference among the three groups were statistically significant as well. On the one hand, whereas English native speakers frequently used accepting strategy (strategy 1), Korean learners of English were found to use the Korean norms of responding to the thanking expressions which carries the meaning of denying the object of gratitude, e.g. "필요요," "아니예요," and "천만에요." They appeared to follow the pattern of the strategic usage of the Korean language concerning this strategy.

On the other hand, they depended highly on the earliest taught expressions in the classroom, "not at all" and "you're welcome." They hardly differentiated different response strategies such as accepting or thanking in the way English native speakers did according to the different intimacy and power relationship. For example, the accepting expressions increased as the intimacy of the addressee increased and as the status of the addressee decreased. English native speakers differentiated the strategies 2 and 10, by intimacy and power relationship, preferring denying expression over the other when responding to the intimates of equal power. The pleasure expression increased as the intimacy of the addressee diminished in status imbalance (+ power and - power). Korean English learners employed more accepting expressions upon thanking expressions from the intimates of equal or less power.

This study supports and confirms the previous studies of L2 pragmatic competence. Apparently, responding to gratitude appropriately and effectively in different contexts is a challenging task for L2 learners. L2 learners may need to understand pragmatic factors of the target culture better in order not only to speak grammatically but also to interpret appropriately what they hear and to interact effectively with members of the target culture. Since the relative appropriateness of which strategy to choose depends to a great extent on the socio-cultural context in which the interaction takes place, Korean EFL learners should be trained so that they can interpret the context and produce the speech act according to the L2 norms.

Specific and authentic examples of conversational sequences need to clearly show that

accepting thanking expression is a natural and acceptable action to enact the speech act in English. In addition they need to learn the function of “thank you” as a usual response in the service encounter such as supermarket counter. Teachers need to present each of the responses examined in this study with its semantic function and provide how they are differently distributed by situation, intimacy and status.

These implications may need to be cautiously generalized to EFL classrooms because of several limitations of this study. The limitations include the methodology of data collection. Although the DCT taken in the present study did allow looking at the patterns of the speech act that might not be able to study through other methods, there still exists the need to collect natural data (Schnurr & Chan, 2011). The authentic discourse data may overcome the representational power of oral production, and thus should have more immediate implication to the specific context in which the speech act occurs. Future research may also design ESL Korean learner group in addition to the three groups defined in this study, which, as Yu (2004) claimed, may help to explain the effect of cultural effect on the ESL group in a more effective manner.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE**Direction:**

As naturally as possible, write a response to the individual in each situation. If you think you won't say anything in this situation or your reply is [mhm] or [uhuh], please write ϕ for no response "mhm" for [mhm] and "uhuh" for [uhuh].

Example:

You and Bob are friends at the university. You lent Bob \$50.00 last week. Bob is returning it now.

Bob: "Here is the \$50.00 you lent me last week. Thanks."

You say: "Sure"

.....

1. You and Susan are both students at the university. You have just finished helping Susan packing as she is moving out of her dorm room to a new place.

Susan says, "Thanks for your help."

You say:

2. While working as a waiter at a restaurant, you see a customer accidently drop his knife on the floor.

You take a clean knife to the customer. Accepting the knife, he says, "Thank you."

You say:

3. You have just stopped by the office of the chairman of the English Literature Department, Professor Johnson. He wanted a copy of an article that you found.

You say: "Here's a copy of that article you wanted."

Professor Johnston says: "Many Thanks."

You say:

4. In the supermarket, you have just bought a bottle of milk and some bread. While the cashier is giving you the change and the receipt, she says: "Here's your receipt. Thank you."

You say:

5. Your roommate has a very special meeting this evening. While he is ironing his dress shirt, he burns it by mistake. He asks you to lend him your dress shirt.

You say, "Sure, Here it is."

Your roommate says: "Thank you."

You say:

6. You are about to enter a building. A woman carrying luggage in both hands asks you to help her through the door, saying "Excuse me, but could you hold the door for me?"

You say: "Sure."

The woman says: "Thank you."

You say:

7. You are an undergraduate psychology student. One of your seniors of the department has just interviewed you for research for her Ph. D. dissertation.

Senior: "Well, this was a good interview. Thank you very much."

You say:

8. You have just arrived home from work, and find your brother doing some statistical work on the computer. You help him out, and after finishing his work,

He says: "Thanks."

You say:

9. You are at home and a friend of yours stops by to return some class materials that he borrowed. The friend parked his car in front of your neighbor's parking lot. Now the neighbor is calling to complain.

Neighbor: "There is a car right in front of my parking lot. Is it yours?"

You: "It belongs to a friend of mine ... he is here for only a few minutes. He is returning something to me."

Neighbor: "Well, next time please tell your friend not to park there, even if it's only for a few minutes."

You: "O.K. I will."

Neighbor: "Thank you."

You say:

10. On your way to work, you run into your friend Allen. He is wearing a new shirt.

You say: "Allen I really like your shirt."

Allen: "Thanks."

You say:

11. You work for a company. The vice president has just called you in for a special conference regarding your performance on a special project.

He says: "We appreciate the sacrifice you are making for the company. Thank you very much."

You say:

12. You are a supervisor at the office in a company. There is a young man right out of college working for you. You find him having some trouble with all of the paperwork. You help him out.

He says: "Thank you, sir."

You say:

.....
Please review the fourteen situations you have responded to. Pick any **two** of the twelve situations that you feel fits next to each item in the table below. Write the number of the situation in the corresponding box.

	Very High	Very Low
Intimacy between you and addressee	,	,
Social status of addressee	,	,
Obligation to respond to the thanking	,	,

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