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Non-Native Speakers' Verbosity in Speech Act Performance

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The purpose of this paper was to examine one pragmatic aspect of speech act performance, talkativeness of learner language. To this end, a study was conducted in which data were gathered via discourse completion test, and Korean learners of English and native speakers of English were asked to perform the speech act of requests in various situations. The analysis of data showed that indeed, ESL learners tended to make their requests lengthier by making frequent use of supportive moves of external modification across situations than EFL learners and native speakers. EFL learners realized simple, brief requests due mainly to their limited proficiency of L2. It was also found that native speakers were active in internal modification of their request strategies by using downgraders throughout situations, and thus produced more words inside request strategy than two learner groups. The native speakers' frequent use of downgraders contributed greatly to an appropriate expression of politeness in each situation while the learners' under-use of downgraders led them to sound direct and impolite across situations. Based on the results of the study, it was suggested that since learner verbosity weakens the illocutionary force of an act by providing more information than needed, and is seen as one type of pragmatic error, learners should be taught to be sensitive to their talking-much behavior in L2 speech act performance.

[speech acts/pragmatic competence/verbosity/화행/화용적능력/다변]

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of interlanguage pragmatics in the field of second language acquisition, it has been apparent to both L2 teachers and learners that grammatical competence with no adequate support of pragmatic competence is insufficient for interaction with target

language speakers in social situations (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2002). Pragmatic competence constitutes part of communicative competence, and is context-specific competence which involves producing and comprehending utterances in contexts in terms of appropriateness of form and meaning (Canale, 1983). The notion of pragmatic competence has attracted much attention from applied linguists due in part to pioneering, influential work on speech act theory by language philosophers such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The fact that speech acts seen as doing verbal acts with language are performed differently across societies and cultures led L2 scholars and practitioners to note that lack of knowledge about speech acts may result in misunderstanding or communication breakdown in cross-cultural communication. The knowledge required to perform speech acts in a way accepted by target language speakers is considered one essential, crucial aspect of pragmatic competence in L2 teaching profession. L2 researchers working within interlanguage pragmatics, through a systematic investigation and comparison of native and non-native speakers' speech act behaviors, attempt to identify non-native speakers' pragmatic deviations from target language norms with the hope that such an effort would help non-native speakers perform speech acts in a way similar to native speakers of L2.

Various speech acts examined to date include requests (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Niki & Tajika, 1994; Eun Mi Yang, 2005), apologies (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Rose, 2000), refusals (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Robinson, 1991), compliments (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Min-Chung Yu, 2004), complaints (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Murphy & Neu, 1996), and expressions of gratitude (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986). One of the common findings of the studies on speech acts is that L2 learners, even those with high levels of grammatical knowledge, fall short of native-speaker competence, and therefore, are pragmatically deficient. This indicates that for most learners, it is a complicated, difficult task to attain pragmatic competence to the same extent that they develop grammatical competence in L2 learning. Several major sources such as learner L2 proficiency, L1 transfer and waffle phenomenon have been proposed to account for learners' pragmatic deficiency (Ellis, 1994; Jae-Suk Suh, 2001). Above all, learner L2 proficiency is a key factor that plays a critical role in not only which acts learners perform to whom, but also how and when they use them. Limited L2 proficiency is the most serious barrier for speech act performance, and results in great differences between native and non-native speakers in speech act patterns. Similarly, L1 transfer is another factor that is actively operative when learners apply the socio-cultural rules of their native language into L2 speech act performance. Where there is a difference between two languages in socio-cultural norms, and negative transfer takes places, learners are likely to face difficulty in the appropriate use of a target language, and end up with pragmatic failure.

As a main source of pragmatic errors, it is probably the waffle phenomenon that has

received little attention in interlanguage pragmatics research. According to Edmondson and House (1991), waffling is defined as "excessive use of linguistic forms … to achieve a specific pragmatic goal" (pp. 273-274). In the case of requests, waffling is caused by the overuse of supportive moves, downgraders or politeness markers. One popular explanation for waffling is that since learners are not sure or confident in appropriateness of form or meaning of utterance used to attain a specific communicative goal, they tend to talk or speak much in the belief that a lengthy realization of a given speech act would both compensate for insufficient pragmatic knowledge and get message across successfully (Edmondson & House, 1991). That is, those learners who have the knowledge needed to perform speech acts, but are unable to use it at their disposal in real situations may feel the need to 'play it safe' by "making propositional and pragmatic meanings as transparent as possible" (Ellis, 1994, p. 172). The problem with the waffle phenomenon is that being verbose may lead learners to become pragmatically deficient users of L2 since talking much sounds redundant or awkward to interlocutors. When waffling occurs, learners tend to provide more information than needed, and some of the information provided may be seen as irrelevant or redundant by interlocutors. Consequently, talking-much behavior is likely to weaken the illocutionary force of an act, which might cause interlocutors to experience difficulty of recognizing speaker's intended meaning of an utterance at least, or might result in misunderstanding and even communication breakdown at best. Such a view of learners' talking-much behavior as one type of pragmatic errors can be further explained by cooperative principles of conversation put forward by Grice (1975). Grice (1975) claimed that there are unstated assumptions or maxims that we need to follow in order to maintain a good relationship among members of society and to attain social harmony in everyday communication. The maxims involve both quality and quantity of information offered by speaker to hearer during conversation which read as follows: "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)," "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required," and "Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)" (Grice, 1975, p. 45-46). In light of these conversation maxims, learner verbosity deviates from cooperative efforts by conversational interlocutors, and is a clear case of a pragmatically inappropriate use of language, which constitutes pragmatic failure.

Despite a growing interest in learners' talking-much behavior in L2 speech acts, the literature on this phenomenon has been underrepresented. There have been relatively a small number of researchers in interlanguage pragmatics who were active in examining the nature of talking-much behavior and its effect on the overall performance of L2 speech acts. Perhaps Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) were among the first to look into the waffle phenomenon of L2 speech acts in a systematic and comprehensive way. In their study in which native and non-native speakers of Hebrew were asked to perform requests in various

situations, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain reported that there existed a significant difference between two groups in the length of requests due to a tendency of non-native speakers to make more frequent use of supportive moves within requests than native speakers. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) compared complaints as performed by native and non-native speakers of Hebrew, and showed non-native speakers' preference for making their complaints longer than native speakers throughout situations. Similarly, Rintell and Mitchell (1989) provided empirical evidence that ESL learners performed lengthier requests than English native speakers by employing more supportive moves and more restatements. The work by Rose (2000) also offered findings similar to those of Rintell and Mitchell (1989). Rose examined the performance of apologies made by EFL elementary school students in Hong Kong, and found that students in higher grades tended to make lengthy apologies by using a wide range of apology adjuncts as compared to students in lower grades who showed serious limitedness in the use of apology adjuncts and thus made simple apologies most of the time. This finding indicates that verbosity in L2 speech acts is more evident in learners with higher proficiency than those with lower proficiency, and has a close relationship with L2 proficiency (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986). That is, it can be assumed that a certain level of L2 proficiency is necessary in the use of talking-much strategy in L2 speech act realization. Such an assumption is supported by Jong-Im Han's (1999) study on the role of instruction in the development of pragmatic ability of Korean college students of EFL. It was reported that a six-week period of instruction on L2 requests contributed considerably to an increase in students' pragmatic knowledge, and enabled them to talk a lot with lengthy requests in English.

Given the critical role of pragmatic competence in L2 learning and use in general, and a growing concern over learners' talking-much behavior in L2 speech acts in particular, the present paper investigated the pragmatic ability of Korean students of English with a focus on their talking-much behavior as they perform the speech act of requests in various situations. When making a request, people usually weaken or strengthen its illocutionary force through internal and external modifications (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986). Internal modification occurs inside a head act of request in the form of downgraders to reduce the illocutionary force or of upgraders to increase the force. In the case of external modification, it appears outside of a head act of request through supportive moves in the form of excuses or explanations for making a request in a given situation. This study viewed learners' talking-much behavior in the performance of requests as a function of both internal and external modifications inside the whole requestive realization. As shown before, despite the recent studies on learner verbosity in interlanguage pragmatics, they have been done mostly with informants of ESL or EFL with L1 backgrounds including Chinese, Japanese and Hebrew. As a result, little information is available on how Korean learners of English deal with internal and external modifications during their performance

of requests. So the paper attempted to look into requests made by Korean learners in various situations in order to determine whether their treatment of internal and external modifications deviates from that of native speakers in the performance of one typical face-threatening act, requests. To be more specific, the research questions addressed in the study are as follows:

1. What similarities and differences are there between English native speakers and Korean learners of English in the use of internal and external modifications as they perform requests in various situations?
2. What similarities and differences are there between Korean learners of ESL and Korean learners of EFL in the use of internal and external modifications as they perform requests in various situations?

II. METHODS

1. Participants

In the study there were three different groups of subjects. The first group consisted of twenty Korean college students learning English as a foreign language (ten males and ten females) who were enrolled in one of the major universities in Korea. All of them majored in English language and literature, and most of them were either sophomore or junior. They had no experience with travelling to or residing in English-speaking countries at the time of study. Their self-rated English proficiency ranged from intermediate-low to advanced. The second group of subjects was composed of twenty Korean college students learning English as a second language (ten males and ten females) who studied English at one major university in America. All subjects in this group were enrolled at Intensive English Program in university that had an aim to help foreign students become proficient in English for academic purposes. Among seven proficiency levels at the program, subjects were placed in 5, 6 or 7 level, which means that their English proficiency ranged from intermediate-mid to advanced level. The average length of stay in America by the subjects was 4.3 months. Some of the subjects in the group had a plan to become undergraduate or graduate students in American universities when completing the program. Finally, the third group of subjects consisted of twenty native speakers of English who were undergraduate or graduate students (nine males and eleven females) enrolled in the same university as the second group of subjects, Korean learners of ESL. The subjects in this group majored in various fields including law, information science, education and nursing, among others, and served as informants for L2 baseline data. It was thought that since subjects in all three

groups were college students, variables such as age, educational background and occupation were constant among the groups, which helped to attain a relatively high degree of homogeneity across the samples of the study.

2. Instruments and Procedure

Data were gathered via discourse completion test (henceforth DCT) which is a written questionnaire. DCT was originally developed to test oral proficiency of immigrants to Canada in such a way that immigrants were given a brief description of a setting and a relationship between interlocutors in terms of contextual variables such as age, gender, social status and familiarity, among others in a particular situation, and were asked to say what they would most likely say in that situation (Levenston, 1975). DCT in the present study contained six different situations requiring the performance of the speech act of requests. Six situations were created on the basis of two contextual variables like social status and familiarity. Social status representing social power of speaker over hearer had three values (i.e., +, -, and 0) while familiarity representing the degree to which speaker and hearer know each other had two values (i.e., + and -). Three values of social status multiplied by two values of familiarity resulted in six different situations (See Appendix A for DCT). Three groups of subjects in the study were given the DCT, and were instructed to read the description of each situation carefully in order to write down what they would be most likely to say in a given situation. Data from both ESL learner group and English native speaker group were taken from Jae-Suk Suh (1998), and were reanalyzed for the purpose of the present study accordingly.

3. Data Analysis

Since the focus of the study was on non-native speakers' verbosity in their performance of requests, the first step to analyze data was to define verbosity and identify it in their requests. Earlier it was noted that the current study viewed learner verbosity as a function of internal and external modifications during the realization of requests in a given situation. As its name shows, internal modification involves making an internal change or adjustment to a request strategy of a whole request realization by using either downgraders to reduce the imposition created by requests or upgraders to increase it (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). It is common that when performing a request, people tend to make their request sound polite since they want to save interlocutor's face that is threatened by their request, and at the same time, gain his or her compliance with the request. It is exactly downgraders that serve the function of minimizing the imposition created by requests and making them polite. So in order to determine whether or not internal modification occurs

inside a request strategy of a specific request realization, downgraders rather than upgraders were identified and classified with the help of coding schemes proposed by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), and House and Kasper (1981, 1987) (See Appendix B for classification of downgraders).

On the other hand, external modification takes place when something called supportive moves is added before and after a request strategy. In performing a request, people rarely make a single requestive utterance alone. Instead, they usually say more by giving supportive moves that are divided into two types, mitigating and aggravating supportive moves. The former is used to minimize the imposition of request while the latter to strengthen it. For instance, supportive moves often used during the performance of requests may include offering a reason for request, checking on a potential rejection before making a request, showing a concern over hearer's ability to perform a request, or even threatening hearer to ensure compliance with request. To identify external modification occurring in a given request realization in this study, a coding manual developed on the basis of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), and Mir-Fernandez (1994) was used (See Appendix C for classification of supportive moves). As a second step of data analysis, a comparison was made between Korean students of English and native speakers of English on the one hand, and between Korean students of EFL and Korean students of ESL on the other in terms of internal and external modifications. In doing so, statistical techniques such as ANOVA and Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) were used with a significance level set at .05.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Comparison between Native and Non-Native Speakers in Internal Modification

To determine whether or not Korean learners had a tendency to talk much in L2 speech act performance, they were compared with English native speakers in terms of internal modification of requests throughout six situations in the DCT. The total number of words used by three language groups (i.e., EFL Korean learners, ESL Korean learners and English native speakers) within request strategy in individual situations was counted, and shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Total Number of Words Used within Request Strategy across Situations (raw score)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total	Mean
EFL	135	135	127	112	115	102	726	36.3
ESL	136	118	137	123	163	125	802	40.1
ENS	191	149	202	134	222	115	1006	50.3

cf) S=Situation, EFL=EFL Korean learners, ESL=ESL Korean learners, ENS=English Native Speakers

According to Table 1, English native speaker group produced the largest number of words (1006 words) within request strategy across six situations with an average of 50.3 words per situation, which was followed by ESL learner group who used 802 words throughout situations with an average of 40.1 words in each situation. It was EFL learner group who employed the fewest number of words (726 words) inside request strategy across situations. This finding is surprising since it contradicts the widely known phenomenon of non-native speaker verbosity in L2 speech act performance. Further to determine whether or not the differences between two learner groups and native speaker group in the total number of words within request strategy across six situations were statistically significant, an ANOVA procedure was computed with a significance level set at .05, and results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2
ANOVA Summary for Number of Words in Request Strategy across Situations

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between	64.653	2	32.326	13.099	.000
Within	140.671	57	2.468		
Total	205.324	59			

Table 2 indicated that there were statistically significant differences among the three language groups in the production of words within request strategy across six situations. In order to find out which means of language groups made more contribution to statistically significant differences, Tukey's HSD was calculated. It was found that there were statistically significant differences between EFL Korean learners and English native speakers on the one hand (p=.000), and between ESL Korean learners and English native speakers on the other (p=.002). This means that the English native speaker group indeed used more words within request strategy throughout situations, and thus was more talkative than the two learner groups. Meanwhile, no statistically significant difference was found between the two learner groups (p=.378). Though the finding that the English native speaker group talked more than the learner groups in its internal modification of request

strategy was unexpected, it can be explained if one takes a close look at what constitutes request strategies employed by three language groups. While it is necessary to know how many words were produced inside request strategy in a specific situation, it is more important to examine what kinds of words were used, and which functions they served under each face-threatening situation. In other words, a careful look at request strategies made by the three groups indicated that the native speaker group differed from the two learner groups in the use of downgraders across all the six situations. The English native speakers were very active in using a wide range of downgraders in a way different from the learners in order to express various degrees of politeness needed in different situations.

Table 3
Number of Downgraders in Request Strategies by Three Groups in Situation (mean)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
EFL	9(0.45)	7(0.35)	11(0.55)	6(0.30)	4(0.20)	21(1.05)	58
ESL	11(0.55)	7(0.35)	14(0.70)	6(0.30)	14(0.70)	25(1.25)	77
ENS	38(1.90)	21(1.05)	36(1.80)	4(0.20)	39(1.95)	32(1.60)	170

As shown in Table 3, the native speaker group used the largest number of downgraders (170) across situations, which is more than double the ESL learner group (77), and is more than triple the EFL learner group (58). More specifically, the native speaker group tended to employ more than one downgrader in every situation except situation 4 as compared to the learner groups which used less than one downgrader per situation. It is clear that such an active employment of downgraders by the native speakers attributed the most to their largest use of words inside request strategy. So the overuse of words by the native speakers within request strategy did not seem to make them sound talkative during the realization of requests, but rather enabled them to express politeness in a way appropriate to situations. In contrast, the two learner groups which suffered a shortage of downgraders were very likely to sound impolite or even rude across situations. One thing to note here is that the ESL learners employed more downgraders than the EFL learners in four out of the six situations, and showed some similarities to the native speaker group. This suggests that the ESL learners seemed to get closer to L2 norms of politeness than the EFL learners.

The difference between the native speaker group and the learner groups in the use of downgraders can be shown clearly in situation 3 in which subjects asked a professor whom they had known to lend a book to them, or in situation 5 in which subjects asked a student whom they had no familiarity with to study together for a test. The native speakers made frequent use of downgraders within request strategy under these two situations where a considerable amount of politeness was necessary since subjects had to make a request to either a professor with higher social status, or another student with little familiarity. So the

native speakers employed almost an average of two downgraders in each situation (i.e., 1.8 downgraders in situation 3 and 1.95 downgraders in situation 5) in order to make their requests sound indirect and polite, and at the same time, gain compliance from a requestee. The EFL learners produced very few downgraders in the same situations (i.e., 0.55 downgrader in situation 3 and 0.2 downgrader in situation 5), which made them sound abrupt and impolite to a requestee. The ESL learners were in-between in that they were similar to the EFL learners in their limitedness in a range of downgraders, but at the same time, were close to the native speakers in their gradual increase in the use of downgraders in those situations (i.e., 0.7 downgrader). The following are some examples of request strategies that were taken from data, and show how three language groups dealt with internal modification through downgraders in situations 3 and 5 (Italicized parts indicate downgraders).

Please lend me your book. (EFL learner 1, in situation 3)
May I borrow your book? (EFL learner 3, in situation 3)
Would you lend me your book? (EFL learner 6, in situation 3)

Can you lend the book? (ESL learner 1, in situation 3)
I'll really appreciate *if* you lend the book to me. (ESL learner 5, in situation 3)
Could you *please* lend me the book for a week? (ESL learner 8, in situation 3)

Do you think I *could* borrow the book and return it *immediately please*? (ENS 2, in situation 3)
I *was wondering if* I *could* borrow this book for my term paper. (ENS 10, in situation 3)
I *was just wondering if* you *would* mind *if* I *borrowed* that book we need to use for the paper. (ENS 18, in situation 3)

I want to study together. (EFL learner 9, in situation 5)
Can you study math with me? (EFL learner 11, in situation 5)
Will you study together for the upcoming test? (EFL learner 15, in situation 5)

Would you mind *if* we study together for it? (ESL learner 7, in situation 5)
I *just* want to study with you until you think my skill is enough to me. (ESL learner 10, in situation 5)
I *would* like to study with you for a test. (ESL learner 13, in situation 5)

Could we get together and study? (ENS 9, in situation 5)
Do you think we could meet somewhere before the test and go over some things? (ENS

15, in situation 5)

I *was wondering if* you *would* like to get together sometime before this test to study. (ENS 17, in situation 5)

As shown in the data, the request strategies created by the learners of both EFL and ESL contained few downgraders, which made them look simple and sound direct. In contrast, the native speakers' request strategies were well decorated with a variety of syntactic, phrasal and lexical downgraders (e.g., 'play-down' (past tense, durative aspect mark), 'downtoner' (just), 'consultative device' (would you mind …?), and 'politeness marker' (please, do you think?)). It is likely that the proficient and frequent use of various types of downgraders by the native speakers played a critical role in making their requests less imposing and more indirect, and helped to increase the possibility of gaining compliance from a requestee across the situations. In sum, the largest number of words produced by the native speakers within request strategy was due mainly to the frequent use of downgraders relevant to the expression of politeness, and should be seen as totally appropriate in the performance of face-threatening acts like requests. The two learner groups which were supposed to say more in their request strategies than the native speakers actually under-used words as a result of a shortage of downgraders, and should be perceived as having insufficient pragmatic ability to handle politeness in the L2.

2. Comparison between Native and Non-native Speakers in External Modification

The second way of examining the verbosity of the Korean learners was to look into external modification of a whole request realization. External modification occurs when something is added before or after request strategy, and takes the form of supportive moves. Its purpose is to either reduce or strengthen the impositive force of request in a given situation. After identifying and classifying supportive moves produced by the three groups, all words and sentences used to form supportive moves in every situation were counted, and results were given in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Total Number of Words & Sentences in Supportive Moves across Situations

	S1 W/ S	S2 W/S	S3 W/S	S4 W/S	S5 W/S	S6 W/S	Total
EFL	262/34	280/43	400/50	265/42	315/54	156/29	1678/252
ESL	584/68	552/73	867/99	446/55	679/95	310/56	3438/446
ENS	253/21	274/25	389/33	289/36	223/30	150/28	1578/173

cf) W=Words, S=Sentences

According to Table 4, the ESL learner group produced the largest number of words and sentences (3438 words and 446 sentences) as supportive moves in their request realizations across all situations. The EFL learner group was ranked second by producing 1678 words and 252 sentences whereas the native speaker group talked the least by using 1578 words and 173 sentences. This finding indicates that the non-native speakers tended to be more talkative than the native speakers, and is in line with the common findings from previous studies on L2 speech acts. In particular, the ESL learner group produced more than twice as many words as the EFL learner group or the native speaker group. Indeed, the results of ANOVA showed that there were statistically significant differences in the use of words of supportive moves among the three groups across situations (see Table 5). According to the results of Tukey's HSD, there existed statistically significant differences between ESL Korean learners and English native speakers on the one hand (p=.000), and between ESL Korean learners and EFL Korean learners on the other (p=.000). This indicates that the ESL learner group produced more words in the form of supportive moves in its requestive performance across situations, and was more talkative than the other groups. Meanwhile, no statistically significant difference was shown between the EFL learner group and the native speaker group (p=.932).

Table 5
ANOVA Summary for Number of Words in Supportive Moves across Situations

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between	3040.370	2	1520.185	27.956	.000
Within	3099.539	57	54.378		
Total	6139.909	59			

At this moment, one interesting question arises about why the EFL learner group was not similar to the ESL learner group in the use of supportive moves across situations, and consequently, talked much less during the performance of requests. As the findings of several studies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Edmondson & House, 1991; Ellis, 1994) suggested, one major factor influencing verbosity is learners' level of L2 proficiency. It is obvious that learners with limited knowledge of the L2 would have difficulty not only communicating what to say, but also expressing how to say it during speech act performance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) offered some cogent explanations for the various degrees of verbosity among learners at different levels of proficiency, stating that learners at lower levels of proficiency "tend to avoid verbosity since their knowledge of the language is so limited, which ironically keeps them closer to the native norm in terms of utterance length. Second, at high intermediate and advanced levels the learners gain confidence with respect to their linguistic knowledge… and thus tend to be considerably

more verbose than their native counterparts" (p. 177). Though the Korean learners of both EFL and ESL had English proficiency above intermediate level at the time of study, in reality, the EFL learners can be assumed to have been far behind the ESL learners in their grammatical and pragmatic abilities. It was found earlier that the EFL learner group was more deficient than the ESL learner group in using downgraders within request strategy across situations. In addition, the ESL learners which had been exposed to a large amount of input and interaction for communication in naturalistic settings while residing in America are believed to have had more advantages of developing the overall target language proficiency than the EFL learners. As a result, the superiority of the ESL learners over the EFL learners in L2 proficiency must have led them to be able to say almost whatever they wanted to say during speech act production, and thus end up with lengthy requests.

Table 6
Number of Supportive Moves in Requests by Three Groups in Situations (mean)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total	Grand mean
EFL	34(1.70)	44(2.20)	46(2.30)	28(1.40)	41(2.05)	25(1.25)	218	1.82
ESL	78(3.90)	71(3.55)	84(4.20)	47(2.35)	66(3.30)	33(1.65)	379	3.16
ENS	33(1.65)	38(1.90)	48(2.40)	35(1.75)	23(1.15)	20(1.00)	197	1.64

As indicated in Table 6, it is the ESL learner group which made the most frequent use of supportive moves (379 supportive moves) in requests across situations. They employed an average of 3.16 supportive moves per situation. The EFL learner group was ranked second (218 supportive moves) with an average of 1.82 supportive moves in each situation. The English native speaker group produced the fewest supportive moves, and talked the least during the realization of requests across situations. It can be said that when it comes to external modification in the form of supportive moves, the ESL learner group showed a strong tendency to become most talkative among the three groups while requesting. As mentioned above, the ESL learners, who were assumed to have higher English proficiency than the EFL learners due mainly to their advantageous learning environment, were able to use their knowledge of the L2 at their full potential in order to get their intended meaning cross for communication during speech act performance. The problem here is that their talking-much behavior differed greatly from the speech behavior of the native speakers who used the fewest supportive moves, and sounded concise. One possible explanation for the verbosity of the ESL learners can be found in their lack of confidence in the appropriateness of what they produced in a particular context (Edmondson & House, 1991). Despite their uncertainty about the effectiveness of their production for communication,

the ESL learners must have had a strong willingness to make their production work and to keep it going, and this must have motivated them to make what they said as clear and meaningful as possible by relying on every linguistic resource available to them. As a result, though they managed to transmit their message in some way with little trouble, they came to end up with lengthy requests. As an example, the following data show how the ESL learners differed from the other groups of subjects in their external modification through supportive moves in situation 1 in which subjects as a bookstore owner ask a clerk to work after store hours (Italicized parts indicate supportive moves).

Hi, man. *How's your work going these days? As you know, I have a plan to extend business hours by an hour. This plan is not just for me. It is also good for your job. Don't you think?* So today I want you to stay after store hours. *Please help me.* (ESL learner 8)

Clerk, I should say something to you. These days, you know, the store is so busy. So I need many help from you. Can you work more time? *If you do that, I'll give you more salary, and really appreciate to you. If you can't do, I should find one more clerk, but I don't want that.* (ESL learner 15)

Hi, guy. *I know you work very hard. And I really appreciate your sincerity. Anyway, I have a request to you. If you don't have emergent affairs,* can you work after store hours? *I'll give you another money for that. You know, our bookstore is so busy nowadays.* (ESL learner 20)

I think that we should work one more hour. I wish that you can work. *Is it OK?* (EFL learner 2)

Are you OK? You know our store is very busy. And I hope to extend your work time. I will raise your salary. Would you help me? (EFL learner 5)

Hey, clerk. I hope that you stay after store hours. *I'll give the money for bonus. Are you OK?* (EFL learner 11)

Hi, I was wondering if you might be able to work a little late tonight *because of the extended hours.* (ENS 3)

Josh, could you do me a favor? Could you stay an extra hour and help me out with the rush of people? (ENS 13)

Jane, we're real busy today, and I was wondering if you could stay an extra hour today? *I would really appreciate it if you could.* (ENS 18)

From the data it follows that indeed, the ESL learners preferred to say more in their requests than both the EFL learners and the native speakers. Though the EFL learners seemed to be similar to the native speakers in the overall length of requests, actually they were far behind the pragmatic norm of politeness of the L2 given their deficiency in internal modification of request strategy through downgraders. What is most important is that the ESL learners' lengthy requests due to the overuse of supportive moves deviate from the native speakers' speech act patterns. Their overproduction is likely to offer more information than needed, and moreover, some of the information provided in certain situations appears superfluous and even useless. As a result, their verbosity can cause a hearer to have hard time capturing their intended meaning of an utterance, distract a hearer's attention from request, or even work against their will to make successful communication happen (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986). Thus the provision of many words leading to lengthy realization of speech acts is a clear case of a deviation from the target language norm, and becomes a legitimate source of pragmatic errors.

IV. CONCLUSION

The focus of the present study was on the investigation of one pragmatic aspect of speech act performance, verbosity of learner language. In the study, both Korean learners of English and English native speakers performed requests in various situations of DCT, and their requests were analyzed in terms of internal and external modifications of requests. The results of the study showed that the ESL learner group produced more supportive moves, and thus made lengthier requests across situations than the EFL learner group or the native speaker group. Unexpectedly, the EFL learner group made less frequent use of external modification of their requests with fewer supportive moves across situations than the ESL learner group, and ended up with simple, brief requests. The superiority of the ESL learners over the EFL learners in L2 proficiency was assumed to attribute the most to the ESL learners' realization of lengthy requests, leading them to express whatever they wanted to say in a given situation in order to make a successful transmission of message happen.

Unlike its verbosity as a result of the overuse of supportive moves before or after request strategy, the ESL learner group was reluctant to engage in internal modification inside request strategy, and was the under-user of downgraders. The under-use of internal modification through downgraders in request strategy was also true to the EFL learner

group who suffered lack of knowledge of downgraders across situations. Consequently, the two learner groups were deficient in expressing the appropriate amount of politeness according to different situations, and sounded impolite or even rude. In contrast, the native speaker group produced somewhat long request strategies due to the frequent, skillful use of downgraders, which did not lead it to sound talkative at all, but just showed the norm of politeness of the L2. The finding that the ESL learners at higher level of proficiency tended to make lengthier requests by using more supportive moves than the native speakers did give support to the findings of many previous studies on L2 speech acts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Rose, 2000).

It is not clear exactly what motivated the ESL learners to become verbose during their request realization since no verbal data from introspective methods like think-aloud or interviewing were collected in the study. Nonetheless, it was noted that one main reason for their verbosity might lie in their uncertainty about the appropriate use of knowledge of L2 speech act patterns, which led them to have difficulty hitting the mark, and to rely on any linguistic resource available to them in order to make their expression as clear and comprehensible as possible to interlocutors. The resulting product based on such performance contained many words, and was shown as lengthy requests, which sounded talkative. As mentioned before, since learner verbosity violates the conversation principles, and has a negative effect on a transmission of illocutionary meaning of an utterance, it is considered one type of pragmatic failure that impairs the smooth flow of communication, or brings about misunderstanding between interlocutors. The problem, as Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) pointed out, is that learners themselves rarely know that their talking-much behavior deviates from the L2 norms of speech act patterns, and are unable to make any repairs to such undesirable speech behavior. Thus future research needs to examine learner unawareness of verbosity during speech act production in a systematic way, and hopefully, offer some suggestions to help non-native speakers to realize speech acts in pragmatically appropriate manners without being too much talkative.

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APPENDIX A

Six situations in DCT

Please imagine yourself in the following situations, and write down everything that you would say in the situations.

Situation 1)
You are the owner of a bookstore. Your shop clerk has worked for a year, and you have gotten to know him/her quite well. It is the beginning of the semester, and you are very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day. Today you have a plan to extend business hours by an hour, and you want to ask the clerk to stay after store hours. What would you say?

Situation 2)
You are typing a term paper on a computer. Suddenly, the computer breaks, and you don't know how to fix it. The paper should be submitted by tomorrow because the professor will be out of town for a while. You know that your close friend has the same computer you use. You want to ask him/her to let you use his/her computer for typing the paper. What would you say?

Situation 3)
You are looking for a book that you need to read for writing a term paper. Today you have just found that this book was checked out and recalled by another student, which means that you will have to wait for at least a month. You have about a week to write the paper. You know that your professor has this book. Because you have taken a course from this professor, you know him/her. You want to ask the professor to lend the book to you. You go to his/her office, and knock on the door. What would you say?

Situation 4)
You are a police officer. You see a car driving 50 miles an hour on campus, where the speed limit is 30 miles an hour. You stop the car and approach the driver, who seems to be a student. What would you say?

Situation 5)
For the first time this semester, you are taking a mathematics course. You have had a hard time

following lectures and understanding the textbook. A test is scheduled to be held next week. You notice that one student sitting next to you seems to have good background knowledge of math, and is doing well. Since it is the beginning of the semester, you do not know him/her yet. You want to ask him/her to study together for the upcoming test. What would you say?

Situation 6)
You are taking a course from a professor whom you have never seen before. Today is the first day of class. The professor talks about important things, such as textbooks, assignments and exams. Since a classroom is rather large and the professor speaks with a soft voice, you can't hear him/her well. What would you say?

APPENDIX B

Coding scheme for classification of downgraders (Adapted from Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989) and House & Kasper (1981, 1987))

I. Syntactic downgraders

1. Tense: Past tense forms as downgrading only if they are used with present time reference, i.e., if they can be replaced by present tense forms without changing the semantic meaning of the utterance

(Example: "I *wanted* to see if I could turn it in a little late", "Would it be alright if I *could* borrow the article from you?")

2. Aspect: Durative aspect marker as downgrading only if it can be replaced by a simple form
(Example: "I *was wondering* if the music could be turned down", "I *was hoping* to get an extension for the paper")

3. Interrogative: Syntactic structure used as interrogation for downgrading

(Example: "*Do you think* I could borrow your notes?")

4. Conditional clause: Syntactic device used to tone down the illocutionary effect of an utterance
(Example: "I was wondering *if* I could borrow your notes and maybe copy them")

5. Agent avoider: Syntactic devices by means of which it is possible for the speaker not to mention either him/herself or the hearer as agents, hence, avoiding direct attack
(Example: "*Would it be at all possible* for me to borrow your notes?", "*Is there any way* I could have an extension because I will not be done in time")

II. Lexical and Phrasal downgraders

1. Politeness marker: An optional element added to a request to involve a hearer directly in a request, bidding for cooperative behavior
(Example: "Could you *please* let someone who is doing academic work use this computer?")

2. Downtoner: Sentential modifiers (e.g., 'just', 'possibly', 'maybe', 'rather', 'simply', and 'perhaps', etc) used to reduce the illocutionary effect of an utterance on a hearer
(Example: "Could you *possibly* turn your music down?", "I was *just* wondering if you could *maybe* turn your music down a little bit because I have a huge test tomorrow")

3. Understater: Adverbial modifiers (e.g., 'a little bit', 'for a second', 'not very much', and 'just a trifle', etc) by which a speaker under-represents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition
(Example: "I was wondering if you guys could turn down the music *a little bit*")

4. Subjectiviser: Elements (e.g., 'I think', 'I believe', 'I suppose', 'I am afraid', and 'in my opinion', etc) in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion vis-a-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of an utterance
(Example: "*I think* you should give other students your computer", "*I am afraid* you're going to have to move")

APPENDIX C

Coding scheme for classification of supportive moves (Adapted from Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989) and Mir-Fernandez (1994))

1. preparatory: The speaker prepares his/her hearer for the ensuing requests by announcing that he/she will make a request by asking about the potential availability of the hearer for carrying out the request, by asking for hearer's permission to make the request, or by stating a problem or needs leading to a request.
(Example: "*I'm having a major crisis over here!* Can I use your computer tonight?""*I just wanted to talk to you about the paper that is due tomorrow.* I have had so many problems with it")

2. precommitment: The speaker checks on a potential refusal before making a request by trying to commit his/her hearer
(Example: "*Will you be using your computer tonight?* I really need your help""*Are you by any chance using your computer tomorrow?* Well I was just wondering if you cared if I used it")

3. Grounder: The speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his/her requests, which may either precede or follow it.
(Example: "*The book we need for the assignment is checked out.* May I borrow your copy please?""Could you please let some of the students waiting have a turn *since you are just playing games?*")

4. Disarmer: The speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request.
(Example: "*You seem to know what's going on in here*. Would you like to get together and study for the test?""I was wondering if you want to study for the upcoming test. *I know you are smart*")

5. Promise of reward: The speaker gives a reward to increase the likelihood of the hearer's compliance with the request
(Example: "Could you please stay late today since we are so busy? *I will pay you overtime*""Would you like to stick around for another hour? *Extra money*")

6. Imposition minimizer: The speaker tries to reduce the imposition created by the request
(Example: "Would you mind if I borrow your article? *I will return it as soon as I can*""Can I borrow yours if you are not using it? *I will pay for the paper*")

7. Acknowledgement of imposition: The speaker acknowledges the imposition created by a requested action by apologizing, referring to a situation involved in the request, or providing a moral statement
(Example: "I was wondering if you might have a copy of this book that I could borrow. *Sorry about the inconvenience*")

8. Concern: The speaker shows concern about the hearer's ability, willingness, or availability to carry out the request
(Example: "*if you don't mind*""*if you have time*""*if it's OK to you*")

9. Appreciation: The speaker expresses his/her appreciation for the hearer's compliance with the request before it is performed
(Example: "*I appreciate you (it)*""*thank you*""*thanks*")

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