Korean Learners' Strategies and Decision-Making Processes in English Compliment Response Behavior*

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The aim of this paper was to examine Korean learners' pragmatic competence in the speech act of compliment response. A study was conducted in which four language groups participated as subjects, and data were collected by means of open-role play, interview and DCT. The results of the study indicated that Korean learners of both EFL and ESL were able to respond to L2 praise in a way similar to English native speakers by using acceptance strategies most of the time while some of them still applied their L1 social norms into L2 use by using non-acceptance strategies. Korean learners were also shown to talk more than native speakers in response to L2 praise, and this talking-much behavior was seen as one type of pragmatic errors. In addition, the learners were found to pass through a variety of mental, decision-making processes while responding to L2 praise. Some suggestions were offered to help them to respond to L2 praise in pragmatically appropriate manners.

[compliment response/pragmatic competence/speech acts/
칭찬응답/화용적 능력/화행]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of interlanguage pragmatics in SLA, the role of pragmatics in learner language has been found crucial and important in L2 research (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Numerous studies in this line of research attempted to find answers to questions about learner abilities to perform language functions in contexts through comparing between native and non-native speakers in the realization of communicative acts or speech acts in various situations (Baba, 2010; Chang, 2010; S. J. Min, 2013; Saito & Beecken, 1997; K. M. Won, 2012; Yu, 2004). According to a plethora of studies on L2 speech acts, even higher-proficiency learners had much difficulty in speech act performance, and differed greatly from target language speakers in several significant ways (Al-Zumor, 2011; Castro, 2005; M. Y. Chun, 2010; B. H. Chung & S. J. Min, 2013; Worathumrong & Luksaneeyanawin, 2016). As Bardovi-Harlig (2002) noted, most learners lacked both pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge combining to constitute pragmatic competence, which led them to use strategies or semantic formulas in a way different from target language speakers during speech act performance.

Among various speech acts most researched in L2 pragmatics to date, it is perhaps the acts of compliment and compliment response that learners would encounter quite often in cross-cultural communication (Barnlund & Araki, 1985). Many studies of these speech acts have demonstrated cogently that learners, particularly those with East Asian languages as L1 backgrounds, experienced considerable difficulty making a compliment and responding to compliment in L2 (Chen, 1993; Daikuhara, 1986; S. K. Lim, 2000; M. K. Oh, 2006). Such difficulty may cause them to deal with the two acts in inappropriate manners during interaction, and make them look uncooperative, impolite or even rude to the eyes of interlocutors (Yu, 2004). In particular, studies of L2 compliment response by learners with Korean, Japanese or Chinese as L1 backgrounds reported that subjects had a strong tendency to use strategies of non-acceptance rather than those of acceptance in response to L2 praise (Y. S. Jeon, 1996; S. K. Lim, 2000; M. K. Oh, 2006; Saito & Beecken, 1997). Such a preference for denial or rejection as compliment response seemed to originate from the Eastern cultural tradition based on Confucianism and collectivism in which Chinese, Korean and Japanese people were trained to show respect and deference to people of older age or higher social status mainly through modesty or humbleness (Chen, 1993; Gu, 1990; Yu, 2004). Also since Eastern societies built upon groups had long relied on group activities for political, economic and social welfare and security (Eisenson, Auer, & Irwin, 1965), they tended to stress harmonious relations among group members, discouraging "comparisons that inherently weaken group membership" (Barnlund & Araki, 1985, p. 25), and instead, encouraging members to focus more on group needs than individual desire. For these reasons, people in the three East Asian countries are inactive in paying a compliment to others in everyday life, and further feel uncomfortable about a frequent exchange of compliment and compliment response among people in English-speaking countries. So when given L2 praise, learners with the three languages as L1 backgrounds may have no idea of what to do, try to reject or deny the praise in order to look polite by following their L1 socio-cultural norms, and end up with an inappropriate response to L2 compliment. This is one good example of negative pragmatic transfer applying L1 norms into L2 performance, and according to previous studies of L2 compliment response by learners with the East Asian languages as L1 backgrounds, they showed a fairly strong preference for non-acceptance strategies through denial, rejection or even silence in response to L2 praise (Chen, 1993; S. K. Lim, 2000; Saito & Beecken, 1997; Yu, 2004).

In spite of much research on L2 compliment response by learners with various L1 backgrounds including Chinese and Japanese, the number of studies of Korean learners of English in this speech act performance is small, so little information is available on their pragmatic abilities to respond to L2 praise in contexts. It is well-known that American culture based on individuals' freedom and autonomy values each person's characteristics, "favors confrontation with differences, and is likely to promote such evaluations for they confirm the individuality of each person and encourage competition" (Barnlund & Araki, 1985, p. 25). In this regard, American people have positive attitude toward the act of exchanging compliments in everyday interaction, and are active in making a compliment and responding to it through acceptance in order to create harmony and enhance solidarity among social members (Eisenson, Auer, & Irwin, 1965; Knapp, Hopper, & Bell, 1984). In light of clear and definite differences between Korean and American cultures in the view and treatment of the acts of compliment and compliment response, it would be quite burdensome and challenging for Korean learners of English to perform the two acts in a way that is accepted by target language speakers.

On the other hand, one notable characteristic of studies on L2 compliment response by Korean learners is that they tended to describe and explain their pragmatic competence with performance or production data mostly from discourse completion tasks (henceforth, DCTs). Despite many advantages of DCT data (e.g., an easy, fast collection of a large amount of data, an effective manipulation of situational variables under study, and a quick identification of stereotypical strategies in naturally occurring speech) (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Cohen, 1996a; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; J. S. Suh, 2006), data from DCTs are not problem-free. Most important, it is still controversial how well DCT data can reflect spontaneous speech in natural interaction (Wolfson, 1989a; Xu & Wannaruk, 2015). As Wolfson, Marmor and Jones (1989) noted, short, decontextualized written responses elicited from DCTs are unlikely to fully match natural speech. Another serious problem with DCT data involves offering little information about informants' cognitive, decision-making

processes underlying speech behavior (Robinson, 1991). Performance data like DCT data only provide strategies or semantic formulas realizing a specific speech act in a given situation, and do not tell what goes on inside learners' mind during speech act performance. Consequently, they really do nothing in gaining insight into learners' mental, decision-making processes occurring during speech act production, and are not an appropriate tool to have a solid understanding of their speech act behavior (Matsumoto, 1994; Robinson, 1991). Recently, due to a growing concern over the use of introspection as a viable tool to gain empirical evidence for informants' mental, internal processes involved in the acquisition and use of knowledge (Ericsson & Simon, 1980), there has been a consensus among many scholars in L2 pragmatics research about the adoption of introspective techniques as a data-gathering method to figure out everything that comes into learners' mind during speech act performance.

Given that handling the speech act of compliment response is culture-specific and tricky for Korean learners of English on the one hand, and that most studies on L2 compliment response based their investigation mostly on performance data like DCT data, and provided little information on leaners' decision-making processes involved in response to L2 praise on the other, the current study examined the compliment response behavior of Korean learners of English with a focus on their cognitive, decision-making processes underlying this speech act realization. More specifically, the aim of the study was to investigate pragmatic abilities of Korean learners in L2 compliment response by using open-role plays and immediate retrospection as main data-gathering methods. In light of the assumption that open-role plays produce data closer to actual, spontaneous speech by allowing learners to have much freedom to organize interaction in their own ways, and that immediate retrospection provides verbal report on learners' mental states or processes involving speech act performance through having "access to the reasoning processes underlying cognition, response and decision-making" (Cohen, 1996b, p. 8), it was hoped that data from the two methods would help to obtain a solid understanding of pragmatic knowledge and performance of Korean learners of English in situations requiring the realization of the act of compliment response. The research questions guiding the present study are as follows:

1) What are similarities and differences among Korean learners of EFL, Korean learners of ESL, and native speakers of English in the realization of compliment response in various situations?
2) What are EFL and ESL Korean learners' cognitive, decision-making processes involved in the realization of compliment response in various situations?

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

As an adjacency pair in conversation, the speech act of compliment response is inseparable from the act of compliment. According to Holmes (1988), compliments are the communicative act that "explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speakers, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and hearer" (p. 485). The most striking feature of compliment across languages lies in its formulaic and patterned nature (Chen, 1993; Herbert, 1989; Manes & Wolfson, 1981). For instance, English compliments paid by American people are characterized by a limited number of lexical items and syntactic structures. The formulaic nature of compliment contributes greatly to its quick, frequent use whenever speaker wants to offer positive evaluations or remarks about hearer as Manes and Wolfson (1981) mentioned that the compliment can be "adapted with minimal effort to a wide variety of situations in which a favorable comment is required or desired" (p. 123). In the same vein, M. K. Oh (2006) noted that "In American society, compliments are more expected and acceptable … since they have important functions in the interaction between speaker and hearer. Thus compliments are everyday events for Americans" (p. 170). In light of the significant roles of compliment in English-speaking countries, it is clear that handling the two acts of compliment and compliment response appropriately is really important to learners of English. The overall findings of previous studies on L2 praise indicate that non-native speakers differed much from native speakers in paying a compliment as they transferred L1 pragmatic norms into L2 use or showed misunderstandings of the praise given to them (D. M. Kang, 2008; S. K. Lim, 2000; M. K. Oh, 2006; Wolfson, 1989b; Worathumrong & Luksaneeyanawin, 2016).

Like compliment, the act of compliment response is also formulaic, but is realized in much easier and simpler manners across cultures as Herbert (1989) noted that "there is relatively strong agreement within the speech community as to what form constitutes a *'correct response'*" (p. 5). Despite such a formulaic nature of the act of compliment response, there exist big differences between Eastern and Western cultures in this speech act patterns. In general, native English-speaking people prefer acceptance strategies in response to praise whereas people from East Asian countries like China, Japan or Korea adopt non-acceptance strategies to look polite through self-denigration. Perhaps, Barnlund and Araki (1985) showed such differences between the two cultures in the act of compliment response. They reported that American college students responded to praise by using strategies of acceptance most of the time while Japanese college students did so mostly by choosing strategies of non-acceptance like denial or rejection. The difference here was explained by a clear contrast between two groups in social norms of speech behavior that Americans see the act of compliment as a social lubricant, and are willing to receive praise with grace while Japanese

have a negative attitude about exchanging compliments among themselves, and try to deny or ignore them since they may damage group harmony and prosperity. Similar findings were obtained by Chen (1993) who examined compliment response behavior of Chinese and American university students. In a study in which both groups of native speakers responded to compliment in various situations of DCT, American students were active in paying and receiving a compliment unlike Chinese students who relied mostly on non-acceptance strategies in response to praise. Chen claimed that Chinese prefer to deny or reject praise to pay respect or be polite through self-humiliation whereas Americans tend to make frequent use of compliment and "receive the compliment *'gracefully'*" (p. 67) to highlight individuality through comparison and competition. Also S. Lim (2000) compared between Korean and English in the act of compliment response, and showed that the most preferred way of responding to praise in English was to accept it while the most popular response in Korean was non-acceptance.

Based on work by Barnlund and Araki (1985), Chen (1993) and S. Lim (2000), the formulaic nature of compliment response does not always lead to a successful realization of L2 compliment response. Rather it is the socio-pragmatic, or socio-cultural aspect of pragmatic competence that has more influence on an appropriate performance of L2 compliment response. As stated before, in light of socio-cultural norms of speech behavior in American society that value each person's freedom and autonomy, and encourage the exchange of compliments among social members, Americans are willing to give and take a compliment in a direct and explicit manner as Saito and Beecken (1997) said "As for the American norm of response to compliments, … We assume that 'thank you' is the most preferred response" (p. 366). On the contrary, in Korean society where group rapport and harmony have long been considered a top priority for collective well-being, people were discouraged from doing any actions causing comparison or competition with others (Eisenson, Auer, & Irwin, 1965), and were poor at paying a compliment and responding to it in everyday interaction. So their typical response to compliment is non-acceptance via denial or rejection through self-denigration to make themselves polite. Work by G. S. Baek (1998) made this point clear, and found that about 82% of L1 praise given to Koreans were denied, and their preferred strategy for compliment response was no acknowledgement through avoiding or ignoring praise in order to look polite or humble. Likewise, Y. S. Jeon (1996, as cited in S. K. Lim, 2000) reported that when given a compliment, overall, Korean people were unwilling to accept it, often smiling or even keeping silence. Also based on a comparison between Korean compliment response and English compliment response, C. H. Han (1992) indicated that the majority of compliment response in Korean contained non-acceptance strategies such as 'Reject,' 'Deflect,' or 'Evade' and the rest were relevant to strategies of 'Accept.'

Unlike much research on L1 compliment response, the literature on L2 compliment response was under-represented, and moreover, studies on this speech act by Korean learners of English are few. According to the overall results of previous studies on L2 compliment response, most learners with various L1 backgrounds including Korean lacked the pragmatic knowledge needed for a successful realization of L2 compliment response. For instance, in a study in which data were gathered by means of DCT, and Chinese and American college students participated as subjects, Yu (2004) reported that Chinese students of ESL responded to L2 praise by using strategies of acceptance more often than Chinese students of EFL, and seemed to get closer to L2 norms while both groups of learners were still under L1 influence by applying their L1 norms into L2 performance. Saito and Beecken (1997) had interest in pragmatic transfer in L2 speech act realization. They asked American college learners of Japanese to respond to various situations of closed-role plays, and found that American subjects selected acceptance strategies more frequently than those of non-acceptance through transferring their L1 socio-cultural norms into L2 use. Similar findings were obtained by Y. S. Jeon (1996) who addressed her concern about Korean learners' pragmatic abilities in situations requiring the performance of compliment response. It was shown that Korean learners of both EFL and ESL relied on strategies of non-acceptance like denial and negative elaboration more often than those of acceptance in most situations, which indicated clear evidence for L1 pragmatic transfer in L2 speech act performance. In addition, J. H. Shim (2012) was interested in the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction in the development of pragmatic abilities of Korean learners of EFL. In a study in which Korean subjects were given a twelve-week period of instruction based on a systematic analysis of responses to praise by English native speakers in DCT, they were found to respond to L2 praise by using acceptance strategies more often than they did before instruction, which suggested that there were positive effects of L2 instruction on the promotion of pragmatic competence in the act of compliment response.

Finally, despite a plethora of research in L2 pragmatics, there exist few studies that looked into what goes on inside learners' mind during speech act performance. That is, most studies focused on determining learners' pragmatic competence through comparing them with native speakers in the performance of various speech acts. In doing so, they relied heavily on elicitation methods like DCTs or role-plays to gather speech act data. Resulting data represented learners' performance in terms of strategies or semantic formulas realizing a specific act in contexts, not offering any information on what they think, feel or do in speech act production. As a result, many existing speech act studies were unable to tell learners' cognitive, decision-making processes involved in speech act behavior (Cohen, 1996b; Faerch & Kasper, 1987; Robinson, 1991). Cohen and Olshtain (1994) were among many scholars to stress a clear, definite need for an investigation into such mental processes occurring during speech act production

by using verbal data, arguing that "only through verbal report are researchers able to tap some of these cognitive processes by calling the learners' attention to them" (p. 149). From this it follows that any speech act study using verbal data as a source of information can tell about learners' decision-making or problem-solving processes involved in speech act performance, and further can contribute much to a solid understanding of interlanguage pragmatics. Maybe Robinson (1991) was among the first to address his concern about the mental, internal processes of Japanese learners during the production of the act of refusals. In a study in which Japanese female college students were asked to verbally report everything that came into their mind while responding to DCT, it was found that Japanese subjects had much difficulty realizing the act of L2 rejections in clear, direct manners as they were taught not to say 'No' explicitly from early childhood. It is clear that verbal data in the study provided valuable information on Japanese subjects' mental processes involved in speech act behavior, which would be unobtainable from DCT data alone. Similarly, Cohen and Olshtain (1993) examined the decision-making processes of Hebrew learners of EFL in the production of speech acts such as requests, apologies and complaints. They conducted a study in which Hebrew subjects participated in role-plays with English native speakers in various situations requiring the use of the three acts, and were asked a set of questions about the factors affecting the production of those acts. It was reported that while subjects made a general assessment of their utterances, they had no plan for what vocabulary items and grammatical structures to use before production.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Four language groups participated in the study: Korean learners of EFL, Korean learners of ESL, English native speakers and Korean native speakers. A first group of EFL Korean learners consisted of 10 college students (5 males and 5 females) enrolled at one major university in this country. They majored in English education as juniors or seniors. Their self-rated L2 proficiency ranged from intermediate-low to intermediate-high level. Seven out of ten subjects had no opportunities to visit English-speaking countries, and nearly all subjects agreed that one serious disadvantage of English learning in Korea was the lack of opportunities for interaction with native speakers to develop speaking skills. A second group, ESL Korea learners, contained 10 college students (5 males and 5 females) enrolled at one major university in a mid-western region of the United States. They majored in various fields such as business, biology, psychology, finance, accounting, biochemistry, and astrophysics. They were all undergraduates (5 freshmen, 1 sophomore, 2 juniors and 2 seniors). Their average length of residence in America was about 4 years

and 8 months. They ranged in English proficiency from intermediate-mid to advanced level. Most subjects in this group said that one great advantage of English learning in the US was an enormous amount of exposure to L2 input anytime and anywhere.

A third group consisted of native speakers of English, serving as informants for L2, English, and providing L2 baseline data. They were 10 American students (5 males and 5 females) studying in the same university as the second group of ESL Korean learners. Nine were undergraduates (3 freshmen, 3 sophomores, 2 juniors and 1 senior) and one a graduate. The subjects in the group majored in various fields including biology, Spanish, informatics, education and among others. Finally, a fourth group included Korean native speakers, serving as informants for L1, Korean, and establishing L1 baseline data. Their data offered a good source of information to trace whether L2 utterances produced by Korean learners would be attributable to their L1 norms (Saito & Beecken, 1997; Yu, 2004). The group was composed of 10 Korean students (5 males and 5 females) enrolled in the same university as the first group of Korean learners of EFL. All subjects in this group were undergraduates (3 sophomores, 5 juniors and 2 seniors), majoring in Korean education. One good advantage of selecting college-level students as subjects across all four groups was that subject-sensitive variables like age, occupation and educational background were easy to control, which helped to achieve a high degree of homogeneity among samples of groups. In addition, to encourage an active, sincere participation in the study, all subjects in four groups were given some amount of money as gratuity.

2. Instrument and Procedures

For data collection in the study, three different methods were employed: open-role play, interview, and DCT. First, the open-role play was used to examine compliment response behavior by Korean learners of both EFL and ESL in various situations. In open-role plays, learners were given cards that contained descriptions of situations, specific roles to be played, and communicative goals to be achieved. After reading each card, learners were asked to play an assigned role in a given situation by interacting with English native speakers. During interactions, they had open-ended discourse which provided them with much freedom to organize talks in their own way, and led them to experience various features of natural interaction such as turn-taking, meaning negotiation and elaboration of linguistic forms (Houck & Gass, 1996; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Thus one advantage of open-role plays over DCTs is that subjects' responses from open-role plays seemed to be closer to natural speech than those from DCTs in terms of interactive features of naturally occurring speech. This was one main reason for choosing open-role plays as a main data-gathering tool in the study. As interlocutors with Korean learners during open-role plays, two native speakers of American English, one professor teaching conver-

sation courses for more than ten years in Korea and one graduate with a college degree in the US, participated in interactions with Korean subjects of EFL and Korean subjects of ESL, respectively. They were told that they should make efforts to create an atmosphere which could make subjects feel comfortable and become active in role-plays to attain a given communicative goal as much as possible. Oral production during open-role plays was tape-recorded and transcribed for a later analysis.

As for the development of situations in open-role plays, four differing situations were designed to reflect real life situations where compliments occur most often. That is, situations were developed on the basis of a strong tendency of English native speakers to place emphasis on two topics like ability and appearance in their compliment as Wolfson (1983) noted that "with respect to topic, compliments fall into two major categories-those having to do with appearance and those which comment on ability" (p. 90). Concerning the relationships between complimenters and complimentees appearing in situations of role plays, based on the findings of Wolfson (1988, 1989b) that English compliments are often exchanged between equal-status interlocutors or acquaintances rather than between strangers or intimates, four differing roles (i.e., classmate, peer, college assistant, and professor) to be played by complimenters in role plays were created. One main reason for creating all college-related roles lies in the assumption that since Korean subjects were all students in college, they had much familiarity to those roles of complimenters, so they were expected to respond naturally to the praise given by complimenters with those roles, which would contribute considerably to the collection of more accurate, valid data on the speech act of L2 compliment response (J. S. Suh, 1998; Yu, 2004). For the same reason, an effort was made to create scenarios of situations that Korean subjects were familiar with and that they might have reacted to before. The following is a summary of scenarios of four situations in open-role plays (see Appendix 1 for a full version of four situations).

Situations 1:
Responding to a classmate's compliment on haircut
Situations 2:
Responding to a peer's compliment on skills in basketball
Situations 3:
Responding to a college assistant's compliment on clothes
Situations 4:
Responding to a professor's compliment on paper

As the second data-gathering tool, interviews were used to look into Korean learners' mental, decision-making processes involved in response to L2 compliment. Right after interactions with English native speakers in open-role plays, the learners of both EFL and ESL were asked a few questions about their response to praise in each situation (e.g., 'you just responded to praise in this situation, and can you tell why and on what basis you responded in

that way?' or 'What do you think when you responded to praise in the situation?'). During interviewing, individual subjects were instructed to recall and tell whatever they had thought or done when responding to praise in each one of the four situations of role plays. Such retrospective verbalizations were seen to offer richer and more insightful information on subjects' mental, decision-making processes occurring in response to praise than concurrent verbalizations since the former leads them to edit or analyze what they experience during speech act production whereas the latter usually does not (Cohen, 1996b; Faerch & Kasper, 1987). For accuracy and convenience, verbal reporting was done in subjects' L1, Korean, which was audio-taped for a later analysis.

As the third data-gathering method, DCT was used to investigate the performance of compliment response by native speakers of both English and Korean. As stated before, data from two native speaker groups are normative in that L2 baseline data from English native speakers determine the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers in speech act performance while data from Korean native speakers help to see whether learner performance is similar to or different from L1 speech behavior. Further, DCT was thought to be an appropriate, data-collection tool to serve a normative function since it can provide information on common, stereotypical speech patterns and compare between native and non-native speakers in speech act performance in fast, effective ways as Beebe and Cummings (1996) pointed out that DCTs do a good job in "studying the stereotypical, perceived requirements for a socially appropriate response" (p. 80). This is a primary reason for choosing DCT to collect data from two native speaker groups in the study. Regarding the development of DCT, four situations used in open-role plays were included into DCT, and two differing versions were created: English and Korean. An English version of DCT was given to native speakers of English while a Korean version of DCT to native speakers of Korean. Both groups of native speakers were instructed to read the description of individual situations carefully, and write down everything that they would most likely say in each situation in either English or Korean. As an example, the following are English and Korean versions of situation 1 in DCT.

Situation 1:
You just got a haircut. One of your classmates meets you at the mall, and says to you: "You look like another person. Your haircut is fabulous!"
You would reply:

상황 1:
당신이 미용실에서 머리를 손질하고 나오는데 과 급우와 마주쳤고 급우는 다음처럼 당신에게 말합니다: "난 네가 다른 사람처럼 보여 못 알아 볼 뻔 했어. 머리손질이 정말로 기막히게 잘 된 것 같아!"
당신은 다음과 같이 응답 합니다:

3. Data Analysis

There were three different sets of data collected in the study: oral data from open-role plays, verbal data from interviews and written data from DCT. First, to answer research question 1 (i.e., What are similarities and differences between Korean learners of English and native speakers of English in the performance of compliment response in various situations?), oral data from role plays were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were analyzed to identify the act of compliment response by learners. Similarly, written data from DCT were analyzed to spot the act of compliment response by two groups of native speakers. All identified compliment responses from role plays and DCT were coded into a variety of strategies according to Chen's (1993) and Yu's (2004) coding schemes. For clarity and simplicity, those strategies were further classified into four super strategies (i.e., 'Acceptance,' 'Amendment,' 'Non-acceptance,' and 'No acknowledgement') proposed by Chen (1993) (see Appendix 2 for definitions of individual super strategies). Then to see the differences between Korean learners and English native speakers in their performance of compliment response during role plays, a statistical technique, one-way ANOVA, was conducted with the level of significance set at .05.

Second, to get an answer to research question 2 (i.e., What are EFL and ESL Korean learners' cognitive, decision-making processes involved in response to L2 compliment in various situations?), verbal data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed on the basis of content analysis (Merriam, 1988; Wolcott, 1994). That is, transcripts were read carefully and repeatedly with a focus on content in order to find out recurring themes involving Korean learners' thoughts, feelings or behavior occurring in the performance of L2 compliment response in contexts. This procedure led to a list of categories which best represented what they had experienced while responding to L2 praise in situations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Comparison Among Four Language Groups in Compliment Response

An analysis of data from open-role plays and DCT yielded 188 compliment responses by native and non-native speakers across four situations (i.e., 106 compliment responses by Korean learners of EFL and ESL, and 82 compliment responses by native speakers of English and Korean). All compliment responses were categorized into four main strategies, 'Acceptance,' 'Amendment,' 'Non-acceptance,' and 'No acknowledgement.' Then to find answers to research question 1 (i.e., What are similarities and differences between Korean learners of English and English native speakers in the realization of compliment response in situations?), a comparison was made

among four groups in response to compliment across four situations, which was summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Four Language Groups in Compliment
Response Across Situations

D.V.		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
	Between Gr.	13.700	3	4.567	4.349	.010*
S1	Within Gr.	37.800	36	1.050		
	Total	51.500	39			
	Between Gr.	2.675	3	.892	1.922	.143
S2	Within Gr.	16.700	36	.464		
	Total	19.375	39			
	Between Gr.	13.275	3	4.425	3.839	.018*
S3	Within Gr.	41.500	36	1.153		
	Total	54.775	39			
	Between Gr.	0.000	3	0.000		
S4	Within Gr.	0.000	36	0.000		
	Total	0.000	39			

Note. D.V.=Dependent Variables, S1=Acceptance, S2=Amendment, S3=Nonacceptance, S4=No acknowledgment,
*$p < .05$

Table 1 showed statistically significant differences among four language groups in the realization of the act of compliment response across situations. More specifically, four language groups differed from one another in the use of two strategies (i.e., acceptance strategies and non-acceptance strategies) in response to praise throughout situations. Further to figure out major contributors to the significant ANOVA values, the Scheffee was computed. There were statistically significant differences between Korean learners of ESL and native speakers of Korean in the use of acceptance strategies across situations during the performance of compliment response ($p = .014$). This means that the ESL learner group indeed made more frequent use of acceptance strategies than the Korean native speaker group in response to praise throughout situations, and was able to get closer to L2 socio-cultural norms, staying away from the influence of L1 norms in L2 use. Also statistically significant differences existed between native speakers of English and native speakers of Korean in the use of non-acceptance strategies across situations in response to compliment ($p = .020$). That is, the Korean native speaker group used non-acceptance strategies more often than the English native speaker group in the realization of compliment response. This finding made good sense in light of a clear contrast in socio-cultural norms of speech act patterns between two cultures (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Eisenson, Auer, & Irwin, 1965).

Despite no statistically significant differences between Korean learners of EFL and Korean learners of ESL on the one hand, and between Korean learners of English and native speakers of English on the other in response to praise across situations, it would be interesting and meaningful to take an in-depth look at the similarities and differences

between them in some more detail. Table 2 showed the overall distribution of four main strategies used by four language groups in response to praise across situations.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Four Strategies of Compliment
Responses by Four Language Groups Across Situations (%)

Types of Strategies	EFL	ESL	ENS	KNS
S1 (Acceptance)	68	70	86	53
S2 (Amendment)	16	9	7	2
S3 (Non-acceptance)	16	21	7	45
S4 (No acknow.)	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Note. No acknow.=No acknowledgment, ENS=English Native Speakers, KNS=Korean Native Speakers

According to Table 2, Korean learners of both EFL and ESL preferred acceptance strategies to non-acceptance strategies in response to L2 compliment across all situations (68% and 70%, respectively). It was Korean native speaker group that used strategies of acceptance least often among four groups. Further given that in principle, amendment strategies recognize the complimentary force in utterances and send the message of positive remarks or evaluations in situations requiring the performance of compliment response, it would make sense to incorporate amendment strategies into acceptance strategies, which can produce 84% in EFL learner group, 79% in ESL learner group, 93% in English native speaker group and 55% in Korean native speaker group. From this it follows that overall, the most preferred way to respond to L2 praise in the two learner groups was to accept it through expressing appreciation or gratitude (Herbert, 1986; Pomerantz, 1978). The high occurrence of acceptance strategies in both learner groups was somewhat hard to understand (Chen, 1993; Yu, 2004). One possible explanation is that as compared to the traditional Korean society that educated and controlled people with Confucianism and collectivism without interruption from the outside world, due mainly to huge advances in information technology, young people in this country are now constantly exposed to the globalization of Western culture, particularly American culture, which has had great impact on their thoughts, feeling and behavior including language use. In this sense, young EFL Korean college students in this study were active in receiving the praise given to them through acceptance rather than denying or rejecting it. That is, as a result of having easy and rapid access to a variety of visual, auditory L2 input or information on computers, smartphones or the Internet, the EFL learner group must have had plentiful opportunities for understanding and learning how to realize the acts of compliment and compliment response by native speakers of English, not to mention the ESL learner group with enormous exposure to input and interaction in L2 community. The following are some examples showing the use of acceptance strategies by

two learner groups across four situations to respond to L2 compliment:

(In situation 1, Responding to a classmate's compliment on haircut, EFL learner #1)
NS: You look really good, look really different …
    Really looks good on you.
NNS: Thank you too much. But I just follow the TV
    stars on the 2 blocks of men-cut.

(In situation 2, Responding to a peer's praise on basketball skills, ESL learner #2)
NS: You're such a good shooter and player.
NNS: Oh, yeah. Thank you. I practice a lot.

(In situation 3, Responding to a college assistant's praise on clothes, EFL learner #2)
NS: Oh, your sweater's really nice. You look really
    good. You look great in it.
NNS: Thank you for me. Thank you so much. I just
    bought it in on-line shopping. …

(In situation 4, Responding to a professor's compliment on paper, ESL learner #3)
NS: It's just organized and I can understand it.
    It's very nice. I think you really did a good job.
NNS: Oh, yes. Thank you so much. I feel satisfied.

One thing of interest here is that no notable differences existed between the EFL learner group and the ESL learner group in response to L2 praise throughout situations. Both groups of subjects (i.e., 68% of EFL learners and 70% of ESL learners) chose acceptance strategies as their most preferred strategy for response to L2 praise. Given great advantages of ESL learning environments favorable to the success of L2   learning, the similarities between two learner groups in speech act realization were rather hard to explain. That is, it was surprising to observe the outstanding performance of the EFL learner group as compared to the ESL learner group. One possible explanation is that as the EFL learner group with all juniors and seniors majoring in English education had a strong willingness to become an English teacher, they were believed to study hard to be communicatively proficient L2 users, which could lead them to develop sufficient pragmatic knowledge about L2 speech act performance.

Concerning the differences between Korean learners of English and native speakers of English in response to compliment, they differed from each other in two main ways. Most important, 16% of EFL learners and 21% of ESL learners adopted strategies of non-acceptance across situations as compared to only 7% of native speakers who chose them in response to compliment. This indicated that some subjects in both learner groups tried to respond to L2 praise in much the same way that they usually do in L1 interaction, which suggested that L1 effects were operative in their speech act performance (Saito & Beecken, 1997; Yu, 2004). Interestingly, in many of non-acceptance strat-

egies, subjects in the two learner groups sent a message of self-denigration combined with expressions of thanking or disagreement, which rarely occurred in the native speaker data as seen below from (1) to (6):

(In situation 2, Responding to a peer's compliment on skills in basketball)
(1) Well, I only played for 1 year. I'm not really good at basketball. (EFL learner #6)
(2) Thank you. I'm not good at that time. But I practiced a lot. I become a little get some ability to play basketball. (EFL learner #8)
(3) Oh, I'm? Thanks so much. I'm just beginning. I'm not an expert in basketball like Mike Jordan. (ESL learner #2)
(4) I'm not that long. Actually I think I started, maybe from middle school. I'm not sure I'm a good player. I'm not good at playing. (ESL learner #5)
(5) Thanks. I guess it's my height that helps. (Native speaker #1)
(6) Thanks, I grew up in a basketball town. (Native speaker #9)

One remarkable thing about the data is the co-occurrence of positive remarks like thanking expressions with utterances with a negative meaning of self-denigration (J. S. Suh, 2017). According to Chen (1993), thanking expressions in the non-acceptance strategies above were produced not to show acceptance or appreciation of praise in any sincere manner, but to just acknowledge the fact that a compliment was simply paid. Further, right after an acknowledgement, Korean learners must have felt a strong need to send their real message of politeness by making themselves denigrated or humiliated just as they usually do in interactions with Koreans (Yu, 2004). Hence, the combination of thanking and self-denigration expressions in the learner data can be seen as one typical example of non-acceptance strategies occurring in L1 interaction, and is good evidence for L1 negative pragmatic transfer (Saito & Beecken, 1997; J. S. Suh, 2017; Yu, 2004).

Another notable difference between the learner groups and the native speaker group involves the total number of words used to realize the act of compliment response across situations (i.e., 714 words by the EFL group, 678 words by the ESL group, and 315 words by the native speaker group). This indicates that both learner groups tended to talk much more than the native speaker group in response to praise. The following are some examples ((1) – (6)) showing learners' talkativeness unlike native speakers:

(In situation 4, Responding to a professor's compliment on paper)
(1) Oh, I appreciate such your idea. What kind of interesting points are you asking me? I think I'm not good at the paper. I don't know why. (EFL learner #2)
(2) Yes (Thanks). Actually I did. Ah, it's important to

me to get good grade. So I put a lot of time into it. And I'm so happy that you're saying that. (EFL learner #4)
(3) Thank you. Did you like it? I did quite a lot of research and tried to think about it very critically in terms of kinds of arguments that I made and support I wrote on the paper. (ESL learner #6)
(4) Oh, thank you very much. You said it was better than you expected. So your previous expect was horrible. (ESL learner #7)
(5) Thank you so much. I worked really hard on it. (Native speaker #3)
(6) Thank you. That means a lot. (Native speaker #7)

As seen in these examples, though the learners were able to receive compliment by showing appreciation or gratitude as part of their response, they tended to be talkative in the rest of realizations of compliment response. Such talking-much behavior is known as 'waffling' which involves "excessive use of linguistic forms … to achieve a specific pragmatic goal" (Edmondson & House, 1991, pp. 273-274), and can make learners sound pragmatically deficient. When talking more, they are likely to give more information than required, and some of the information offered may appear superfluous, redundant or even irrelevant to interlocutors. This can make the intended meaning of an utterance unclear and blurry, cause interlocutors to have difficulty capturing it accurately, and "even work against their will to make successful communication happen" (J. S. Suh, 2011, p. 15; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986). Thus, Korean subjects' verbosity here is one source of L2 pragmatic errors, and shows deviations from native speakers' speech act norms.

2. Learners' Decision-Making Processes in Speech Act Production

To determine Korean learners' decision-making processes involved in the production of L2 compliment response, right after interactions with English native speakers in open-role plays, they were asked several questions about what they had experienced while responding to L2 praise in a given situation. Their verbal report was audio-taped and transcribed. A content-analysis of verbal data yielded a set of categories that represented the learners' mental, decision-making processes involved in response to L2 praise. The categories are 'desire to say thanks,' 'discourse skills,' 'association,' 'comparison,' 'automatism,' and 'doubting.'

Among categories, the most frequently mentioned was 'desire to say thanks.' Quite a few subjects told that it was kind of automatic response to say thanks to a complimenter to express appreciation or gratitude simply due to the fact that they were given praise irrespective of whether or not the praise paid to them was true, or whether or not they liked it. EFL subject #7 pointed out that "since praise usually made people feel good, I wanted to express my thanks

first. Even in Korean interactions where praise did not occur often, I made it a rule to say thanks whenever I got praise from others." Also ESL subject #8 said that "since my interlocutor gave his praise about my haircut, I just responded with appreciation of it." ESL subject #10 added "I really wanted to express my thanks for the praise." The earlier finding that Korean learners of both EFL and ESL preferred to use acceptance strategies across situations in response to L2 praise may be understood by their strong desire to show appreciation of the praise paid to them in a given situation. That is, such a desire might have helped Korean subjects stay away from their L1 norms of speech behavior, and instead, naturally turn to the 'human nature' that the most appropriate, best response to praise is to say thanks or express appreciation in either L1 or L2 use.

As the second most often mentioned category, 'discourse skills,' Korean learners here were concerned about the continuation of interaction while responding to L2 praise. They worried about whether they might stop conversation or create communication breakdowns by providing only one short, brief response like 'thanks' or 'thank you.' In fear of this, many learners tended to offer information, ask questions, or say something that was related to the talk in a specific situation as shown in the following:

The praise about good shooting led me to say thanks almost automatically, and at the same time, I paid a compliment back by saying "I think you are too" or asked a question like "How long have you played basketball? (EFL subject #9)

After offering my response to praise which was quite short, I said "I love basketball, so every weekend I play basketball with friends" to make a dialogue keep going. (EFL subject #10)

Rather than simply saying 'thank you' as response to praise, it would be better to say more by providing some information or explanations to maintain the conversation. (ESL subject #3)

The learners' efforts to maintain interaction may result in long negotiations or extensive elaborations during compliment response which would help "signal solidarity and avoid confrontation" (Wolfson, 1988, p. 33) among equal-status interlocutors, non-intimates or acquaintances. As mentioned before, however, such efforts with lengthy negotiation, extensive elaborations or frequent repetition can also lead the learners to sound verbose, which would weaken the intended meaning of utterance, and thus impair the success of communication (Edmondson & House, 1991; Ellis, 1994).

In the third category, 'association,' the learners made connections between their personal life experiences and situations in open-role plays. During the performance of compliment response, they tried to respond to praise on the basis of recollections of personal experiences in the past that they had reacted to before. As ESL learner #7

remarked, "As I'm now taking a course on philosophy, I try to be often considerate and careful about everything. So when I got the praise about my haircut, I wanted to know exactly what made me look different." Similarly, another ESL learner #9 commented that "I have lived here in Bloomington for years, and whenever I go for a haircut, I'm not satisfied with it. I just based my response to praise in the situation on such experiences." Also another EFL subject #3 told that "My response here is not to say thanks, but to show hesitation or ask questions. The reason for this is because I have much familiarity with the situation in Korea, and apply what I usually do in my country (i.e., show hesitation)." According to ESL learner #3, "Since I have lots of assignments these days, and struggle with them, based on this current experience, I decide to respond with 'thank you' as the professor in the situation acknowledges my hard working."

In the fourth category, 'comparison,' Korean learners responded to L2 praise on the basis of a comparison between Korean culture and American culture. For instance, ESL learner #6, who knew about the difference between two cultures in speech behavior, said that "unlike Korean culture where when being given praise, it is OK to say nothing or deny it, I know I should accept praise 100% in American culture. Otherwise, I would make a complimenter feel embarrassed." Likewise, another ESL subject #10 added that "I tried hard to respond to the praise in a way accepted by Americans by offering sufficient information to the partner. This was made possible by my knowledge of American way of responding to compliment." Still there were several other EFL subjects who realized L2 compliment response with a focus on the comparison between two cultures. EFL subject #1 told that "In Korean society, people often say "I'm flattered" when given a compliment, but such is not the case in American society. I keep this in mind all the time during role plays." Also according to EFL subject #4 who responded to the praise by professor in situation 4, "It would be almost impossible for me to say anything to professor in a Korean situation because saying something here means I am impolite or rude. As Americans differ from Koreans in the way of treating compliment, I try to be active in talking, not to mention saying thanks as a response to compliment."

As for the fifth category, 'automatism,' among Korean subjects who used acceptance strategies mainly through thanking expressions in response to L2 praise during role-plays, many of them had no hesitation in saying that their response was quite automatic or mechanical without any thoughts or plan. The following are some examples from the data.

When given praise, I tend to respond by expressing my thanks, which is habitual and planless. (ESL subject #1)

As a response to compliment, I wanted to express appreciation by saying "Thank you so much," which almost came out thoughtlessly. (ESL subject #10)

I expressed my thanks for the praise, and the reason for this was because I simply did it automatically. I would do the same thing in L1 interaction. (EFL subject #3)

My first reaction to the situation was that I said 'thanks' almost automatically. (EFL subject #5)

In the last category, 'doubting,' the learners were uncertain about the sincerity or truth of the praise given to them, and responded to it through either questioning or denial. EFL subject #3 mentioned that "the reason for not responding with acceptance in the situation was because, in opposition to the praise about my basketball skills, in fact, I wasn't good at basketball. This mismatch made me feel uneasy, and led me to deny the praise with non-acceptance expressions." Similarly, another EFL subject #5 reported that "My first response to praise was saying nothing since I couldn't believe it. So I doubted the truth of praise by saying "Oh, like Michael Jordan?"" Another EFL subject #6 added "I had some difficulty accepting the praise about my basketball skills since I didn't play basketball well. That's why I responded with doubts, not with acceptance."

In sum, on the basis of the six categories that characterized Korean learners' mental, decision-making processes involved in response to L2 praise, it is evident that they underwent a variety of mental, cognitive activities underlying this speech act realization. When responding to L2 praise in a given situation, the learners showed some desire to express appreciation merely because they were given a compliment, created lengthy responses to make interaction keep moving, and made connections between personal life experiences and situations of role plays that they were faced with. In addition, they responded to L2 praise by comparing between L1 and L2 cultures, casting doubts on the truth of praise, or simply offering mechanical responses driven by automatic reactions. It is important to note that the learners did not go through every one of the six categories in a neat, predictable manner, and instead, experienced one category or combinations of categories in various orders in order to realize the speech act of L2 compliment response according to different situations (J. S. Suh, 1998).

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine Korean learners' pragmatic abilities in the speech act of compliment response by comparing their responses to praise with those of English native speakers in situations and determining their decision-making processes involved in speech act realization. Thus, a study was conducted in which four language groups (i.e., EFL Korean learners, ESL Korean learners, English native speakers and Korean native speakers) participated as subjects, and data were gathered via open-role play, interview and DCT. According to the results of the study, most important, there were no statistically significant differences in the performance of   compliment response between Korean learners of English and English native speakers on the one hand, and between EFL Korean learners and ESL Korean learners on the other. That is, Korean learners of both EFL and ESL responded to L2 praise in a way similar to English native speakers mainly by adopting acceptance strategies throughout situations. Also two learner groups were much similar to each other in response to L2 praise across situations by using acceptance strategies more often than non-acceptance strategies. In particular, the outstanding performance by EFL learners was surprising and explained by both their enthusiasm for becoming English teachers and their easy, fast access to a large amount of L2 input or materials on computers, smartphones or the Internet, which seems conducive to the learning and use of various L2 communicative acts including compliment and compliment response. Meanwhile, it was also found that two learner groups made more frequent use of non-acceptance strategies than English native speakers across situations, which suggested that some learners in the two groups were influenced by their L1 norms during speech act performance (Saito & Beecken, 1997; J. S. Suh, 2017; Yu, 2004). Interestingly, the two learner groups tended to talk more than the English native speaker group when responding to L2 praise. Finally, the learners in the two groups were shown to pass through a variety of decision-making processes (i.e., 'desire to say thanks,' 'discourse skills,' 'association,' 'comparison,' 'automatism,' and 'doubting') during the performance of L2 compliment response. This indicated that the act of responding to praise in L2 was not a simple, mechanical reflex, but involved various, simultaneous actions of different parts of our cognitive systems.

As for the limitation of the study, first of all, the number of each language group was small, which may not give a good justification to conduct statistical analyses. Second, subjects in each language group were selected by convenience sampling, not random sampling, which would impair the generalizability of the findings of the study. Nonetheless, the good news is that unlike common findings of previous studies on L2 pragmatics (e.g., Al-Zumor, 2011; Castro, 2005; M. Y. Chun, 2010; B. H. Chung & S. J. Min, 2013; Worathumrong & Luksaneeyanawin, 2016), most Korean learners of both EFL and ESL in the study were similar to English native speakers in that they were able to respond to L2 praise with acceptance strategies expressing appreciation or gratitude, which clearly indicated that the learners' preferred way of responding to L2 praise was by acceptance, not non-acceptance. The bad news, however, is that they tended to talk much in this speech act performance, and end up with lengthy realizations of compliment response unlike native speakers. As verbosity can negatively influence a transmission of intended meaning of utterance in contexts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; J. S. Suh, 2011), learners' talking-much behavior has been viewed as one type of pragmatic failure in L2 pragmatics, so needs to draw much attention from both leaners and teachers. That is, learners should

be taught to know that talking much in speech act realization may lead to deviations from L2 norms of speech patterns. In this sense, future research needs to take an in-depth look at learner verbosity in speech act performance in order to provide effective ways to help learners promote awareness of talking-much behavior and to guide them in realizing the act of L2 compliment response pragmatically appropriately with a focus on a clear, smooth transmission of the illocutionary force of this speech act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; J. S. Suh, 2011).

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APPENDIX 1
A Full Version of Four Situations Used in Open-Role Plays

Situation 1)
You just got a haircut. One of your classmates meets you at the mall, and says to you: "You look like another person. Your haircut is fabulous!"
You would reply:

Situation 2)
You are playing basketball with your friends in the college. One friend says: "Wow, you're such a good shooter and player!"
You would reply:

Situation 3)
You are wearing a sweater. A secretary of your department happens to see you on your way to class, and says: "What a nice sweater! You look great in it"
You would reply:

Situation 4)
You submitted a term paper to your professor the other day. Today your professor returns it to you, and says: "I think you really did a good job!"
You would reply:

APPENDIX 2
Definitions and Examples of Four Super Strategies (Taken From Chen, 1993)

Super Strategy 1: Acceptance Strategies
Utterances that recognize the status of a preceding remark as a compliment
1. Appreciation: "Thank you, appreciate it, thanks."
2. Agreement: "Yeah, I think it went well, too."
3. Comment: "I put a lot of work into it last night."
4. Expression of gladness/pleasure: "I'm glad you liked it."
5. Association: "Thank you! I'm glad you liked it."

Super Strategy 2: Amendment Strategies
In recognizing the status of a preceding remark as a compliment, the speaker tries to amend its complimentary force.
1. Return: "You play very well, too."
2. Question: "Is that so? Do you really think that I played very well?"
3. Association: "It's only O.K. I think yours is pretty good."

Super Strategy 3: Non-acceptance Strategies
Utterances that deny, question, or joke about the content of the compliment or avoid responding directly to the praise
1. Disagreement: "no."
2. Disagreement and Denigration: "I'm older than uglier." "It's not that nice at all." "I know I bored you."
3. Thanking and Denigration: "Thanks. But I know I'm older and don't look nice." "Thank you. But the sweater is not that nice."
4. Combination strategies: "Thank you! But I'm embarrassed."

Super Strategy 4: No Acknowledgement
The case in which the speaker chooses not to response to the compliment bestowed upon himself or her-
self
1. No Acknowledgement
2. No Acknowledgement followed by Denigration
3. No Acknowledgement followed by Return