

Refusal Speech Act Response: Differences between South Koreans and North Korean Refugees in Inducing Speech Acts and Directness

Haiyoung Lee

youngewha@ewha.ac.kr

Ewha Womans University, Korea

Bolami Lee

blee0927@korea.kr

The National Institute of the Korean Language, Korea

Hee Chung Chun

heechung.chun@rutgers.edu

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, United State

ABSTRACT

The majority of previous studies on North Korean Refugees (NKR) focused on the linguistic heterogeneity of pronunciation and vocabulary use. Only a handful of studies examined differences between South Koreans' (SK) and NKR's language use and they concluded that NKR prefer direct refusal speech acts rather than indirect ones. However, we hypothesized that NKR's preference on direct refusal speech acts would vary depending on the types of inducing speech acts; speech acts that induces refusal expressions. 47 SK and 43 NKR answered three questions after watching video clips of short conversation in refusal situations. The results were statistically analyzed with independent sample *t*-tests and multi response analyses, revealing that NKR preference on direct refusal speech acts varied depending on the types of inducing speech act. In addition, multi response analyses indicated that the NKR and SK evaluated the same rejecter's personality differently and that this difference may result in miscommunication. Lastly, NKR's evaluations on the refusal speech acts did not change over time, as NKR who stayed less than a year in South Korea and those who stayed more than five years did not show significant difference in their evaluation. This result suggests that explicit education on this may be required. Additionally, it is worth to note that current research confirms that SK and NKR react differently toward expressions used only in North Korea, and, therefore, not only the refusal strategy, but also the refusal expression itself are both important for successful communication. Additionally, the results showed that refusing with non-avoidable and non-personal reasons were perceived more positively than personal reasons. These findings suggest that for successful communication to happen between two groups with different linguistic backgrounds, pragmatic awareness in language use is helpful.

Keywords: language Use; Refusal Speech Act; Inducing Speech Act; directness; North Korean Refugees

INTRODUCTION

The gap in language use between North Korean refugees (NKR^s)¹ who settled in South Korea and South Koreans (SK^s) may cause miscommunication among them. A number of studies has reported that NKR^s desire to become fluent in the standard Korean language of South Korea (Chung, 2001; Moon, 2006; Yang, 2013; Kwon, 2014; Gim, 2014). However, their actual language use appears quite different in their pronunciation, accents, and vocabulary use from those of SK^s which may have negative impact on NKR^s' adaptation to South Korea. In particular, the NKR^s' use of pragmatic features (Rose, 2005, p. 394) does not match with what is preferred in the South Korean discourse community, and this gap may lead NKR^s to pragmatic failures. Unfortunately, these are mostly not perceived as linguistic failures, but as personality flaws and thus, NKR^s may struggle during their adaptation process to the South Korean society.

Most current studies about NKR^s' language focused on the most distinctive feature of their language, linguistic heterogeneity of pronunciation and vocabulary, displaying how different NKR^s' language is from SK^s. However, having a perfect pronunciation or using a homogeneous vocabulary as SK^s would not solve miscommunication issues between SK^s and NKR^s. Therefore, difference in pragmatics, caused by matters other than the pronunciation or vocabulary heterogeneity must be taken into account. That is we have to be aware; that the language gap between SK^s and NKR^s resulting from differences in their life styles, cultural differences, or the NKR^s' misuse of pragmatic features may lead to pragmatic failures.

SK^s and NKR^s display pragmatic differences when they participate in speech acts that are face-threatening, such as refusals, complaints, or criticisms. If we can determine in which context NKR^s show pragmatic difference from SK^s and face pragmatic difficulty or even failure, we will be able to support their adaptation to the South Korean linguistic community.

We will describe differences between SK^s and NKR^s in their language use, especially when they engage in refusal speech act, which previous studies have characterized as the most difficult act for NKR^s (Moon, 2005; Yang & Kwon, 2007; Jeon, 2010). These past investigations centered on the two groups' production differences in speech acts. However, since mutual understanding starts by understanding each other's linguistic habits, there is a need to consider differences in their perception of these speech acts as well as its production. Thus, the current research analyzes SK^s' and NKR^s' difference in their perception of language use as a hearer's perspective.

Previous research (Jeon, 2010; Ko & Kim, 2013) has stated that NKR^s prefer direct refusal speech acts in contrast to SK^s. The current study rests on the belief that these differences are not only based on directness, but also differ by the type of inducing speech acts. An inducing speech act in this study is defined as a speech act which leads the counterpart of the conversation to utter refusal expressions as a reaction toward the compensation, request or favor. The research questions are as follow:

¹ North Korean Refugees (NKR^s) in this paper are defined as North Koreans who fled to South Korea. In 2017, 30,490 NKR^s (8,848 males and 21,642 females) have settled in South Korea at the time of this writing (Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1440>). The number of NKR^s has steadily increased since the 2000's and communication problems between NKR^s and their South Korean neighbors have become important social issues in the country.

- 1) Do SKs' and NKR's perceive appropriateness and unpleasantness of refusal expressions differently when the types and directness of inducing speech acts vary?
- 2) Do SKs and NKR's perceive the rejecter's personality differently when the types and directness of inducing speech acts vary?
- 3) Does the NKR's length of stay in South Korea have an impact on their perception of appropriateness and unpleasantness of refusal expressions? Would it differ on the basis of the types and directness of inducing speech acts?

BACKGROUND

According to Chung (2001), who made an initial attempt to conduct research on NKR's linguistic adaptation to South Korea, 90.15% of 90 NKR's struggled due to language barriers. Moon (2006) organized a survey and in-depth interviews with 100 NKR's and concluded that they were psychologically intimidated due to linguistic differences and thus felt obligated to learn the language used in South Korea. Kim (2005) worked with NKR's and South Korean experts² in South-North Korean relations. Contrary to the expert group's report, NKR's generally recognized the importance of linguistic heterogeneity and reported that they have suffered from linguistic differences. The results demonstrate general aspects of issues related to NKR's linguistic adaptation, but they do not identify actual differences in specific language use of SKs and NKR's nor their reasons.

Previous investigations on the linguistic heterogeneity of South and North Korea, especially case studies, scrutinized the differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Only a few investigations have focused on language use, which mostly reported that NKR's prefer direct expressions. For instance, in Jeon (2010)'s survey of 115 NKR's, 34.1% of them identified refusal expressions as most difficult ones to use, followed by compliments (21%), apologizing (20%), and greeting (24%). About 92% of NKR's reported that they and SKs utilized a different refusal speech act strategy and 33% preferred a direct refusal speech act while most SKs favored an indirect one. In the same research, NKR's also reported that they felt troubled because their language was different from SKs (Jeon, 2010, pp. 12-13). These findings corroborate with Moon's (2006) results. NKR's in this study reported that they felt offended when SKs used euphemisms, such as “나중에 연락할게 *najunge yeollakhalke* (I will call you later)” or “연락 남길게 *yeollak namgilke* (I will leave a message)” following their requests. They did not perceive these expressions as refusals and misunderstood the SKs' intentions. It was also mentioned that in North Korea, people tend to use direct expressions rather than euphemisms when they have to use refusal expressions (Moon, 2006, pp. 128-135). Yang and Kwon (2007) also reported cases when NKR's misunderstood SKs' indirect rejections. NKR's expressed a sense of betrayal and were displeased when they faced SKs' indirect refusals. The researchers additionally reported that NKR's evaluated SKs negatively, even as “defrauders” when indirect speech acts were used (pp. 468-469).

While previous studies concentrated on the speaker of the refusal speech act, this study focuses on the “reception of refusal”. We hypothesized that an inducing speech act, which leads to refusal expressions plays a crucial role in the difference between SKs' and NKR's reactions toward that speech act, as well as the expression's directness. As prior research brought to light, NKR's may be

² These experts were SKs with more chances to interact with North Koreans or with unification issue experiences, due to their occupation or education. Out of them, 96% had visited North Korea and met people there.

uncomfortable with indirect refusals, which are known to be SKs' preferred refusal strategy. On the other hand, SKs can also feel offended when NKR refuse with direct expressions. These emotional judgments based on the difference of interpreting expressions are likely to cause more severe misunderstandings than using disparate pronunciation and vocabulary³. Hence, we conduct research on SKs' and NKRs' reactions toward a refusal speech act with the aim to foster communication between these two groups. The present research is distinctive from previously conducted speaker-centric studies as it is listener-oriented, focusing on their interpretations of and reactions to the refusal speech act⁴. Additionally, this leads to identification on the cause of NKRs' sociolinguistic miscommunication and misunderstandings in South Korea.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

In this study, 90 participants (43 NKRs and 47 SKs) answered a set of video-based questions. As access to NKRs was limited, all NKRs were recruited through a *Hana Center*⁵. To control unrelated variables, such as age and gender, NKRs were recruited first and South Korean participants matched accordingly. The NKRs' gender ratio corresponded with that of NKRs in South Korea; there are more female NKRs than males. Among 43 NKRs, 15 were male and 28 were female and 19 males and 28 females participated as SKs group. The age was also taken into account to homogenize the two groups⁶. The NKRs' length of stay in South Korea varied: Among 43 NKRs, 21 participants had stayed less than one year, 11 one year or more but less than five years, and the remaining 11 five years or more.

INSTRUMENT

A set of video-based questions was designed to determine the SKs' and NKRs' reactions toward a refusal speech act. Lee (2009)'s video-based questionnaire was adapted to develop the instrument and twelve videos were created that presented twelve situations with refusal speech acts. Participants were asked to answer three questions for each video clip. Each situation varied in the inducing speech act type, leading to expressions of refusals with differing directness. Three types of inducing speech acts - compensation, request, and favor - were combined with either direct (conclusive) expressions or indirect (roundabout) expressions. Additionally, the social distance between conversation participants may influence the judgment about the appropriateness of a given speech act. Therefore, we arranged the relationships of conversation between participants - to have one of them with a higher social status or school year than the other. Table 1 shows the survey's outline.

³ During the data-gathering process, we also encountered NKRs who had unpleasant experiences, mostly because SKs misunderstood the NKRs' direct expressions.

⁴ Lee (2009) conducted research on native Korean speakers' reactions toward Korean-language learners' refusal speech acts. Preferences toward refusal expressions varied when different types of inducing speech acts were used to elicit rejection expressions. Although the research participants differed from those in the current study, the results correspond to our research interests as this was a comparison between two groups with different linguistic cultures.

⁵ A *Hana Center* is an institution where NKRs are entrusted after they complete a three-month-long social adjustment program provided by the South Korean government. A *Hana Center* provides a two-week-long adaptation program and local adaptation support services.

⁶ Among the 43 NKRs, 18 were in their 20s, eight each in their 30s and 40s, and nine in their 50s or older. Out of the 47 SKs, 21 were in their 20s, 12 in their 30s, nine in their 40s, and five in their 50s or older.

TABLE 1. Outline of the Survey

Question number ⁷	Inducing speech act	Directness	Situation
1	Compensation	Direct	Speaker A (A) lost Speaker B (B)'s book and wants to replace it, however (B) refuses to receive the replacement.
2			(A) wants to show her thankfulness by giving a present to (B), however, (B) does not want to accept it.
3		Indirect	(A) offers to replace the damaged cloth, however, (B) refuses to accept it.
4			(A) broke (B)'s fountain pen. (A) wants to fix it for (B), however (B) refuses the offer.
5	Request	Direct	(A) requests (B) to buy a drink on her way, however, (B) refuses to do so.
6			(A) requests (B) to translate a paper into English, however, (B) does not think she can do it.
7		Indirect	(A) requests (B) to work with her, however, (B) cannot make it.
8			(A) wants (B) to open a new credit card account, however, (B) wants to refuse the offer.
9	Favor	Direct	(A) wants to buy (B) a beer, however, (B) does not accept it.
10			(A) wants to buy (B) a drink, however, (B) does not accept it.
11		Indirect	(A) suggests (B) some food that she made, however, (B) refuses to eat.
12	(A) offers a drink to (B), however, (B) refuses to drink it.		

Participants were requested to answer three questions⁸ for each video-recorded situation. The first two were designed to gather data for research question one. Participants had to answer the questions using 6-point Likert scales⁹. The third multiple-choice item pertained to the second research question. To confirm the internal consistency of the first and second question, *Cronbach's alpha* was calculated. The results indicated that the questionnaire was a reliable measure of research questions: The values were .795 for the first question and .743 for the second. Figure 1 shows an example of a set of questions.



FIGURE 1. Examples of the Survey Questions

⁷ To prevent participants from noticing the purpose of the current research, the following measures were taken: 1) the survey was randomized; 2) speech acts of thanking, complimenting, responding to compliments, and apologizing were added to the 12 situations of refusals. In total, 24 different situations were given to participants. The videos were randomly presented, using the random selection function of Microsoft Excel.

⁸ Three questions were as following: 1) What do you think about (B)'s answer?, 2) If you were (A), what would you feel when you heard (B)'s answer? 3) What do you think about (B)'s personality? Choose all that apply.

⁹ To analyze the participants' preferences accurately, 6-point Likert scales were used in the current study, since five or seven points would have allowed the participants to simply choose the median value.

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The data were collected from the 10th of March to the 6th of April 2017 through a "Google online survey form." NKRers who had just moved to South Korea were not familiar with the online survey format, and thus the *Hana Center* employees were allowed to assist participants with technical issues. However, the staff members did not comment on the contents of the questions which may have influenced the data.

The data were coded and statistically analyzed with the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)*, version 23 (IBM). As explained in previous sections, three research questions were predetermined to compare South and North Koreans' reactions toward refusal speech acts based on the types of inducing speech acts and their directness. To answer the first research question, the data were statically analyzed using independent sample *t*-tests comparing SKs' and NKRers' response differences on a refusal speech act. The second research question was statistically analyzed by multiple response analysis where participants could choose multiple answers for the personality judgment of the rejecter. Lastly, to determine whether the NKRers length of stay in South Korea influenced their reaction toward a refusal speech act, independent sample *t*-tests were again calculated.

RESULTS

RESPONSE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SKS AND NKRS REGARDING REFUSAL EXPRESSIONS

In the present research, we compared SKs' and NKRers' reactions toward six types of refusal situations with varying inducing speech acts and directness. The first research question involved comparing how inducing speech act types and the directness of refusal expressions affected SKs' and NKRers' response differences when they were asked to evaluate the appropriateness and unpleasantness of a given situation. This difference was analyzed with independent sample *t*-tests and a response close to "one" (1.00) indicated that participants evaluated the situation as "appropriate."

Contrary to previous research findings, NKRers did not simply prefer direct refusal expressions. Their preferences depended on different inducing speech acts and the variety of directness. Tables 2 and 3 display the differences in SKs' and NKRers' judgments of appropriateness and unpleasantness about the twelve refusal situations.

Two aspects from the descriptive statistic values, in particular, the mean values shown in these tables are noteworthy. First, except in the situation when the conversation participant (B) was rejecting (A)'s compensation with a direct refusal expression, SKs tended to assess the situation as more positive than NKRers, in which the responses were more "appropriate." This is because SKs perceived "일 없습니다 *il eopssumnida* (nothing to worry)¹⁰," which was used to directly reject a compensation, more negatively than NKRers. Secondly, Tables 2 and 3 show that when the rejecter refused (A)'s favor or request with indirect refusal expressions and for inevitable reasons, SKs and NKRers both assessed them as more appropriate and less unpleasant. This finding corresponds with Lee (2009, pp. 218-221). Participants evaluated the situation as more appropriate when the refusal expression was accompanied by inevitable and non-private reasons than when it was used with personal reasons or sententious expressions.

¹⁰ Unlike in South Korea, the refusal expression "*il eopssumnida* (nothing to worry)" is commonly used in North Korea.

TABLE 2. SKs' and NKR's Evaluation of the Conversation: Appropriateness

	Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p		Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p
Compensation/Direct	NKR's (43)	2.95	1.313	-0.340	.735	Compensation/Indirect	NKR's (43)	3.19	1.123	2.584	.011*
	SKs (47)	3.04	1.160				SKs (47)	2.61	1.005		
Request/Direct	NKR's (43)	2.45	1.248	1.792	.077	Request/Indirect	NKR's (43)	1.99	1.157	2.926	.005*
	SKs (47)	2.01	1.081				SKs (47)	1.40	0.640		
Favor/Direct	NKR's (43)	2.55	1.017	3.108	.003*	Favor/Indirect	NKR's (43)	2.07	1.021	0.581	.563
	SKs (47)	1.93	0.878				SKs (47)	1.94	1.150		

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level

When SKs' and NKR's responses were analyzed with an independent sample *t*-test as shown in Table 2, SKs did not assess direct rejection as less appropriate nor did NKR's evaluate direct refusal as more positive. This finding does not coincide with previous research, in which NKR's preferred direct refusal expressions over indirect ones. However, prior studies did not consider the influence of inducing speech act types and the speech act's directness. Such results are limited by their research method, as they were based on individual cases of NKR's. As shown in Table 2, SKs' and NKR's reactions differed only when the rejection was a) indirect and toward a compensation or a request and b) direct toward a favor. Direct refusal toward compensation or a request and indirect refusal toward a favor did not elicit any differences between SKs' and NKR's reactions. Even in some direct refusal situations, for instance, direct refusal toward a favor ($t = 3.108, p = .003$), NKR's evaluated the situation as less appropriate than SKs. Therefore, there is only scanty evidence that NKR's prefer direct refusal expressions in contrast to SKs.

Furthermore, the data shown in Table 3 do not correspond with previous research findings, which concluded that NKR's prefer direct refusal speech acts over indirect ones. In our study, when direct refusal was presented toward compensation and requests, although SKs' and NKR's evaluations of the unpleasantness toward the situation differed, the difference was not statistically significant. Also, even for the direct-rejection situation, NKR's evaluated the situation as more unpleasant when it was toward a favor.

TABLE 3. SKs' and NKR's Evaluation of the Conversation: Unpleasantness

	Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p		Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p
Compensation/Direct	NKR's (43)	3.01	1.203	0.045	.964	Compensation/Indirect	NKR's (43)	3.35	1.126	2.542	.013*
	SKs (47)	3.00	1.225				SKs (47)	2.78	1.010		
Request/Direct	NKR's (43)	2.27	1.088	1.520	.132	Request/Indirect	NKR's (43)	1.87	1.070	2.790	.007*
	SKs (47)	1.91	1.110				SKs (47)	1.33	0.724		

¹¹ "Compensation/Direct" refers to a direct refusal speech act toward compensation and "Compensation/Indirect" to an indirect one. In the same vein, "Request/Direct" denotes a direct rejection toward a request and "Request/Indirect" an indirect rejection toward the same situation.

Favor/Direct	NKRs (43)	2.48	0.938	2.373	.020*	Favor/Indirect	NKRs (43)	2.21	1.135	2.366	.020*
	SKs (47)	2.01	0.924				SKs (47)	1.69	0.918		

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level

SKS' AND NKRS' JUDGMENT DIFFERENCES ON THE PERSONALITY OF REJECTER

The second research question examined how SKs and NKRs evaluate the personality of a rejecter when different inducing speech act types and refusal expressions of varying directness were displayed. The survey participants were asked to describe the rejecter's personality by choosing from a list (includes determined, kind, rude, cold, polite, arrogant, thoughtful, flattering, tough, sociable) and they were also allowed to depict the rejecter's personality in their own words if the list was not agreeable to them. Multiple responses analysis was used to analyze the data statistically. Interestingly, when SKs and NKRs evaluated the situation in 4.1, they evaluated the rejecters' personality differently. See the appendix for a table with complete data.

As stated above, when the rejecter refused compensations directly, differences in SKs' and NKRs' evaluations about the appropriateness and unpleasantness of the situation were not statistically significant. However, while most SKs evaluated rejecters as determined (42.6%), cold (27.7%), rude (20.2%), and arrogant (18.1%), fewer NKRs described them as determined (20.9%) or cold (19.8%). Instead, 22.1% of the NKRs evaluated the rejecter as a kind person, which is about two times more than SKs (10.6%). This seems to be a result of the of determined expression's influence "*il eopssumnida* (nothing to worry)" which is only commonly used in North Korea.

On the other hand, when the rejecter refused compensations indirectly, SKs described her as determined (44.7%) and cold (25.5%), but polite (27.7%). However, NKRs described the same person only as determined (27.9%) and rude (22.1%). In addition, although there were only very few responses, in the same situation, NKRs described the rejecter flattering (2.3%) while SKC chose tough (3.2%). Interestingly, none of the NKRs chose "tough" and none of SKs "flattering" to describe the same rejecter. For this conversation, SKs and NKRs exhibited a statistically significant difference when they were asked to evaluate the situation's appropriateness and unpleasantness. Although a minority opinion, this gap in personality evaluation represents a possibility for miscommunication between SKs and NKRs.

For a situation when the rejecter used direct refusal expressions toward a request, SKs and NKRs both indicated that the rejecter was polite. SKs characterized the rejecter as sociable (36.2%) and polite (31.9%) while NKR described her as a kind (30.2%) and polite (25.6%) person.

Also, when the rejecter used indirect refusal expressions toward a request, both SKs and NKRs evaluated her positively with some minor differences. SKs described her slightly more positively than NKRs: They stated polite (46.8%), sociable (38.3%), and kind (33.0%) while NKRs characterized her as kind (38.4%) and polite (34.9%). In addition, only 16.3% of the NKRs perceived the rejecter as a sociable person, which was about half of SKs' perceptions (38.3%). This finding indicates that NKRs perceive indirect rejection toward requests positively, however, they also think that the person who uses this type of rejection lacks social and interpersonal skills. Also, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, SKs' and NKRs' reactions toward this specific situation were different at a statistically significant level. This corresponds with the finding that SKs perceived rejecters more positively than NKRs (refer to the appendix).

Lastly, if asked to evaluate a rejecter's personality when she directly refused a favor, SKs described her as polite (37.2%), but determined (26.6%) and cold (20.2%), while NKR identified her rather positive: as a polite (23.3%) and kind (23.3) person. It is notable that the percentage of NKRs who described her as arrogant or rude was higher than that of SKs which corresponds with the findings from 4.1, Table 3, where NKRs reported that they felt less pleasant when a favor was directly rejected. We can conclude from these results, that NKRs tend to perceive those who directly reject one's favor somewhat negatively.

On the other hand, both SKs and NKRs showed positive reactions towards those who rejected one's favor indirectly. SKs described her as thoughtful (52.1%), polite (40.4%), and sociable (37.2%), not unlike NKRs who answered that she was kind (32.9%), polite (31.8%), and thoughtful (31.8%).

Needless to say, perceiving another individual's personality or characteristics is an important feature of interpersonal relationships and may have an impact on pragmatic failures. Therefore, for successful communication, both SKs and NKRs should be aware that some perceptual differences exist among them. An interpretation on personality features like "sociable" may indicate one's perception toward interpersonal relations, which illustrates that these miscommunication issues should not only be handled from a pragmatic-linguistics' perspective, which is based on language habits, but also considered as socio-pragmatics' problems.

CORRELATION BETWEEN NKRS' REACTIONS TOWARD REFUSAL EXPRESSIONS AND THEIR LENGTH OF STAY IN SOUTH KOREA

The third research question investigated whether the NKRs' length of stay in South Korea has an impact on their judgment of the refusal conversation: Do they feel more or less appropriate or unpleasant? To address this question, answers from two groups of NKRs, one with less than a year of residence in South Korea and the other with five years and more, were compared with an independent sample *t*-test. Table 4 displays whether these two groups of NKR perceived the situations as more or less appropriate, while Table 5 exhibits the differences in the level of unpleasantness they felt.

TABLE 4. NKRs' Length of Stay in South Korea and Their Evaluation: Appropriateness

	Group (n)	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>		Group (n)	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Compensation/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.98	1.400	1.046	.304	Compensation/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	3.40	1.177	1.241	.225
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.45	1.172				≥ 5 years (11)	2.91	0.769		
Request/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.28	1.032	0.005	.996	Request/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	1.90	1.059	0.096	.924
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.27	1.421				≥ 5 years (11)	1.86	0.897		
Favor/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.63	1.134	0.536	.596	Favor/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	1.93	1.055	-0.775	.445
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.41	0.944				≥ 5 years (11)	2.23	1.009		

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level

TABLE 5. NKR's Length of Stay in South Korea and Their Evaluation: Unpleasantness

	Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p		Group (n)	Mean	SD	t	p
Compensation/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.85	1.368			Compensation/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	3.53	1.186		
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.91	0.769	-0.132	.896		≥ 5 years (11)	3.00	0.707	1.337	.192
Request/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.00	0.874			Request/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	1.73	0.752		
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.41	1.393	-1.008	.322		≥ 5 years (11)	1.77	1.126	-0.141	.888
Favor/Direct	~ 1 year (20)	2.43	0.878			Favor/Indirect	~ 1 year (20)	2.03	1.129		
	≥ 5 years (11)	2.59	1.020	-0.476	.638		≥ 5 years (11)	2.23	0.905	-0.510	.614

* Significant at the $p < .05$ level

According to the independent sample *t*-tests, regardless of the inducing speech act types and the refusal expressions' directness, the two North Korean refugee groups did not show any statistically significant difference in their evaluation of the appropriateness and unpleasantness of refusal expressions.

Moon (2006, p. 35) reported that 30% of NKR's believe that they overcame the language gap between South and North Korean when they passed their 12th month of stay in South Korea. However, as shown in Tables 5 and 6, the participants in this study did not show significant changes, even after five years of stay in the RoK. While Moon (2006)'s research was based on NKR's subjective self-reports, the results did not coincide with the present research, which is based on more objective data analyses.

This result indicates that even if the NKR's length of stay in South Korea increases, their North Korean language use and attitudes are still retained. Especially their reactions and attitudes towards the refusal speech act, which is different from SKs, may become an obstacle to successful settlement in South Korea. This seems to be a more serious issue than linguistic heterogeneity in vocabulary or pronunciations. NKR's preservation of North Korean language use and attitudes, even after lengthy residence in South Korea, needs closer attention for successful settlement in South Korea.

DISCUSSION

As more NKR's settle in South Korea, their desire to acquire the country's standard language has increased. However, only a handful of studies with limited variety was conducted in this field. These previous studies focused mostly on examining NKR's language use, the differences compared to the standard language used in South and North Korea, and NKR's acquisition of the South Korean standard language. Language gaps between SKs and NKR's may become an obstacle in communication between these two groups, and thus, it is important to identify both the differences in and perceptions of each other's language use. In this regard, the present research yielded four notable findings.

First, our results contradict previous studies on linguistic heterogeneity of SKs and NKR's, which reported that NKR's prefer direct refusal speech acts. That is, it is daring to state that NKR's always prefer direct refusal speech act regardless of the

context where the rejection occurs. According to the data gathered in this study, NKRers in general prefer indirect speech acts as do SKs. This becomes clear when we take a look at NKRers' evaluations on appropriateness and unpleasantness of a situation: The mean value did not differ significantly from the SK's value. In addition, NKRers positively evaluated a rejecter's personality not only when they were using direct refusal expressions, but also with indirect expressions. Therefore, we have to depart from the traditional belief that NKRers, at all times, prefer direct speech acts and accept the fact that their preferences vary, based on the types of inducing speech act or the directness of rejection.

Secondly, refusal expressions themselves are as important as the refusal strategy. In 4.1, where SKs and NKRers were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of six refusal situation types, depending on the inducing speech act and the rejection's directness, SKs perceived the situation as more appropriate than NKRers, except for the situation of directly rejecting compensation. This was when "*il eopssumnida* (nothing to worry)," a North Korean refusal expression, was used to directly reject the compensation and it illustrates why we have to take both the refusal strategy and expression into account when studying and teaching NKRers' rejection speech acts.

Furthermore, when the rejecter is using an inevitable reason to refuse compensation and a request, survey participants evaluated the conversation to be more appropriate and less unpleasant. This finding corresponds with the results from previous studies: Non-personal and unavoidable reasons were considered more appropriate for refusals than personal reasons and sententious expressions.

Finally, with the study results, we confirmed that a change in pragmatic perceptions and attitudes requires a long period of time. This is consistent with Bouton's study who asserted that - without instruction - simply spending time in the target language community does not guarantee language acquisition (Bouton, 1994). As mentioned in Rose (2005) and Lee (2015), pedagogical interventions are essential to expedite NKRers' acquiring of pragmatic strategies. An explicit instruction on vocabulary, expression, grammar and pragmatic strategy, as a whole, used in the South Korean pragmatic community will not only facilitate their language acquisition but also aid their adaptation to South Korea.

CONCLUSION

NKRers desire to be fluent in the standard South Korean language; however, their actual language usage is quite different from SKs. Using pragmatic features not preferred in South Korean discourse community may cause NKRers to be involved in pragmatic failures and these failures require special attention as SKs may perceive them as personality issues rather than just linguistic errors.

The current research was based on one single question derived from previous research findings, which concluded that NKRers prefer direct refusal speech acts compared to SKs. However, is this difference, unequivocally statistically significant? Moreover, the hypothesis is that inducing speech act types as well as the expressions' directness may also have an impact on reactions toward rejections. Thus, differences in responses between SKs and NKRers on refusal speech acts, based on the inducing speech acts and directness were examined.

The findings show that NKRers did not simply prefer direct speech act over indirect ones. Statistically significant differences only emerged when the rejecter was refusing compensation and request indirectly, and favor directly. When the two groups were asked to evaluate direct refusal expressions toward compensation and requests as

well as indirect rejections toward favors, their evaluation differences were not statistically significant. Also, in some direct refusal situations, such as directly rejecting compensation, NKR's evaluated the situation as less appropriate than SK's. Thus, when researching and teaching NKR's refusal speech acts, researchers should depart from the dichotomous way of thinking that they will always prefer direct speech acts. Instead, there is a need for an approach with an integrated perspective: Reactions toward refusal speech acts may vary when different inducing speech act types and directness are involved.

It is also confirmed that NKR's, compared to SK's, perceived rejecters who directly refused compensation, as more kind. A few NKR's evaluated a rejecter who indirectly refused compensation as "tough" which was not found at all among the SK's' answers. This result supports the idea that pragmatic differences may be perceived as a function of personality (see our second research question). Lastly, NKR's did not show statistically significant differences in pragmatic perceptions even if they had stayed in South Korea for more than five years (see our third research question). This result suggests that to prevent pragmatic failures, explicit instructions are required.

Since judgments about one's personality are an essential part of social relationships, NKR's may face hardships when adapting to South Korea, if they lack understanding about their linguistic differences compared to indigenous South Koreans. Moreover, as their pragmatic perceptions do not change, even after a lengthy stay in the country, our research strongly suggests that education is essential for their adaptation. The findings from the present research will help NKR's to adapt better to South Korean society by fostering their understanding of linguistic perceptions and to prevent communicational barriers between SK's and NKR's. In addition, the current results are expected to inspire future research as the findings from previous investigations could be statistically confirmed, which had been only reported as individual case studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dr. Haiyoung Lee is the project leader for this research.

REFERENCES

- Bouton, L. F. (1994). Conversational Implicature in the second language: Learned slowly when not deliberately taught. *Journal of Pragmatics*. Vol. 22, 157-167.
- Chung, K. (2001). *Research on North Korean Refugees' Linguistic Adaptation to South Korea*. Seoul, Korea: Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.
- Gim, J. (2014). A Study on Language Attitudes of North Korean Migrants. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea.
- Jeon, J. (2010). A Study on the Speech Acts for Improving Speaking Ability of North Korean Refugees. *URIMALGEUL: The Korean Language and Literature*. Vol. 49, 111-138.
- Kim, S. (2005). How to Perceive the Language Differentiation between the Two Koreas. *North Korean Studies Review*. Vol. 8(2). 85-124.
- Ko, Y. S. & Kim, Y. (2013). A Study on the Pragmatical Competence of North Korean Refugee Adolescents: Focusing on Refusal, Request, and Apology Act. *Korean Semantics*. Vol. 40, 357-384.
- Kwon, S. H. (2014). Real State of Language Use of Bukhanitaljumin (Immigrants from North Korea) and Direction of Education Support for Them. *Journal of*

- Ewha Korean Language and Literature. Vol. 34, 91-123.*
- Lee, H. (2009). A Study on the Korean Native Speakers' Acceptability of the Non-native Speakers' Refusal Speech Acts. *Journal of Korean Language Education. Vol. 20(2), 203-228.*
- Lee, H. (2015). Explicit Teachability of Korean pragmatics in language classroom. *Journal of Korean Language Education. Vol. 26(3), 247-266.*
- Moon, K. (2005). *Research on North Korean Refugees' Language Use for Linguistic Adaptation.* Seoul, Korea: National Institute of Korean Language.
- Moon, K. (2006). *Research on North Korean Refugees' Language Use.* Seoul, Korea: National Institute of Korean Language.
- Rose, K. R. (2005). On the Effects of Instruction in Second Language Pragmatics, *System. Vol. 33, 385-399.*
- Yang, S. (2013). Linguistic Accommodation of North Korean Refugees. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea.
- Yang, S. & Kwon, S. (2007) Study on Speech Difference between the Two Koreas by Interview with 'Saetermin'. *Korean Language Education Research. Vol. 28, 459-483.*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Haiyoung Lee is a Professor of Korean Studies at the Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS), Ewha Womans University. Her recent research centers on acquisition of Korean language as a foreign language (KFL), discourse analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics, multiculturalism and material development in KFL.

Bolami Lee is a Senior Researcher of Korean Language Promotion Division at the National Institute of Korean Language (NIKL). Her research interests include discourse analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics, and Korean language education policy for foreigners.

Hee Chung Chun is a Lecturer of Korean Language and Culture at the department of Asian Languages and Cultures, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Her current research interest includes KFL pedagogy, the effect of cultural factors in language learning, heritage learners of Korean, and cross-cultural pragmatics.