

Pragmatic Features in Korean English

Korea University
Kim, Hyun-Jin



Awkward or Inappropriate Expressions

1) "Teacher!" "Professor!"

- ◆ **Koreans feel uncomfortable calling teachers by their first names in English.**
- ◆ **For NSs, it may sound too polite and inappropriate.**

2) Frankly speaking

- ◆ NS: This is my favorite song.
What do you think?
- ◆ KS: Frankly speaking, I like this music.

2) Frankly speaking

- **Korean expression for “Frankly speaking”**
 - ▶ **as a routine or an emphasis**
- **NSs - to introduce a statement which might offend the listener, or which might be impolite.**

3) 'You'd better~'

- Old lady: How can I get to the hospital?
- KS: You'd better take a bus.

3) ‘You’d better~’

- **For NSs, ‘You’d better~.’**
 - ▶ **a strong command or a threat**
- **Problem? Koreans use this expression for giving friendly advice.**
- **Reason? misleading textbooks or teachers’ instruction**

4) Promise

- Korean word for promise (*yaksok*) can mean either ‘promise’ or ‘appointment’
- In English, ‘promise’ or ‘appointment’ are two different words.

Characteristics of Korean English in Speech Acts

1) Apology

KS

- I am sorry. Can you pass me the salt, please?
(in the restaurant)

1) Apology

- **Korean use "I am sorry" very often**
- **NSs : only when they want to express great degree of responsibility**
- **"Excuse me"**

2) Compliment-response

- **“No” as a response to compliment**
- **to show modesty and politeness in Korean culture**
- **Native speakers response**
 - ▶ **“Thank you.”**

KS: Your jacket is cute.

NS: I like your jacket.

- **"NP (*Your jacket*) + be verb (*is*) + Adjective (*cute*)"**
- **We rarely use "I like/love NP"**
(I like your jacket.)
- **Korean words for "like" or "love"**
▶ **not used in compliment**

3) Thanking

- NS: Thank you for your help.
- KS: Oh, no!

3) Thanking

- **Common Response- "No, no."**
 - ◀ **from Korean culture**
- **Limited expressions :**
 - "Thank you very (so) much"**
 - "Thank you for your~"**
- **Rare use of a verb "appreciate"**

4) The Use of “OK”

- **When Koreans refuse to some offer, many people say "It's OK".**
- **In Korean “It’s OK” has several meanings.**
- **The meaning can make native speakers or other NNSs confused.**