

A Cross-Cultural Study of Complaint Strategies via Spoken and Text-Messaging Modes: A Comparison of Native Korean Speakers, Native Thai Speakers, and Thai Learners of Korean
การศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรมเกี่ยวกับกลวิธีการแสดงความไม่พอใจ
ผ่านรูปแบบการพูดและการส่งข้อความ: การเปรียบเทียบระหว่างเจ้าของภาษาชาวเกาหลี
เจ้าของภาษาชาวไทย และผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทย

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คำสำคัญ: การสอนภาษาเกาหลี, วัฒนธรรมการแสดงความไม่พอใจ, วรรณกรรมการศึกษาเปรียบเทียบ, วรรณกรรมการศึกษาเปรียบเทียบ, ผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทย, การสื่อสารด้วยข้อความ

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Human communication manifests in various forms. The expression of dissatisfaction constitutes one form of communication that may be conveyed through both verbal and nonverbal channels. While previous research has explored complaint strategies within individual linguistic communities, fewer studies have examined how sociocultural factors and communication patterns influence the use of linguistic strategies. This study aims to examine the speech act of expressing dissatisfaction and how linguistic strategies vary according to sociocultural factors and communication media. The study compares Korean native speakers, Thai native speakers, and Thai learners of Korean. It employs a research design that investigates two modes of communication: spoken interaction and text messaging via mobile phones. These modes reveal that each form of communication entails different interactional constraints. The study analyzes linguistic strategies used to express dissatisfaction in relation to varying sociocultural factors and communication patterns, as well as the development of interlanguage pragmatics reflected in Thai learners of Korean.

Methods: The data were collected from university students in Korea and Thailand using a discourse completion test (DCT). The scenarios were designed to take into account contextual factors, including public and private situations; social factors, particularly the interlocutors' status; and communication modes, namely spoken interaction and text messaging. These factors were examined in terms of how they influenced the performance of the speech act of expressing dissatisfaction. The participants were asked to express dissatisfaction in each scenario. The linguistic strategies analyzed included direct expressions of dissatisfaction, indirect expressions of dissatisfaction, the use of mitigating devices to reduce the force of the utterance, and the selection of supportive moves, among others. The researchers employed a widely recognized framework for speech act analysis and conducted comparisons across speaker groups in order to reveal differences in linguistic strategies.

Results: The findings revealed clear cross-cultural and cross-modal differences in complaint realization. The native Korean speakers showed a higher proportion of direct complaint strategies in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios, while frequently combining direct expressions with mitigation devices such as polite endings, address terms, greetings, and emotional expressions. This pattern suggests that directness in Korean often operates within relationally attentive discourse rather than functioning as overt confrontation. The native Thai speakers consistently favored indirect and harmony-oriented strategies across both modes, relying on questions, wishes, explanations, or contextual hints rather than explicit confrontation. Their complaints emphasized relationship maintenance and the minimization of interpersonal tension. The Thai learners of Korean exhibited hybrid pragmatic patterns, combining Thai-style indirectness with emerging Korean-style politeness strategies. In some contexts, the learners transferred indirect strategies from Thai, while in others they adopted Korean mitigation markers without fully adjusting levels of directness. Overall, the findings indicate that linguistic strategies for expressing dissatisfaction are shaped by sociocultural factors and modes of communication. In particular, the mode of communication exerts a significant influence on the use of linguistic strategies.

Application of this study: The findings underscore the importance of integrating pragmatic and intercultural awareness into Korean language education, particularly in multimodal communication contexts. The findings indicate that learners achieved greater communicative success through instruction that promoted pragmatic knowledge, taking into account social factors such as social status, degree of intimacy, and mode of communication. In addition, a comparative study of linguistic strategies may help reduce pragmatic failure in intercultural communication.

Conclusions: This study investigated the speech act of expressing dissatisfaction among native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean, with particular attention to the influence of sociocultural factors and communication modes, including spoken interaction and text messaging. The findings revealed that the linguistic strategies for expressing dissatisfaction vary according to cultural context and communication channels. The native Korean speakers tended to employ more direct strategies while maintaining politeness, whereas the native Thai speakers preferred indirect strategies to preserve interpersonal harmony. The Thai learners of Korean demonstrated the characteristics of interlanguage pragmatics by combining strategies from both languages. The results reflect that the choice of linguistic strategies is shaped by sociocultural factors and communication modes. Therefore, Korean language instruction should integrate knowledge of pragmatics and intercultural communication in order to promote appropriate and effective language use across diverse communicative contexts.

บทคัดย่อ

ที่มาและวัตถุประสงค์: การสื่อสารของมนุษย์มีหลายลักษณะ การสื่อสารเพื่อแสดงความไม่พอใจก็เป็นลักษณะหนึ่งที่ใช้ทั้งผ่านรูปแบบวัจนภาษาและอวัจนภาษา แม้ว่างานวิจัยก่อนหน้านี้ได้ศึกษาการใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาในวัจนกรรมอื่น ๆ แต่มีงานวิจัยไม่มากนักที่จะศึกษาว่าปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมและรูปแบบการสื่อสารสามารถส่งอิทธิพลต่อกลวิธีทางภาษาได้อย่างไร งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาวัจนกรรมการแสดงความไม่พอใจ ซึ่งมีการใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาที่แตกต่างกันอย่างไรตามปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรม และสื่อที่ใช้ในการสื่อสาร โดยเปรียบเทียบระหว่างเจ้าของภาษาเกาหลี เจ้าของภาษาไทย และผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทย ใช้วิธีการวิจัยในรูปแบบการสื่อสารที่ผู้พูดสื่อสารในรูปแบบการพูดและการส่งข้อความผ่านโทรศัพท์ ทำให้เห็นได้ว่าการสื่อสารแต่ละรูปแบบมีข้อจำกัดเชิงปฏิสัมพันธ์ที่ต่างกัน โดยได้วิเคราะห์กลวิธีทางภาษาในการแสดงความไม่พอใจโดยมีปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมและรูปแบบการสื่อสารที่แตกต่างกัน รวมถึงพัฒนาต้นฉบับปฏิบัติการศาสตร์ภาษาระหว่างกลางที่สะท้อนให้เห็นให้ผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทย

วิธีการศึกษา: เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศเกาหลีและประเทศไทยโดยใช้แบบทดสอบเติมบทสนทนา discourse completion test (DCT) ซึ่งสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ ได้คำนึงถึงปัจจัยด้านบริบท (สถานการณ์ส่วนรวมกับสถานการณ์ส่วนตัว) ปัจจัยทางสังคม (สถานะของผู้สนทนา) และรูปแบบการสื่อสาร (สถานการณ์การสื่อสารแบบการพูดกับการส่งข้อความ) ซึ่งมีผลต่อการแสดงวัจนกรรมการแสดงความไม่พอใจอย่างไร ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยได้แสดงความไม่พอใจในแต่ละสถานการณ์ กลวิธีทางภาษาที่นำมาวิเคราะห์ ได้แก่ การแสดงความไม่พอใจอย่างตรงไปตรงมา การแสดงความไม่พอใจแบบอ้อม การใช้ถ้อยคำลดน้ำหนักความรุนแรง และการเลือกสรรถ้อยคำสนับสนุน เป็นต้น โดยผู้วิจัยได้ใช้กรอบการวิเคราะห์วัจนกรรมที่เป็นที่ยอมรับในวงวิชาการและมีการเปรียบเทียบระหว่างกลุ่มผู้พูดเพื่อแสดงให้เห็นความแตกต่างในกลวิธีทางภาษา

ผลการศึกษา: ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นความแตกต่างอย่างชัดเจนทั้งในเชิงการศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรมและกลวิธีทางภาษาในการแสดงความไม่พอใจ เจ้าของภาษาชาวเกาหลีใช้กลวิธีตรงไปตรงมามากกว่าในการสื่อสารแบบการส่งข้อความเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับในการสื่อสารแบบการพูด แต่ยังคงรักษาความสุภาพผ่านการลดน้ำหนักความรุนแรงของถ้อยคำ เช่น คำลงท้ายสุภาพ คำเรียกขาน คำทักทาย และการแสดงอารมณ์ กลวิธีทางภาษาดังกล่าวสะท้อนให้เห็นว่า “ความตรงไปตรงมา” ในภาษาเกาหลีอยู่ภายใต้กรอบวาทกรรมที่คำนึงถึงความสัมพันธ์มากกว่าจะเป็นการเผชิญหน้าอย่างเปิดเผย ขณะที่เจ้าของภาษาชาวไทยใช้กลวิธีทางอ้อมและเน้นความกลมเกลียว โดยใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาในรูปแบบคำถาม การแสดงความปรารถนา การให้เหตุผล การบอกเป็นนัยผ่านบริบทมากกว่าการเผชิญหน้าโดยตรง ดังนั้นกลวิธีการแสดงความไม่พอใจของเจ้าของภาษาชาวไทยปรากฏในรูปแบบการรักษาความสัมพันธ์และลดความตึงเครียดระหว่างบุคคล ส่วนผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทยแสดงรูปแบบวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาระหว่างกลาง โดยมีการผสมผสานใช้กลวิธีทางอ้อมแบบภาษาไทยร่วมกับกลวิธีความสุภาพแบบภาษาเกาหลี ผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทยถ่ายโอนกลวิธีทางอ้อมมาใช้ในบางสถานการณ์ แต่ในขณะเดียวกันก็ใช้ความสุภาพผ่านการลดน้ำหนักความรุนแรงของถ้อยคำแต่ทว่าก็ยังไม่สามารถปรับใช้ได้อย่างสอดคล้องกับสถานการณ์ โดยสรุป ผลวิจัยสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงกลวิธีทางภาษาในการแสดงความไม่พอใจถูกกำหนดขึ้นตามปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมและรูปแบบการสื่อสาร โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง รูปแบบการสื่อสารมีอิทธิพลต่อการใช้กลวิธีทางภาษา

การประยุกต์ใช้: การวิจัยครั้งนี้มุ่งเน้นความสำคัญของการบูรณาการและการตระหนักรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์และการศึกษาข้ามวัฒนธรรมในการเรียนการสอนภาษาเกาหลี โดยเฉพาะบริบทในการสื่อสารหลายรูปแบบ ผลวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่าผู้เรียนสัมฤทธิ์ผลในการสื่อสารมากขึ้นจากการเรียนการสอนที่ส่งเสริมองค์ความรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์โดยมีปัจจัยทาง

สังคม เช่น สถานภาพทางสังคม ความสนิทสนม และรูปแบบการสื่อสาร นอกจากนี้ การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบกลวิธีทางภาษาอาจช่วยลดความล้มเหลวในการใช้ภาษาให้เหมาะสมในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรมได้

บทสรุป: การศึกษาวิจัยการแสดงความไม่พอใจของเจ้าของภาษาชาวเกาหลี เจ้าของภาษาชาวไทย และผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทย โดยพิจารณาอิทธิพลของปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมและรูปแบบการสื่อสารทั้งแบบการพูดและการส่งข้อความ ผลการศึกษาพบว่ากลวิธีทางภาษาในการแสดงความไม่พอใจแตกต่างกันตามบริบททางวัฒนธรรมและช่องทางการสื่อสาร โดยเจ้าของภาษาชาวเกาหลีมีแนวโน้มใช้กลวิธีตรงไปตรงมาควบคู่กับการรักษาความสุภาพ ขณะที่เจ้าของภาษาชาวไทยเน้นการใช้กลวิธีทางอ้อมเพื่อรักษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล ส่วนผู้เรียนภาษาเกาหลีชาวไทยแสดงลักษณะวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ภาษาะหว่างกลางที่ผสมผสานกลวิธีจากทั้งสองภาษา ผลการวิจัยสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าการเลือกใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาถูกกำหนดโดยปัจจัยทางสังคมวัฒนธรรมและรูปแบบการสื่อสาร ดังนั้น การเรียนการสอนภาษาเกาหลีควรบูรณาการองค์ความรู้ด้านวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์และการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม เพื่อส่งเสริมการใช้ภาษาได้อย่างเหมาะสมและมีประสิทธิภาพในบริบทการสื่อสารที่หลากหลาย

Introduction

A complaint speech act refers to a communicative act through which a speaker expresses dissatisfaction or displeasure toward another person's behavior or a problematic situation. As complaints inherently involve the expression of negative evaluation, they constitute a face-threatening act that may potentially disrupt interpersonal harmony. For this reason, speakers often rely on various mitigation and indirectness strategies to balance the need for expressing dissatisfaction with the maintenance of politeness and social relationships (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993).

Previous studies have demonstrated that the realization of complaint speech acts varies considerably across languages and cultures, reflecting different sociocultural norms related to hierarchy, interpersonal distance, and expectations of politeness. In Korean discourse, complaint strategies are known to be highly sensitive to contextual and relational factors, such as social status, situational formality, and the degree of imposition. Native Korean speakers often combine relatively direct expressions with honorifics, softeners, and discourse markers to mitigate potential face threats while maintaining communicative clarity (Honda & Kim, 2009; Hwang, 2021). In contrast, Thai speakers tend to prefer indirect and harmony-oriented strategies influenced by the cultural value of *kreng jai* (เกรงใจ), which emphasizes consideration for others and the avoidance of confrontation (Yang & Wannaruk, 2019; Sripunvoraskul, 2022).

In addition to cultural background, recent research has increasingly emphasized the role of communication modes in shaping pragmatic behavior. Spoken interaction and text-based communication differ substantially in terms of immediacy, presence of nonverbal cues, and perceived social pressure (Jeong, 2025). In spoken communication, speakers can rely on prosody, facial expressions, and gestures to soften or nuance their intentions. In text messaging, however, these paralinguistic resources are absent, which may increase the risk of messages being perceived as overly direct or impolite. To compensate for this limitation, speakers often employ linguistic mitigation devices as well as digital resources such as punctuation marks, emojis, greetings, and discourse markers to regulate emotional tone and interpersonal stance (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017).

To address these gaps, the present study investigates complaint speech act realization across two communication modes—spoken-mode scenarios and text messaging—by comparing three groups: native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean. The study focuses on situations commonly encountered in university settings, as the university context provides a shared institutional environment in which hierarchical relations (e.g., professor–student, senior–junior) and peer interactions coexist. This setting allows for a controlled comparison of how social status, relational distance, and communication mode jointly influence pragmatic choices.

By examining how complaint strategies are realized across cultures and communication modes, this study aims to contribute to the fields of cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics. The findings are expected to offer

pedagogical implications for Korean language education, particularly in raising learners' awareness of how pragmatic choices should be adapted according to social relationships and communication media in contemporary digital environments:

Research Question 1: Do native Korean speakers show differences in the realization of complaint speech acts across communication modes (spoken-mode scenarios vs. text messaging)?

Research Question 2: Are there differences in the realization of complaint speech acts among native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean across communication modes?

Research Objectives

This study pursues three primary objectives. First, it seeks to compare complaint strategies used by native Korean speakers and native Thai speakers in spoken-mode interaction. Second, it aims to examine how complaint realization differs between spoken-mode and text-messaging contexts within each linguistic group. Finally, it analyzes the pragmatic patterns exhibited by Thai learners of Korean in relation to native-speaker norms.

Literature Review

1. Definition and Strategies of Complaint Speech Acts

Complaint speech acts are inherently complex because they involve expressing dissatisfaction or criticism toward another person's behavior or a problematic situation, which threatens the hearer's face and may potentially disrupt social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987). Scholars generally define complaints as speech acts in which speakers express disapproval or dissatisfaction regarding a situation or action that has negatively affected them (Trosborg, 1995). Because complaints often entail elements of blame or confrontation, speakers must carefully balance the expression of negative emotions with the maintenance of politeness and interpersonal relationships.

Previous research has described complaint strategies as existing along a continuum ranging from indirect to direct forms. Direct complaints, such as explicit accusations or demands, pose a greater threat to the hearer's face, whereas indirect complaints—which refer to the situation in general or are framed in a mitigated manner—reduce interpersonal risk and may even contribute to the maintenance of social harmony. To mitigate potential conflict, speakers frequently employ mitigation devices such as hedges, downtoners, explanations, and expressions of understanding, which function to soften the illocutionary force of the utterance (House & Kasper, 1981; Trosborg, 1995).

Olshtain & Weinbach (1987, 1993) proposed five levels of complaint severity, ranging from indirect hints to overt threats, while Trosborg (1995) further elaborated eight sub-strategies spanning from mild reproach to strong blame. Building on these foundational frameworks, subsequent studies have demonstrated that the realization of complaint speech acts is not only shaped by speakers' intentions but is also highly sensitive to contextual variables such as power relations, social distance, degree of imposition, situational formality, and communication mode (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In particular, communication mode has been identified as an important factor influencing how complaints are formulated and interpreted. Spoken interaction allows speakers to rely on prosodic and paralinguistic cues to manage interpersonal meaning, whereas text-based communication lacks such resources and may therefore require alternative linguistic or pragmatic strategies to regulate tone and mitigate face threat. As a result, the same complaint intention may be realized differently depending on whether it is conveyed through spoken-mode interaction or text messaging.

Since complaints demand a high level of pragmatic sensitivity, understanding how speakers select and adjust strategies across different communicative conditions provides a crucial foundation for analyzing cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Accordingly, the present study adopts established complaint strategy frameworks to examine how cultural background and communication mode jointly influence the realization of complaint speech acts across different speaker groups.

2. Cross-Cultural Studies on Korean and Thai Complaint Strategies

Cross-cultural pragmatic research has consistently demonstrated that the realization of complaint speech acts varies across languages and cultures, reflecting differences in sociocultural norms that regulate politeness, hierarchy, and interpersonal distance (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Previous studies have shown that social values, relational expectations, and pragmatic conventions interact to shape how dissatisfaction is expressed, particularly in face-threatening communicative situations.

In Korean, speakers employ a wide range of complaint strategies depending on hierarchical relations, familiarity, social distance, and the perceived severity of the situation. Korean speakers are known to maintain a balance between directness and politeness through the use of honorifics, softeners, and indirectness markers, thereby minimizing potential threats to the hearer's face while preserving communicative clarity (Honda & Kim, 2009; Yoo, Yang, & Moon, 2014; Hwang, 2021). These pragmatic features reflect a sociocultural system in which hierarchical awareness and relational management play a central role in spoken interaction.

Comparative studies involving Korean and other East Asian languages have further highlighted distinctive patterns. Honda & Kim (2009) found that Korean speakers employ a wider variety of complaint strategies than Japanese speakers, frequently using assertive and action-oriented strategies such as urging or demanding remediation. Similarly, Yang (2017) and Yoo, Yang, & Moon (2014) reported that Korean speakers tend to adopt speaker-oriented realization styles, whereas Chinese speakers and learners favor hearer-oriented approaches, relying more heavily on indirectness or silence to mitigate potential conflict.

Although research on Thai complaint strategies remains relatively limited, existing studies have identified several distinctive pragmatic tendencies. Yang & Wannaruk (2019) reported that Thai speakers are generally less explicit and more indirect than Chinese speakers, often downplaying the seriousness of problematic situations. This tendency is closely associated with the cultural value of *kreng jai* (เกรงใจ), which emphasizes consideration for others, deference, and the avoidance of imposing one's negative emotions on interlocutors. As a result, Thai speakers often soften complaints or avoid expressing them altogether, particularly when interacting with higher-status or socially close interlocutors. Sripunvoraskul (2022) likewise found that Thai speakers produced fewer complaint acts and frequently opted for silence or avoidance, although in certain contexts they also employed unexpectedly direct strategies.

Research on second language learners has further shown that complaint realization is shaped by interlanguage pragmatic development. Parikumsin (2019), for example, compared native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean, focusing on complaint strategies, emotional responses, and evaluations of complaint behavior. The findings revealed that Thai learners often suppressed dissatisfaction or relied on indirect strategies influenced by their first language. At the same time, increased exposure to Korean led learners to gradually adopt Korean-style politeness strategies, suggesting dynamic interlanguage pragmatic development mediated by both cultural background and learning experience.

Taken together, these studies indicate that complaint strategies are shaped by a complex interplay of linguistic norms, social variables, and cultural values. However, relatively little attention has been paid to how communication modes—such as spoken interaction and text-based messaging—interact with cultural background to influence the realization of complaint speech acts. In particular, there remains a lack of comparative research examining how native speakers and second language learners adjust complaint strategies across communication modes. To address this gap, the present study adopts a cross-cultural and cross-modal perspective to investigate how native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean realize complaints in spoken-mode scenarios and text messaging contexts.

Research Methods

1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of three groups: native Korean speakers, Thai learners of Korean, and native Thai speakers. As the research instrument was designed to reflect situations commonly encountered in university life, the survey was administered to undergraduate students enrolled at universities in Korea and Thailand. All participants were female students, reflecting both the influence of sociocultural factors on speech act performance and the higher proportion of female learners typically found in Korean language education programs.

The Thai learners of Korean were third- and fourth-year undergraduate students majoring in Korean language. Their Korean language proficiency corresponded approximately to an intermediate–high level, equivalent to Level 4 of the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK). At this level, learners are generally capable of expressing opinions, explaining situations, and managing pragmatic functions in academic and everyday contexts, making them suitable participants for a study examining the realization of complaint speech acts in Korean.

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for research involving human subjects, and the study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards. Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through convenience sampling, with the cooperation of partner universities in Korea and professors of Korean language programs in Thailand.

Table 1 Number of Participants by Group and Demographic

Category	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Number of participants	37	37	38
Gender	female	female	female
Nationality	Korea	Thailand	Thailand
Occupation	student	student majoring in Korean Language	student

2. Research Tools

This study employed a discourse completion test (DCT) to compare and analyze the realization of complaint speech acts among three groups: Thai learners of Korean, native Korean speakers, and native Thai speakers. The DCT was designed to elicit complaint expressions across two communication modes: spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging interactions. In the present study, spoken-mode scenarios refer to situations in which participants were instructed to produce language appropriate for spoken interaction; these scenarios did not involve actual in-person interaction,

interviews, or audio/video recording. This design was adopted to ensure consistency across communication modes while avoiding methodological bias associated with real-time interaction.

The DCT consisted of twelve situational prompts systematically constructed to reflect three key variables: (a) communication mode (spoken-mode scenarios vs. text messaging), (b) social status of the interlocutor (professor, senior, peer, or junior), and (c) situational context (public vs. private). All scenarios were restricted to situations that university students could realistically encounter on campus, such as academic evaluation, group work, and interpersonal conflicts, thereby minimizing extraneous topic- and context-related variables.

The assignment of communication modes to specific scenarios was based on commonly observed communication practices among university students, rather than on experimentally manipulated situational urgency or immediacy. The spoken-mode and text-messaging scenarios were designed to represent interactional contexts that participants could reasonably imagine encountering in everyday academic life.

The initial set of scenarios was drafted by the researchers and subsequently reviewed by three Korean-language instructors with expertise in pragmatics to ensure content validity, contextual appropriateness, and naturalness of expression. Revisions were made based on their feedback, and the final version of the DCT was confirmed. The questionnaire was administered electronically and collected via Google Forms.

In each scenario, participants were placed in a communicative situation in which they could express dissatisfaction or a negative evaluation toward the interlocutor's behavior. Participants first indicated the degree of dissatisfaction they experienced and then decided whether they would perform a complaint in that situation. If they chose to complain, they were asked to describe in detail how they would express it. If they chose not to complain, they were instructed to explain their reasons, and these explanations were later examined qualitatively to identify pragmatic motivations underlying non-performance.

To ensure linguistic accessibility and the accuracy of elicited data, the DCT was provided in participants' respective native languages. The questionnaire for native Korean speakers was written entirely in Korean, while that for native Thai speakers was written in Thai. For Thai learners of Korean, situational descriptions were presented in Thai to facilitate comprehension, whereas responses were written in Korean to allow for the analysis of second-language complaint production within an authentic target-language context.

Table 2 Situation Overview for the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Across Communication Modes

No.	Medium	Social Status	Context	Situation Overview
1	Spoken Mode	speaker<listener	public	You resubmitted the final version of a group project 30 minutes before the deadline, but the professor graded the earlier submission without checking the updated file, resulting in a significantly lower score for your team.
2			private	The professor had agreed to submit your scholarship recommendation letter by the deadline but failed to do so, and as a result, your application was not processed on time.
3		speaker=listener	public	A team member repeatedly delayed their portion of a group project and finally submitted an incomplete version right before the deadline, forcing the rest of the team to work late into the night to rewrite and resubmit it.
4			private	You shared personal photos with a friend and later discovered that they had been shared in another chat group without your consent, causing you to lose trust in that friend.

Table 2 Situation Overview for the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Across Communication Modes (cont.)

No.	Medium	Social Status	Context	Situation Overview
5	Text Messaging	speaker>listener	public	You asked a junior member to print the final poster for a club event, but she printed the wrong version with major errors, resulting in wasted time, money, and damage to the club's reputation.
6			private	A junior borrowed a book from you that you needed for an upcoming presentation, but she did not return it even after several reminders, leaving you unable to prepare properly.
7		speaker<listener	public	The professor announced that midterm feedback would be sent by email, but even after a week, you and several classmates have not received it, putting you at a disadvantage in preparing for the final exam.
8			private	You contacted your professor multiple times to schedule a thesis consultation, but after several days, you still received no reply, and now your submission deadline is approaching.
9		speaker=listener	public	A friend accidentally sent the wrong presentation file to the professor for your group project, and despite noticing the mistake, did not inform you until after the professor had already graded it.
10			private	You confided a personal concern to a classmate through chat, but later found out that others in your department were talking about it, leaving you embarrassed.
11		speaker>listener	public	You asked a junior to manage an important receipt required for the club's financial report, but they misplaced it and failed to inform you until the submission deadline had passed.
12			private	After having dinner with a junior, you asked them to send you their share of the payment, but even after several reminders over more than a week, they still have not sent the money.

“Spoken-mode scenarios” refer to situations in which participants were asked to produce language appropriate for spoken interaction. These scenarios did not involve actual in-person interaction, interviews, or audio/video recording. The classification of speaker–listener relations (speaker < listener, speaker = listener, speaker > listener) indicates relative social status between the speaker and the interlocutor.

3. Data Coding and Analysis

All responses elicited from the complaint scenarios were coded according to the semantic formula of complaint strategies defined in this study. A binary multiple-response coding procedure was applied, allowing each response to be assigned to more than one strategy category when applicable. This approach enabled the identification of both the frequency and distribution of complaint strategies across communication modes and participant groups. Frequency analysis and cross-tabulation were subsequently conducted to examine patterns of strategy use among native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean.

To facilitate systematic coding, data organization, and retrieval, the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti was employed. The software supported the management of large textual datasets, the consistent application of coding categories, and the transparent tracking of coding decisions throughout the analysis process.

The classification of complaint strategies was primarily based on the framework proposed by Trosborg (1995). To ensure contextual appropriateness for Korean discourse, this framework was adapted with reference to previous studies in Korean pragmatics and Korean language education, particularly Hwang (2021) and Park (2023), which refined Trosborg's typology to better reflect sociopragmatic features such as honorific use, mitigation, and indirectness. Drawing on these studies, the present research organized its strategy categories in a manner that captures culturally and linguistically salient features of complaint realization.

Because the study analyzed complaints produced in both spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts, pragmatic features specific to digital communication—such as the use of punctuation marks and emotional emojis—were treated as distinct pragmatic resources. These features were analyzed insofar as they functioned to express stance, regulate emotional tone, or mitigate face-threatening force in text-based complaints. In addition, when complaint strategies emerged from the native Korean speaker data that could not be adequately categorized within the existing framework, they were identified through inductive coding and incorporated as supplementary strategy types in the final analysis.

To enhance the reliability of the coding process, a subset of the data was independently coded by a second researcher familiar with pragmatic analysis. Coding discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, and the finalized coding scheme was subsequently applied to the entire dataset.

Table 3 Frame for Analysis of Complaints Strategies

Strategy	Strategy Label	Description	Example
Explicit Direct Complaints	1. Complaining about the situation	Explicitly expressing dissatisfaction with a specific situation or outcome	아니, 왜 넌 진짜 상황을 애매하게 만들고 그래.
	2. Complaining about the action	Expressing disapproval of the listener's action or behavior	너는 왜 맨날 이렇게 늦어서 사람 짜증나게 해.
Indirect Complaints	3. Reconfirming and Requesting /Correction	Asking the hearer to reconfirm or acknowledge awareness of the situation or event	다시 한 번 확인해 주세요.
	4. Explaining the situation	Providing contextual justification or background for the complaint	이건 우리 모두한테 아주 중요한 일이야
	5. Presenting obligation or responsibility	Attributing duty or responsibility to the hearer	그건 니가 꼭 마무리하기로 한 일이잖아.
	6. Asking questions	Questioning the reason or responsibility behind the problem	어제 왜 연락 안 했어?
	7. Expressing desires or wishes	Indicating a wish or expectation for change or improvement	다음엔 제발 미리 말 좀 해줬으면 좋겠어.
	8. Expressing negative emotions	Revealing frustration, disappointment, or regret toward the situation	나 솔직히 좀 서운했어.
	9. Issuing a warning	Cautioning the hearer against recurrence of the problem	다음에 또 그러면 진짜 화낼 거야.
	10. Using sarcasm or irony	Employing ironic or sarcastic expressions to convey dissatisfaction indirectly	너도 진짜 참 대단하다
	11. Expressing understanding	Showing empathy or partial acceptance to mitigate the complaint	그럴 수도 있었다고 생각은 하는데...

Table 3 Frame for Analysis of Complaints Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strategy Label	Description	Example
	12. Avoidance / No Response	Deliberately choosing not to complain despite dissatisfaction, typically to preserve harmony or minimize conflict	
Additional Strategies	13. Using address terms	Employing appropriate titles (e.g., Professor, Senior, name) to establish or adjust social relationships and politeness levels	선생님 / OO야
	14. Using greetings or discourse markers	Using greetings (e.g., Hello, Thank you) or softeners (e.g., if you don't mind, sorry but) before or after the complaint to reduce psychological imposition	안녕하세요? 감사합니다
	15. Using emotional emojis	Using emojis or specific punctuation in digital messages to substitute for non-verbal cues and visually regulate the emotional tone or intensity of the complaint	

Research Results

1. Complaint Speech Act Strategies Used by Native Korean Speakers

1.1. Complaint Strategies According to Public and Private Contexts

First, the study examined how native Korean speakers employed complaint strategies across communication modes (spoken-mode scenarios and text messaging), with attention to differences between public and private contexts. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Complaint Strategies According to Public and Private Contexts

Strategy	Specifics	Public		Private	
		Spoken Mode	Text Messaging	Spoken Mode	Text Messaging
Explicit Direct Complaints	1. Complaining about the situation	1.8%	0.5%	1.2%	3.9%
	2. Complaining about the action	3.7%	11.4%	8.3%	12.9%
	sum	5.5%	11.9%	9.5%	16.9%
Indirect Complaints	3. Reconfirming and Requesting Correction	22.7%	22.3%	20.7%	23.6%
	4. Explaining the situation	18.4%	14.1%	17.8%	15.7%
	5. Presenting obligation or responsibility	12.9%	16.8%	15.4%	3.4%
	6. Asking questions	4.3%	5.4%	11.2%	3.4%

Table 4 Complaint Strategies According to Public and Private Contexts (cont.)

Strategy	Specifics	Public		Private	
		Spoken Mode	Text Messaging	Spoken Mode	Text Messaging
Indirect Complaints	7. Expressing desires or wishes	11.0%	8.7%	6.5%	5.6%
	8. Expressing negative emotions	4.9%	8.7%	9.5%	10.1%
	9. Issuing a warning	8.0%	0.0%	1.2%	9.0%
	10. Using sarcasm or irony	0.6%	1.1%	1.2%	0.0%
	11. Expressing understanding	3.7%	6.0%	2.4%	7.9%
	sum	86.5%	83.1%	85.8%	78.7%
Avoidance	12. no reaction	8.0%	4.9%	4.7%	4.5%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Native Korean speakers expressed their dissatisfaction more directly in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios, regardless of whether the situation was public or private. In public contexts, the most frequently used strategies in spoken-mode scenarios were 'Explaining the situation' and 'Reconfirming and requesting correction', followed by 'Presenting obligation or responsibility' and 'Expressing desires or wishes'.

Notably, in public spoken-mode scenarios, non-response or avoidance accounted for a relatively high proportion (8%), indicating that some speakers chose not to verbalize their complaints. Furthermore, the two dominant strategies, Explaining the situation and Reconfirming and requesting correction, were frequently used in combination, as illustrated in the following example.

[Situation 1, KNS 10]

이번 과제 평가에서 마감 전 최종 수정본을 제출했는데요, 이전 결과물로 평가가 된 것 같습니다. 새로운 파일을 다시 확인해 주실 수 있으실까요?

I submitted the final revised version of my assignment before the deadline, but it seems to have been graded based on the previous version. Could you please check the updated file once more?

Meanwhile, in public text-messaging contexts, the most frequently used strategy was 'Reconfirming and requesting correction', a pattern also observed in spoken-mode scenarios. This was followed by 'Presenting obligation or responsibility', and, unlike in spoken-mode scenarios, the use of 'Complaining about the action' was comparatively higher. Overall, the distribution of strategies suggests that native Korean speakers employed more direct complaint strategies in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios.

[Situation 9, KNS 8]

발표 자료를 잘못 제출했다는 게 말이 돼? 이 일은 전적으로 네 책임이라고 생각해. 우리한테 영향 없게 니가 교수님 찾아뵙고 해결해줘.

Does it make any sense that you submitted the wrong presentation file? I think this is entirely your responsibility. Please go see the professor and fix it so it doesn't affect the rest of us.

This tendency was also observed in private situations. In spoken-mode scenarios, native Korean speakers most frequently employed the strategies of ‘Reconfirming and requesting correction’ and ‘Explaining the situation’, consistent with the patterns found in public contexts. In text-messaging contexts, these two strategies were likewise the most common; however, compared with spoken-mode scenarios, the use of ‘Complaining about the action’ was noticeably higher.

[Situation 10, KNS 13]

아니 내 개인적인 일을 함부로 얘기하고 다니면 어떡해? 자꾸 이러면 너한테 아무 말 안 할 거야.

How could you go around talking about my personal stuff like that? If you keep doing this, I won't tell you anything anymore.

Overall, native Korean speakers expressed unpleasant emotions or voiced complaints more directly in private situations than in public ones, and more frequently in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios. These patterns indicate that the degree of directness and emotional expression varies across situational contexts. The following section examines how supplementary strategies used by native Korean speakers differ across contexts. Table 5 presents the proportional distribution of supplementary strategies relative to the total number of responses.

Table 5 Additional Strategies According to Public and Private Contexts

Strategy	Specifics	Public		Private	
		Spoken Mode	Text Messaging	Spoken Mode	Text Messaging
Additional Strategies	13. Using address terms	14.2%	16.0%	18.0%	21.6%
	14. Using greetings or discourse markers	10.6%	14.2%	14.4%	18.9%
	15. Using emotional emojis or punctuation marks	0.0%	11.7%	0.0%	19.8%

As shown in the table, native Korean speakers employed a wider range of supplementary strategies in private situations than in public ones across both spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts. In addition, in text-messaging contexts, speakers used vocatives, greetings, and discourse markers more frequently than in spoken-mode scenarios. These features were observed to co-occur with complaint expressions and were therefore included as supplementary strategies in the analysis.

[Situation 7, KNS 13]

안녕하세요 교수님! 지난번에 중간고사 피드백을 해주시기로 하셨는데 아직 메일이 오지 않아 연락드립니다. 기말고사 전에 중간고사 피드백을 참고하여 공부하려고 하는데요, 한 번 확인 부탁드립니다 😊

Hello Professor! You mentioned that you would provide feedback on the midterm exam, but I haven't received your email yet, so I'm reaching out. I'd like to review your feedback before preparing for the final exam—could you please check it when you have a chance? 😊

1.2 Complaint Strategies According to the Interlocutor's Social Status

Next, the study examined how native Korean speakers employed complaint strategies across communication modes according to the interlocutor's social status. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Complaint Strategies According to Social Status

Strategy	Specifics	Higher		Same/Lower	
		Spoken Mode	Text Messaging	Spoken Mode	Text Messaging
Explicit Direct Complaints	1. Complaining about the situation	2.5%	2.4%	0.9%	2.1%
	2. Complaining about the action	0.0%	1.6%	9.4%	17.5%
	sum	2.5%	4.1%	10.3%	19.6%
Indirect Complaints	3. Reconfirming and Requesting Correction	31.9%	37.4%	16.0%	15.4%
	4. Explaining the situation	34.5%	29.3%	8.9%	7.5%
	5. Presenting obligation or responsibility	13.4%	3.3%	14.6%	13.8%
	6. Asking questions	3.4%	0.0%	10.3%	6.7%
	7. Expressing desires or wishes	3.4%	8.1%	11.7%	6.7%
	8. Expressing negative emotions	0.0%	0.0%	11.3%	14.2%
	9. Issuing a warning	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	6.7%
	10. Using sarcasm or irony	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.8%
	11. Expressing understanding	7.6%	11.4%	0.5%	5.0%
	sum	94.1%	89.4%	81.7%	76.7%
Avoidance	12. no reaction	3.4%	6.5%	8.0%	3.8%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Native Korean speakers used a relatively limited range of complaint strategies when addressing interlocutors of higher social status. Across both spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts, the most frequently employed strategies were 'Explaining the situation' and 'Reconfirming and requesting correction'. Direct complaints were rarely observed, and when dissatisfaction was expressed, speakers tended to focus on the situation rather than on the interlocutor. Overall, the distribution of strategies indicates a preference for less confrontational complaint realizations in interactions with higher-status interlocutors.

By contrast, when the interlocutor held an equal or lower social status, the strategies of 'Presenting obligation or responsibility' and 'Reconfirming and requesting correction' were used most frequently, accompanied by a notably high occurrence of 'Expressing negative emotions'. In particular, the proportion of direct complaints was higher in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios. Examples illustrating the use of direct complaints in combination with the 'Expressing negative emotions' strategy are presented below.

[Situation 4, KNS 23]

개인적인 걸 이렇게 공유하면 어떡해? 너한테 진짜 실망이야.

How could you share something so personal like that? I'm really disappointed in you.

The study examined whether the supplementary strategies employed by native Korean speakers varied across different situational contexts. Table 7 presents the proportional distribution of each supplementary strategy relative to the total number of responses, illustrating how the use of these strategies differs according to contextual factors.

Table 7 Additional Complaint Strategies According to the Interlocutor's Social Status

Strategy	Specifics	Higher		Same/Lower	
		Spoken Mode	Text Messaging	Spoken Mode	Text Messaging
Additional Strategies	13. Using address terms	36.5%	43.2%	7.4%	8.1%
	14. Using greetings or discourse markers	32.4%	44.6%	4.1%	4.1%
	15. Using emotional emojis or punctuation marks	0.0%	6.8%	0.0%	20.3%

As shown in the table, native Korean speakers employed supplementary strategies—such as the use of vocatives, greetings, and discourse markers—more actively when complaining to interlocutors of higher social status. This tendency was particularly prominent in written contexts.

[Situation 8, KNS 15]

교수님 안녕하세요? 000입니다. 지난번에 논문 관련 일정을 잡았는데, 아직 연락이 없으셔서 이렇게 문자를 보내게 되었습니다. 가능하신 시간을 말씀해 주시면 연구실로 찾아뵙도록 하겠습니다. 감사합니다.

Hello Professor, this is [Name]. I scheduled a meeting about my thesis earlier, but I haven't received a reply yet, so I'm sending this message. Please let me know a convenient time, and I will visit your office. Thank you.

In contrast, when addressing interlocutors of equal or lower status, the use of supplementary strategies was less frequent. However, in text messaging contexts, speakers tended to use emojis and punctuation marks more actively to convey emotions, indicating a relatively informal and expressive communication style in interactions with peers or juniors.

2. Patterns of Complaint Speech Act Strategies Across Speaker Groups

2.1. Complaint Strategies According to Public and Private Contexts

The following section presents a comparison of complaint strategies used by the three groups across spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts in public situations.

Table 8 Patterns of Complaint Speech Acts Across Groups in Public Contexts

Strategy	Strategies	Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Explicit Direct Complaints	1	1.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%
	2	3.7%	6.1%	5.1%	11.4%	6.1%	4.2%
	sum	5.5%	6.6%	5.6%	11.9%	6.1%	4.8%
Indirect Complaints	3	22.7%	20.9%	27.7%	22.2%	22.8%	30.1%
	4	18.4%	21.7%	20.5%	14.1%	28.9%	18.7%
	5	12.9%	8.2%	14.4%	16.8%	11.8%	15.7%
	6	4.3%	12.3%	8.2%	5.4%	7.7%	3.0%
	7	11.0%	13.5%	4.6%	8.6%	5.3%	7.2%
	8	4.9%	4.5%	6.2%	8.6%	4.1%	0.0%
	9	8.0%	2.9%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6%
	10	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	1.1%	0.8%	0.0%
	11	3.7%	1.2%	1.5%	6.5%	5.6%	6.7%
	Sum	86.5%	86.0%	87.7%	83.3%	87.0%	88.0%
No Reaction	12	8.0%	7.4%	6.7%	4.9%	6.9%	7.2%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In public spoken-mode scenarios, native Korean speakers most frequently used the strategies ‘Reconfirming and requesting correction’, ‘Explaining the situation’, and ‘Presenting obligation or responsibility’, in that order. Native Thai speakers also showed high frequencies of ‘Explaining the situation’ and ‘Reconfirming and requesting correction’; however, compared with native Korean speakers, they used ‘Asking questions’ and ‘Expressing desires or wishes’ more frequently. An example of the ‘Asking questions’ strategy, which occurred more often in the Thai speaker data than in the Korean speaker data, is presented below.

[Situation 1, TNS 20]

หนูขอสอบถามนิดนึงค่ะ ว่าอาจารย์ได้ให้คะแนนจากไฟล์แรกหรือไฟล์สุดท้ายคะ?

May I ask whether the grade was based on the first file or the final version we submitted?

Thai learners of Korean also employed many of the strategies frequently used by native Korean and native Thai speakers. However, similar to native Korean speakers, they used the strategy ‘Presenting obligation or responsibility’ more often than native Thai speakers.

In public text-messaging contexts, native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean primarily employed the strategies ‘Explaining the situation’, ‘Reconfirming and requesting correction’, and ‘Presenting obligation or responsibility’. A difference was observed in the extent to which direct complaint strategies varied across

communication modes: native Korean speakers showed greater variation between spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts, whereas native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean exhibited relatively little variation across the two modes.

Table 9 Additional Complaint Strategies Across Groups in Public Contexts

Strategy	Strategies	Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Additional Strategies	13	14.2%	13.8%	14.9%	16.0%	17.6%	20.4%
	14	10.6%	12.7%	12.4%	14.2%	15.3%	18.7%
	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.7%	14.5%	5.4%

Across all groups, the use of supplementary strategies was more frequent in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios, with native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean showing particularly high frequencies. By contrast, native Korean speakers showed comparatively lower use of supplementary strategies and tended to rely more on core complaint expressions.

Next, the following section presents a comparison of complaint strategies used by the three groups across spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts in private situations.

Table 10 Patterns of Complaint Speech Acts Across Groups in Private Contexts

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Explicit Direct Complaints	1	1.2%	0.0%	1.4%	3.9%	0.5%	2.8%
	2	8.3%	4.2%	6.7%	12.9%	5.6%	8.4%
	sum	9.5%	4.2%	8.1%	16.9%	6.1%	11.2%
Indirect Complaints	3	20.7%	18.8%	28.3%	23.6%	20.9%	22.9%
	4	17.8%	24.2%	16.3%	15.7%	30.3%	17.3%
	5	15.4%	12.3%	10.5%	3.4%	11.8%	11.2%
	6	11.2%	9.2%	9.1%	3.4%	3.3%	11.2%
	7	6.5%	7.3%	4.3%	5.6%	5.2%	3.9%
	8	9.5%	8.5%	8.6%	10.1%	8.0%	7.3%
	9	1.2%	7.3%	5.3%	9.0%	0.0%	2.8%
	10	1.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	1.7%
	11	2.4%	1.2%	3.8%	7.9%	1.9%	3.2%
	Sum	85.8%	89.2%	86.2%	78.7%	82.3%	81.6%
No Reaction	12	4.7%	6.5%	5.7%	4.5%	11.7%	7.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In private situations, native Korean speakers employed direct complaint strategies more frequently than native Thai speakers across both spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts. The use of indirect strategies showed broadly similar patterns across the three groups, with all groups frequently employing strategies such as ‘Explaining the situation’, ‘Requesting confirmation’, and ‘Presenting responsibility or obligation’.

In addition, native Korean speakers showed a higher proportion of direct complaint strategies in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios, indicating a difference in strategy use across communication modes. In contrast, native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean exhibited relatively little variation between spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts. Furthermore, in private text-messaging contexts, native Thai speakers showed a comparatively high proportion of silence or non-response.

Table 11 Additional Complaint Strategies Across Groups in Private Contexts

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Additional Strategies	13	18.0%	17.7%	18.1%	21.6%	17.3%	18.3%
	14	14.4%	13.5%	14.0%	18.9%	15.0%	16.4%
	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	19.8%	14.2%	14.8%

In private situations, the use of supplementary strategies was higher in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios across all groups. Strategy 15 (‘Use of emoticons’) appeared exclusively in text-messaging contexts. Among the three groups, native Korean speakers showed the highest frequency of emoticon use (19.8%), whereas native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean used emoticons less frequently. By contrast, the latter two groups relied more heavily on linguistic mitigation strategies, with emoticons appearing only as supplementary elements.

2.2. Complaint Strategies According to Social Status

First, the following section presents a comparison of complaint strategies used by the three groups across spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts when addressing interlocutors of higher social status.

Table 12 Patterns of Complaint Speech Acts Across Groups Toward Interlocutors of High Status

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Explicit Direct Complaints	1	2.5%	0.7%	0.8%	2.4%	0.7%	2.8%
	2	0.0%	3.5%	0.0%	1.6%	2.7%	0.0%
	sum	2.5%	4.2%	0.8%	4.1%	3.4%	2.8%
Indirect Complaints	3	31.9%	25.9%	37.5%	37.4%	23.6%	32.7%
	4	34.5%	25.2%	25.0%	29.3%	29.7%	23.5%
	5	13.4%	4.9%	10.8%	3.3%	12.8%	5.8%
	6	3.4%	7.0%	8.3%	0.0%	4.7%	4.8%

Table 12 Patterns of Complaint Speech Acts Across Groups Toward Interlocutors of High Status (cont.)

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Indirect Complaints	7	3.4%	16.8%	4.2%	8.1%	10.8%	6.7%
	8	0.0%	4.2%	2.5%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%
	9	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	11	7.6%	1.4%	5.8%	11.4%	3.4%	13.5%
	Sum	94.2%	86.1%	94.1%	89.5%	87.0%	87.0%
No Reaction	12	3.4%	9.8%	5.0%	6.5%	9.5%	10.2%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When addressing interlocutors of higher social status, native Korean speakers most frequently employed the strategies ‘Explaining the situation’ and ‘Reconfirming and requesting correction’, followed by ‘Presenting obligation or responsibility’. Native Thai speakers also made notable use of the strategy ‘Expressing desires or wishes’. In addition, approximately 10% of Thai respondents reported that they would choose not to express a complaint. The overall distribution of strategies in text-messaging contexts showed patterns similar to those observed in spoken-mode scenarios.

Table 13 Additional Complaint Strategies Across Groups Toward Interlocutors of High Status

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Additional Strategies	13	36.5%	28.0%	30.2%	43.2%	33.0%	36.0%
	14	32.4%	29.3%	29.8%	44.6%	30.3%	34.8%
	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%	4.1%	4.8%

When addressing higher-status interlocutors such as professors, all three groups showed more frequent use of supplementary strategies in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios. Among native Korean speakers, addressing terms, discourse markers, and greeting expressions occurred more frequently in text-messaging contexts. Native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean also employed supplementary strategies in text-messaging contexts, with a greater reliance on linguistically expressed mitigation. In addition, emoticons, which did not appear in spoken-mode scenarios, were observed in text-messaging contexts across the groups.

Next, the study compares the complaint strategies employed by the three groups across spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts when interacting with interlocutors of equal or lower social status.

Table 14 Patterns of Complaint Speech Acts Across Groups Toward Interlocutors of Equal or Lower Social Status

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Explicit Direct Complaints	1	0.9%	0.0%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%	1.2%
	2	9.4%	5.8%	8.5%	17.5%	7.4%	8.9%
	sum	10.3%	5.8%	9.5%	19.6%	7.4%	10.1%
Indirect Complaints	3	16.0%	17.4%	23.9%	15.4%	21.0%	23.0%
	4	8.9%	22.2%	15.5%	7.5%	29.4%	16.5%
	5	14.6%	12.5%	13.0%	13.8%	11.3%	16.1%
	6	10.3%	12.2%	8.8%	6.7%	6.1%	8.1%
	7	11.7%	7.8%	4.6%	6.7%	2.6%	4.8%
	8	11.3%	7.5%	9.5%	14.2%	8.4%	5.2%
	9	7.0%	6.9%	6.7%	6.7%	0.0%	6.5%
	10	1.4%	0.8%	0.4%	0.8%	1.3%	1.2%
	11	0.5%	1.1%	1.4%	5.0%	4.2%	1.2%
	Sum	81.7%	88.4%	83.8%	76.7%	84.5%	82.7%
No Reaction	12	8.0%	5.8%	6.7%	3.8%	9.0%	7.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

When interacting with interlocutors of equal or lower social status in spoken-mode scenarios, native Korean speakers employed a relatively wide range of complaint strategies, including 'Reconfirming and requesting correction', 'Presenting obligation or responsibility', 'Asking questions', 'Expressing desires or wishes', and 'Expressing negative emotions'. Similar sets of strategies were also observed among native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean.

In text-messaging contexts, native Korean speakers showed a higher proportion of direct complaint strategies than in spoken-mode scenarios. By contrast, native Thai speakers and Thai learners of Korean exhibited relatively similar patterns of strategy use across spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts.

Table 15 Additional Complaint Strategies Across Groups Toward Interlocutors of Equal or Lower Social Status

Strategy		Spoken Mode			Text Messaging		
		KNS	TNS	TKL	KNS	TNS	TKL
Additional Strategies	13	7.4%	7.8%	8.1%	8.1%	7.6%	8.1%
	14	4.1%	4.2%	3.8%	4.1%	3.8%	4.2%
	15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.3%	16.0%	18.6%

When expressing complaints toward interlocutors of equal or lower social status, all three groups showed generally low and comparable levels of supplementary strategy use across both spoken-mode scenarios and text-messaging contexts. Across the groups, addressing terms, discourse markers, and greeting expressions were used only to a limited extent in these contexts. Overall, the distribution of supplementary strategies showed similar patterns among native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that the realization of complaint speech acts is shaped by the complex interplay of contextual, cultural, and modal factors. Native Korean speakers, native Thai speakers, and Thai learners of Korean each exhibited distinct patterns in how they expressed dissatisfaction, reflecting differing sociocultural orientations toward politeness, hierarchy, and interpersonal harmony.

For native Korean speakers, complaint realization varied according to both social relationship and communication mode. They tended to employ more direct complaint expressions in text-messaging contexts than in spoken-mode scenarios, particularly in private or peer interactions. Importantly, however, directness was frequently accompanied by mitigating devices such as polite endings, vocatives, greetings, and emotional expressions. This pattern suggests that, in Korean communication, directness and politeness do not operate as opposing forces but rather as complementary resources for balancing clarity with relational consideration. In digital contexts, the frequent use of greetings and emojis further indicates that modality-specific pragmatic resources may play a role in regulating emotional tone when immediate paralinguistic cues are absent.

Native Thai speakers, by contrast, showed a strong preference for indirect and harmony-oriented complaint strategies. Their complaints were often realized through questions, wishes, or explanatory statements rather than explicit criticism, aligning with the cultural value of *kreng jai*, which emphasizes consideration for others and avoidance of confrontation. In hierarchical settings, a notable proportion of Thai speakers chose not to complain at all, prioritizing relational smoothness over assertive expression. When complaints were produced, they were typically softened through polite markers and hedging expressions, thereby minimizing potential face threats.

Thai learners of Korean exhibited hybrid pragmatic patterns that reflected influences from both their first language (Thai) and the target language (Korean). Their frequent use of strategies such as 'Reconfirming and requesting correction' and 'Explaining the situation' resembled patterns observed among native Korean speakers, while their continued reliance on mitigation and indirectness echoed Thai pragmatic norms. In text-messaging contexts, learners appeared to increasingly adopt Korean-style politeness conventions, alongside the use of emojis or punctuation marks to adjust tone. This tendency can be interpreted as evidence of interlanguage pragmatic development, in which learners gradually internalize target-language sociopragmatic norms while adapting to new communicative modes.

Across all three groups, social status, situational context, and communication mode emerged as influential variables in shaping complaint realization. While text-based communication was associated with relatively higher levels of directness, participants across groups continued to employ politeness-oriented strategies, underscoring the ongoing importance of face management in complaint interactions. The balance between explicitness and courtesy thus appears to represent a shared pragmatic concern, albeit one that is realized in culturally and contextually specific ways.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of incorporating pragmatic and intercultural competence into Korean language education. Learners need guidance in understanding how linguistic choices are conditioned by social hierarchy, interpersonal distance, and communication mode. Furthermore, as digital communication becomes increasingly central to everyday interaction, instruction should address the pragmatic functions of contemporary discourse features—such as emojis, punctuation, and greeting forms—as integral components of authentic Korean communicative competence.

In conclusion, this study contributes to research in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics by demonstrating how cultural values, linguistic conventions, and technological affordances intersect to shape complaint speech act performance. The findings offer both theoretical insights and practical implications for developing culturally responsive Korean language instruction in increasingly multimodal communicative environments.

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